Faculty, Fellowship, and Faith: Creating a Spiritual Community of Teachers

by

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Introduction

Hi Jo,

I went in to school today. I wish I had happy things to say. I walked in to the sound of Marie crying in her room. I went to see what had her so upset and it was the foul condition of her room. She can go into the details but needless to say it was a filthy mess—dirty tables, food crumbs, items missing, misused, broken etc. Again, she can give you details, but what I saw was just a complete lack of respect. Quickly I went to my room. While not nearly as bad as Marie's, it was dirty—not even close to the status it was when we left in June. Dirty tables, crumbs on the carpeting, mats and items used and not put away. I know that our rooms were used for camp; I get it. However, when I left my room in June, it was spotless and ready for campers. What I saw today was a lack of respect, not to mention a lack of hygiene. Honestly, if a staff member does not care, what message are we sending to the children?

> This is a consistent issue, an unkind issue. I am not telling you this so that heads will roll. I am telling you this because it is yet another instance of staff members doing whatever they want with whatever they want. It is hurtful, destructive and unkind. It undermines any sense of community.
>
> After looking at our new room, we will need some shelving for blocks, toys, bins etc. and we will need a small file cabinet, all of which should always remain in the room. Aside from the camp "issues" it felt good to be back. Also, found my copy of A Hidden Wholeness. Thank you. Stay cool, Rachel

This email is, sadly, not an uncommon tirade from teachers in my school, and my 28 years of teaching has provided numerous examples of teachers expressing similar emotions. Although this may not have been quite so surprising in the public and secular schools in which I've taught, it was unexpected when I began teaching in Christian schools 18 years ago. In this particular instance, the summer camp program, staffed by our own teachers, had indeed used the classroom, but camp had ended two days earlier on a Friday and no cleaning staff was scheduled to work again until Monday. In addition to the understandable discomfort felt by a returning teacher discovering a dirty classroom, a common issue revealed in this email is one of possessiveness: *my* stuff, *my* room, others using *my* space, no one taking care of *my* things, and the concern that

someone might *take* things from my room. Where do these reactions come from? I have seen teachers request new materials for their classrooms when they already had these items hoarded and locked in a cabinet. They were unaware these materials were actually in their possession because they had been hidden away and stored for so long. Many teachers have an uncanny ability to know when "someone's been in my room" and sadly, some become existentially suspicious.

In addition to possessiveness, I have also observed resentful words and behavior from teachers who see fellow faculty members not working as hard as they do, accusations of unfairness in the assignment of extra duties, and a lack of compassion for teachers who are undergoing hardship. In one of my former schools, teachers often mysteriously disappeared when a call was put out for assistance with set-up for special events, such as concerts and graduation. A lack of trust can become so common, in my experience, that teachers go about their daily tasks with little imagination for healthy community. It becomes all too normal for adults employed by a school to feel defensive. Many then come to school unconsciously prepared to do battle, to find a way to oppose other teachers. Such anxiety is revealed in tattling, gossip, complaining, lack of teamwork and no common mission.

Departures from this pattern, from a demoralized status quo, are fortunately, opportunities to see what is possible. One teacher offers to take another's duty when that colleague is having a bad day. A teacher notices and says "thank you" to someone who goes the extra mile to support a colleague. Someone asks a co-worker about her weekend or trip or anniversary. The goodness of individuals can certainly be found in

school settings, but is often hidden within a climate of concern for self, personal convenience, and unrealistic expectations that others will conform to one's own sense of "how things ought to be."

Much of what I have described here is overstated. No one school seems to be completely lacking in community or fully practicing community at all times. Sometimes social gatherings are suggested as a way to improve collegiality, but they happen sporadically, and usually with the familiar departing words, "This was fun; we should do this more often." Sadly, it is rare that anyone follows through on the plans. Although some schools appear to be caring environments where teachers work together to uphold the mission of the institution, the breakdown of relationships may be evident to faculty members. My own experiences in six schools have resulted in strong and close relationships with colleagues, enduring friendships, joyful moments of common mission, but not without my share of passive-aggressive battles, unkind gossip, and accusations of favoritism. So how might a school address the need for community among its faculty?

I have typically seen administrators deal with personnel conflicts on an as-needed basis with the faculty members involved. Sometimes a school head or division head will scold a full faculty about behavior that is deemed unprofessional or harmful to the school. Never have I seen a long-term effort to address how staff members relate to one another, or an attempt to build strong communities by identifying what teachers have in common, or providing even occasional opportunities to share personal stories. Administrators may feel it is not their job to manage how teachers get along with each

other, or that time is so precious during the school day that such work is not a priority. Too often, the lack of collegiality among a group of faculty members is simply tolerated as normal, or as a problem too big to be solved. Without attention to this issue, however, schools may lose valued teachers or suffer from poor morale, which inevitably spills over into relationships with students and families.

Outsiders often identify particular schools as good, bad, and mediocre by the success of the students, the satisfaction of the parents, the physical plant, and availability of resources. Teachers may see the picture somewhat differently. Richard Ingersoll asserts that teachers often base a decision to stay or leave a particular school, at least in part, upon the level of conflict within the organization (507).[1] I have seen unhappy teachers walk away from wealthy, well-supplied schools and I have seen teachers line up to teach in a low-income housing project because the faculty morale is high. At the preschool level, teacher turnover rates are reported by Whitebook and Sakai to be as high as 30% per year (6) with staff coming and going from a classroom with such frequency that a child may well go through several different teachers in one year. What distinguishes a happy school and an unhappy one is often the community teachers find there. Other factors are certainly important, but the pleasure of arriving at work to find a group of supportive and caring co-workers makes the choice to stay in a particular school easier.

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[1] Other factors in teacher retention identified by Ingersoll are compensation, support from administrators, and the ability of teachers to exercise influence in organizational decision-making.

So what does a healthy faculty community look like? M. Scott Peck, author of *The Different Drum*, has been examining true community for more than three decades, and his definition includes the characteristics of honest communication, relationships with depth, and a commitment of individuals to one another, sharing each other's joys and sorrows in a compassionate way (59). To solve any complex human problem, Brené Brown encourages the sharing of stories and making connections that assure people they are not alone (*I Thought It Was Just Me* xxvii). Both authors note that connection is essential, i.e., the kind of connection that benefits all members of the community.

A strong community comprises healthy, nurtured individuals. A willingness to step outside oneself to connect with a colleague is more likely to occur when a teacher is receiving what she needs, emotionally and spiritually. Brené Brown defines spirituality, at least in part, as "the deeply held belief that we are inextricably connected to one another by a force greater than ourselves—a force grounded in love and compassion" (*Daring Greatly* 151). Put another way, the "force greater than ourselves" is what binds us to community. It is easier to reach out to others when we feel loved. In a religious school, we might talk about the love of God providing this personal strength that is needed to connect to someone other than ourselves, but it is not necessary to label it as such, especially when the terminology is foreign or off-putting to someone without a religious background. Scott Peck would likely call it "spiritual healing," or "becoming whole or holy" (19), while Parker Palmer calls it "integrity…the state or quality of being entire, complete, and unbroken" (*Hidden Wholeness* 8).

When a group of teachers said to me, "It should mean something to teach in an Episcopal School," and I asked them to say more, they explained it in two ways. First, as a Christian school, we should be treating our colleagues in ways that demonstrate Christian principles, which I understood to mean with the love that Jesus taught. They said we should be behaving better toward one another. Then, as an Episcopal school, we should be respectful and inclusive, allowing everyone to feel welcome here, no matter what tradition they are from.[2]

This group of teachers expressed a longing, though, for a school environment that was distinct from a secular child care center. Several said that they only wanted to work in church related schools. My sense that they did not clearly understand our Episcopal identity, and yet knew that it was inherently meaningful or special, made me want to work with them to devise a project which met their needs—one which provided spiritual nurture and worked to improve our relationships. It would be easier to help them understand our Episcopal-ness if we could demonstrate it in action.

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[2] They did not seem to equate the Episcopal part of our identity with the religious part. They did not talk about chapel, or service, or how religion is taught in the classroom, or even the classroom prayers before meals or snacks.

Chapter 1: Existing Community and Hope for the Future

Thesis Statement

My own observations of teachers who work together daily, but find no fulfillment of their spiritual needs and whose relationships are often strained and bad-tempered, has led me to the understanding that many teachers do not expect their school environment to provide a community of supportive relationships or opportunities to engage in spiritual practices. As a result, I propose a series of planned community-building events based on sharing stories and listening to others, along with opportunities for communal prayer and worship, which will meet the needs for connecting faith and work that some teachers have expressed and is evident in their interactions. Teachers who participate in these activities will form a community in which they can be their authentic selves and live with others in harmony and peace.

The Setting

Christ Church Episcopal Preschool (CCEP) in Greenville, Delaware is a parish school serving 70 children aged 18 months to 5 years. As a ministry of Christ Church Christiana Hundred, the school exists to "educate young children, create community among families, school, and church, and [to] honor and nurture children in the Episcopal tradition."[3]

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[3] Christ Church Episcopal Preschool mission statement, 2007.

During my tenure as Head of School, I have focused on realizing the mission of the school, and in particular, have worked to "create community among families, school, and church." Success has been achieved to some extent in increasing the interactions of parish and school and in the support of one another's mission. Many vestry members and other parishioners participate in CCEP's activities, such as parenting classes, fundraisers, and social events. A concerted effort to involve parents in the spiritual life of the school has broadened the community further. In fact, the parent community is a strong and cohesive one that has provided support and nurture for many adults. Parents have participated in serving meals at a homeless shelter; they support one another during times of illness or challenge; and they regularly attend family chapel services in large numbers. The group whose inclusion in the community is yet to be intentionally addressed and nurtured is the faculty.[4] Their sense of belonging seems to be based on the school as an organization—their employer, rather than on ties which represent who they are as people. Dervin and Korpela note that "communities do not merely exist but are actively made" (8). Organizational membership must be transcended and choices made in order to become a community.

It is significant that the school's mission statement was slightly modified soon after its composition. The original statement said that the mission was to "promote a sense of community," rather than to "create community." This intentional change of wording represented an acknowledgment that the mission was not about a feeling (a

[4] The terms faculty, staff, and teachers are used interchangeably in this document, referring to all adults employed at the school.

"sense of community") but about reality. Real community was important enough to be a central purpose of the school, and the trustees who made this adjustment in language recognized that community is "*actively* made."

The small group of faculty members described above expressed an understanding of their work as more than job, career, or even calling. They feel that a purposeful relationship of work and faith is a desirable outcome of their employment in a religious school. They are looking for spiritual nurture within the community of teachers, students, families, and church. Sadly, they admitted that they do not feel this sense of community nor the spiritual nurture they hoped to find in the school. Collegiality is an ongoing problem among the faculty at CCEP and the spiritual nature of their work is largely relegated to the weekly 15 minute chapel service, during which they attempt to keep their charges attentive and quiet. Teachers find that the chapel service has little meaning for them personally. Aside from prayers in the classroom before snack and lunch, which are largely rote and perfunctory, and once-weekly Godly Play lessons for each class, little else distinguishes the work environment as a place of spiritual nurture or practice for the staff. In one of the conversations mentioned above, a teacher said that she was at times "shocked at how we treat each other."

The glimmers of hope for more collegiality and community have come during our occasional faculty gatherings for lunch, at our faculty Christmas parties, and at professional in-service trainings focused on learning more about one another. When this group of teachers, who voluntarily attended an early morning breakfast for a conversation about work and spirituality, were asked what would nurture them

spiritually at school, they replied, “More of this.” They explained that this meant opportunities to talk and share about what is important to them and how their spiritual hungers can be fed. Before 2010, the teachers had never had opportunities to eat together and to focus on learning about one another, but having experienced shared meals on occasion during the last five years, they hungered for more. An opportunity was staring me in the face: the chance to build community and to meet the needs of teachers for an inner life that could be congruent with their professional one.

As I later described to the teachers in an introductory letter (see Appendix A), the plans for the project grew out the love and respect I had for them and reflected my desire to work with them to build a peaceful and generous community. I noted that the faculty community was just one of the many “little communities” that made up our school and that children and parents would benefit as well as the teachers.

Although I had hoped that the teachers would embrace this effort, I recognized that what they have said they want and how they behave toward one another on a daily basis is paradoxical. They have appreciated the few opportunities to draw closer to their colleagues, but they cannot seem to maintain a sense of community in their routine interactions. Their surprise and delight upon learning that only two colleagues are extroverts in a professional development workshop does not carry over into an understanding of those teachers’ actions when they return to the classroom. Their complaints about their co-workers are often couched in terms of, “She doesn’t do it the way I would.”

One teacher made it a habit to regularly appear in my office 15 minutes after her children departed for the day, whispering a comment which usually began, “I think you might want to know this…” and then proceeding to “tattle” on a colleague. Possessiveness, as illustrated in the email above, is an ongoing issue with some teachers writing their room number in indelible marker on every single piece of classroom material or equipment.

In *Teaching Happiness and Well-Being: Learning to Ride Elephants*, Ian Morris points out that even though we make mistakes in our relationships, “humans also possess the remarkable skills of self-consciousness and reflection. We can step outside ourselves to examine what we have done in the past and make decisions about what we will do in the future; we are not trapped in an endless present moment like almost all other species” (17). Morris’ optimism regarding human relationships and the ability to change them reflects the hope upon which this project is based. If we truly desire to change the way we relate to one another in a positive way, we must actively reflect upon the barriers we have erected between ourselves and our colleagues, and seek ways to connect with and appreciate one another.

The disconnect between the community the teachers desire and the one they have created may be a result of not understanding what a supportive and nurturing community looks and feels like. Or perhaps they are hesitant to try out new behaviors that could improve campus morale because they feel pressure from their peers to conform. They recognize that they don’t have the community they desire, but are not quite sure how to achieve it, especially if not all their colleagues are on board. Standing

at this crossroads between the possibility for growing a strong community and continuing down our familiar paths, I am seeking ways to offer my faculty some direction and to provide opportunities to share their lives with one another in a deeper and more meaningful way. This thesis will describe our journey and the impact our actions have had on the overall sense of community. David Gortner points out that a journey, or a pilgrimage, carries certain common themes, such as "seeking and uncertainty, finding and being found…" (among others) (36). Sometimes the end is uncertain, but even a little progress moves us forward.

As we seek to define what a faculty community should look like, we must always consider the religious nature of our school. Some teachers want to be nurtured spiritually while others are suspicious of what "spiritual" means. They are afraid that embracing anything labeled "spiritual" may mean that they are expected to support a particular religious agenda. The teachers come from a variety of religious backgrounds, and some from no religion at all. Those who are professed Christians have eagerly asked for opportunities to embed Christian spiritual practices into our faculty sharing. Those who are wary of Christianity (which is a very small number) would rather limit spiritual practices to what we are already doing, i.e., offering the children some sacred experiences, but not expecting teachers to participate in any personal religious activities apart from the children. In this matter, the project is guided by the Episcopal traditions of inclusion and respect, while staying true to our Christian identity. We are, unashamedly, a Christian school, but we understand and accept that non-Christians are

a vital part of our community. We will pray and worship in an inclusive, respectful way that honors all traditions.

The National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES), in the introduction to its Episcopal Identity and Culture Self-Study states, "A school calling itself Episcopal offers some concrete evidence, some outward sign, of its 'Episcopal-ness,' beyond the mere statement that it is" (2). For our school, this means forming a community that is more than simply being inclusive of and respectful of all traditions. Articulating ways in which the school is enhancing its religious and spiritual mission is encouraged by the NAES self-study and this project was designed to help Christ Church Episcopal Preschool do just that. The project will be successful when my faculty genuinely get along better, and the school provides ongoing spiritual nurture for the adult community through worship, prayer, and the provision of time and resources for self-care and reflection.

It is common to refer to our neighborhoods and towns as communities, and often we have a group of close friends we call community. At times the words congregation and community are used interchangeably. M. Scott Peck would challenge us to be more careful. In *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* he argues that churches are not likely to be true communities (25). They can be lacking in trust, intimacy, and vulnerability resulting in members failing to communicate honestly with one another (57, 59). Peck acknowledges that community may have been a more common experience for humans in the past. Quoting Governor John Winthrop in a speech to his companions before landing on American soil, Peck describes the ideal community as one in which we "delight in each other, make others' conditions our own,

rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body" (26).

Community is not a clear-cut term with a definition agreed upon by all. A. P. Cohen says it lacks "lexical precision" (165) and Nigel Rapport calls it "an un-scientific folk notion" (211). Nevertheless, community is deemed to be a positive thing, at least when it is included in a mission statement, like ours. Dervin and Kopela argue that people wish to belong to communities because they find them "personally significant" and "emotionally rewarding" (1-2). Communities are, at the very least, groups where something of perceived value is shared (which may include a group's very mission, or simply a comfortable feeling of belonging).

Given Peck's view about the lack of true community in churches, a religious school would seem to have no better claim on being a community than a secular school. It is not the religious nature of a group that gives it a sense of community, but rather how the members of a group treat one another, as in Winthrop's description, above. The challenge of creating authentic community is equally difficult in churches, neighborhoods, schools, and businesses. The religious bent of an organization might inform the desire for, or expectation of, community, but it by no means automatically exists.

Our school exists in a religious environment and has certain religious characteristics, but much of what we do can be seen as ordinary, even tedious. We create and implement learning experiences, serve meals and snacks, change clothing or diapers, apply bandages, read stories, tidy our classrooms, hold faculty meetings, take

recess duty, and communicate with parents. These are the aspects of early childhood education that are common to large franchised child care centers and church-based schools. Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass argue that even these mundane activities can be Christian practices, depending upon how we respond to them. If we can see these tasks as gifts for which we are grateful rather than as mere required duties, we may understand them as having spiritual meaning (205).

What could make either the religious school or the secular child-care center into true community? The staff of any school has the potential to become a community, but in my experience, workplace communities are quite rare and healthy communities in Christian schools perhaps even more so. Margaret Benefiel, writing about the "soul at work," describes organizations that embrace "fully engaged human spirits" (10). She does not label these places as communities, *per se*, but the businesses and charities she describes have much in common with the community ideal of mutual caring for one another. The religious setting makes possible, and to some extent obliges, our school to at least examine our spiritual lives, individually and jointly, and make a decision about a path toward community that honors and nurtures the human spirit.

Chapter 2: A Community of Souls at Work

Characteristics of Community

This chapter title hints at several dimensions of what is hoped for in our school. The project addresses community, but within a spiritual environment where the soul can be nurtured. It is also distinguished by its workplace context. All three of these factors—community, soul, and work—are at play in the activities which were carried out in the project.

As discussed above, the idea of community is a key focus, but we are not simply looking for teachers to like each other and get along well. The root word of community is *common*, meaning that members of a community share something *in common*: geographic location, age, sexual orientation, workplace, or any other aspect of life. Community can be chosen, such as church membership or social groups, or can be assigned by virtue of birth, such as ethnic groups and families. Because our teachers work in a common place of employment, they can be technically described as community, but not in the sense written about by Scott Peck or Parker Palmer. In fact, Peck would call such a group a *pseudocommunity*. Until a group of individuals accepts themselves as members of the same body, as Governor Winthrop advised, delighting in one another and making each other's conditions their own, Peck's true community is vacant.

How does such a transformation from individuals to "members of the same body" come about? Winthrop's advice to delight in one another and to make other's conditions one's own demands not only the presence of grace, but a certain connection

that can only come about through honest sharing and vulnerability. This means talking about weaknesses and fears as well as strengths. Connections made on the basis of identifying both positive and negative attributes shared in common have the ability to strengthen not only the community but the individual as well. The result may be the creation of a safe space where one's sense of self and his/her public persona lived out in the workplace can be integrated, softening the boundaries between solitude and community that Parker says "go together as both-and" (*Hidden Wholeness* 54). A true community is also characterized by a sense of outward harmony, i.e., a lack of conflict among its members, although this virtue alone does not define a community. I have taught in schools where outward harmony was present on the surface, but did not represent any real connection among teachers.

Parker Palmer writes that community is a necessity for human beings. Even though we need a certain amount of solitude, we were also made for connections; without them we "wither and die" (*Courage* 67). The communal experience is partially realized through coming to know others at a deep level. And yet, like Peck, Palmer recognizes that there are "perversions" of community in which the interiority of the soul is not respected and in which the "group norm asserts." This may be reflected in the expectation that everyone must speak, share, or use a common voice. (*Courage* 79). Fear of connecting with others may arise out of this very group dynamic in which those who do not conform are alienated. Palmer says that one of the deepest fears of the human race is that of a "live encounter" with someone or something different from ourselves—i.e., the "other" (*Courage* 37) He says we may fear diversity; a live

encounter with a colleague who is not like us leads us to suspect something is wrong with us or them. Or we may fear conflict; we cannot agree with our colleagues, so it is safer to keep to ourselves. We may fear losing identity; encounter with the other may cause us to change (38). Brené Brown agrees with Palmer regarding our fear of diversity, arguing that the fear that we are flawed makes us feel we are not worthy of being accepted by and belonging to a group (*I Thought it was Just Me* 5).

This fear of connectedness seems antithetical to a teaching community where we share the responsibility for educating and nurturing young children. Should not our common mission provide a bond among the adults in the organization, causing us to support and encourage one another? Just as Peck argues that churches are often not authentic communities because they can be lacking in trust, intimacy, and vulnerability (57), schools may exhibit the same deficiency. A teacher may care for and educate her students in an exemplary way but with her door closed and little regard for what is going on in a neighboring classroom. David Hagstom refers to this habit as teaching in "side by side caves," a condition of "fragmentation and division" (94), yet some teachers like and choose the solitude of their classrooms over connecting with fellow-teachers. Teachers struggling to meet the requirements of students with special needs may feel very alone because no colleague is sharing this experience. Perhaps teachers struggling in this way do not wish to admit the struggle because it reflects badly on their teaching abilities. Whatever the reason, when teachers are not talking about their weaknesses or sharing their feelings with colleagues, authentic community is not likely to form. Governor Winthrop says we must bear one another's burdens, but if those burdens of

weakness or loneliness remain hidden, then the support of a community is impossible. We may be part of a pseudocommunity, in which Peck says individual differences are denied and we keep our feelings to ourselves (89) or we may share only what reflects well upon us, but we are not yet a true community.

Sharing something of one's own interiority with co-workers requires a willingness to be vulnerable. The kind of response someone receives will either make one shut down and withdraw, or be willing to share further. When we try to correct a colleague or tell him/her how to fix a problem, we imply that we are more knowledgeable and more experienced; we place ourselves in a position of superiority, even though we might feel that we are being helpful. In reality, though, we send the unintended message to the person who shared the problem that the solution is obvious and he/she should have discovered it. Palmer says that such a person feels "unheard and dismissed." He goes on to say that "the human soul does not want to be fixed" (*Courage* 156). It is easy to see how being unheard and dismissed can prevent a person from feeling part of a community. Understandable responses might include, "You're not listening to me…I'm not important…My problem is bigger than you think it is." Barriers go up to protect that person from being hurt again in the future. Sharing stops.

Brené Brown cautions that when a person exhibits vulnerability and opens herself up to others, there is always a chance that she will be met with cynicism and criticism or even mean-spiritedness. Those practicing these behaviors are in part fashioning armor for themselves in order to "keep vulnerability at bay" or perhaps using them as weapons to hurt those whose sharing of vulnerability is making them

uncomfortable (*Daring Greatly* 166). Once a person has experienced such a response to her willing vulnerability, she is likely to pull back and protect herself from future rejoinders of this type.

Teachers are not unique in being reticent to share their inner lives. This commonplace hesitancy may result, not from a fear of employment repercussions, but from the very lack of an inner life at all. Jan Walgrave, in a conversation with Ronald Rolheiser, pointed out that the lives most of us lead prevent us from allowing inner lives to receive any attention, largely because we fill our days with noise, activity, work, entertainment, and talking (125-126). In a preschool, the literal noise is ever-present as classrooms are filled with laughing, talking, singing, asking questions non-stop, and the noise of play. Even when a teacher would like to enjoy some quiet moments, or practice selective attention, few opportunities present themselves. The school day is reflected in Walgrave's litany of busy-ness, as teachers develop and deliver curriculum, keep children safe and healthy, communicate with parents and plan for the next day—all the while caring for their own families and households. Time to meditate, breathe, and focus on an inner life can always wait until tomorrow, or whenever our schedule allows. When inner lives are put on hold, there is little chance that workplace conversations will go any deeper than "How was your weekend?" The soul is relegated to the basement.

Separating the day-to-day tasks of getting through the day, whether at school, another workplace, or at home, from what Palmer calls our "backstage" lives—what we may perceive as our "real" selves—results in a fragmentation or lack of integrity that makes us feel unbalanced and incomplete. These backstage lives (what we think we

don't have time for) help to shape the world we occupy, while our onstage lives (what we feel forced to do) receive formation from what lies outside us—schedules, to-do lists, family responsibilities. Palmer points out that the great spiritual traditions address this inward/outward dichotomy by asking the same two questions: "What are we sending from within ourselves out into the world, and what impact is it having 'out there'? What is the world sending back at us and what impact is it having 'in here'?" (*Hidden Wholeness* 48).

The disintegration of self into incompleteness and imbalance cannot be solved simply by our will to rejoin the disconnected parts of ourselves. The task is not an individual endeavor at all, but, as Peck argues, requires a recognition that we are social creatures and we desperately need others to help us make meaning in our lives. When we see that what is different about a colleague may be a strength and a gift, not merely a difference, we are more likely to learn something that might be incorporated into ourselves, resulting in more wholeness for both self and colleague (56). But we also must be willing to share our own weaknesses and challenges, or we risk not being truly ourselves. Acting as though we have no weaknesses, or trying desperately to hide them, results in loneliness that we cannot even acknowledge (58).

The condition of the CCEP community is not yet defined by balance, where integration of backstage and onstage lives can occur. We need support and sustenance for the difficult journey that each teacher travels alone, but we need it, according to Palmer, in the context of guidance and collegial discourse (*Courage* 146). Palmer acknowledges that our culture sees the "inner realm of the heart [as] a romantic

fantasy, an escape from harsh reality" (*Courage* 20). Given this view, does a group of teachers have time (or should they take the time) to engage in collegial discourse that offers guidance for both the group and individual journey? This would seem to require conversations that go beyond professional topics, even venture into sharing personal stories and histories.

Palmer points out that all of the world's major social changes were led by people who had no power granted to them by others, but who were willing to wear their hearts on their sleeves. Citing the examples of Rosa Parks, Vaclav Havel, Dorothy Day, and Nelson Mandela, who shared their personal struggles with the world and attracted millions of followers, he encourages people to refrain from "emotional distancing as a strategy for survival" (*Courage* 206-207). Such distancing results in alienation and isolation, which David Hagstrom says is the world's biggest problem (111). It is the very knowing of someone else, which happens through sharing, that builds community (*Courage* 55).

Following the advice of Parker and Peck, especially as he evokes Winthrop, this project will include opportunities for sharing stories. How can we make each other's burdens our own if we do not know what those burdens are? Sharing our experiences can not only increase connections between faculty members, but can also result in improved personal well-being, as demonstrated in the research of Pennebaker, Glaser, and Glaser. They have shown that sharing negative experiences through story-telling can have positive effects on physical and psychological health (239-245).

This project also focuses on the *soul*, which Palmer calls the true self (*Hidden Wholeness* 33), and Margaret Benefiel defines as "the lived manifestation of spirituality in an individual, a family, or an organization." She acknowledges that employers nurturing souls in the workplace are rare, but describes some for-profit and non-profit organizations where a *co-evolution* of both individual and organizational souls has succeeded (9-10). Ideally, it is that *co-evolution* that will occur in this project—the individual soul nurtured in such a way that the soul of the organization grows, and, coming full circle, the individual finds meaning in being a member of a soulful organization.[5]

A number of authors writing about community talk about *wholeness* as an essential component of such groups. In *Soul at Work*, Benefiel describes the mandala as a symbol chosen by the Greyston Foundation to describe its mission:

> In Buddhism, the mandala is a circular diagram representing the different aspects of life within a balanced and harmonious whole; it represents the unity and interdependence of life. Within Greyston, the term is used on three levels to denote:
>
> - The well balanced individual
> - The well-functioning community
> - The integration of the individual within community (126)

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[5] The soulful organization is not necessarily a religious one. It can simply be an organization where workers find joy in their work and where their spirits are celebrated (Benefiel 154).

This is an example of the wholeness of community contributing to the wholeness of the individual. Growth, says Sandra Lommasson, cannot occur simply by serving individuals, hoping that their personal transformation results in communal transformation; rather, each affects the other, and support of the communal soul is essential alongside the support of individuals, if real growth is to occur (139). Benefiel cites the example of the Document Management Group, whose vision statement addresses "the commitment to build a workplace in which our people can find meaning, significance and success through their work, and where personal and workplace values align to achieve greater outward harmony and inner spiritual life" (150). Focusing on the inner life sounds like a rare and noble thing for an employer to do, but the Document Management Group consciously links this nurture of the individual with outward harmony. Lommasson says this is what must happen to achieve growth (138).

In a workplace focused on outward harmony and the inner life of employees, boundaries between people and between personal and professional values might be described as "soft" by Scott Peck. In order for boundaries to be soft, Peck says a community must practice inclusiveness not only in sex, race, and creed, but also in human emotions, styles, and personalities (61). Members of a true community are still individuals, but because boundaries between them are soft, they are willing to share their weaknesses and imperfections. Healing can happen in such an environment. While boundaries might be soft, they are still present and Parker says that this is a good thing because a trusting relationship can be created when participants (in the words of Rilke) "protect and border and salute" each other's solitude. Parker is speaking about

the respect that keeps us from doing even subtle violence to another when we invade his or her solitude with the intention of being helpful (*Hidden Wholeness* 62).

Palmer says that when people who work together learn something about each other's lives, it helps them "feel less like replaceable parts" (*Hidden Wholeness* 171). They learn what is unique about each individual, but at the same time they learn what they share in common with others. The telling of a story does not have to reveal a moral or solve a problem. The telling itself can be healing and provide insight to both teller and listener (*Hidden Wholeness* 125).

Community, therefore, in this project will be marked by the faculty's own awareness that the nurture of their individual souls contributes to the organization's health and wholeness. They will see themselves not solely as teachers whose domain is their classroom and whose duties are limited to their own students, but as members of a group whose responsibilities also include caring for one another, bearing one another's burdens, and integrating their personal spiritual health with the wellbeing of the full school. In such a place, teachers will not construct barriers that divide or exclude, but will soften the boundaries between themselves and their colleagues, recognizing and accepting their differences as having the potential to strengthen the organization. They will avoid the tendency to heal and convert one another, which Peck says actually prevents community (68).

Characteristics of Christian Community

Kelly Bulkeley states that a prime role for religion over the course of history has been to create and sustain communities. He notes that religious traditions have created elaborate cultural systems for bringing together large groups of people over time and geographical space (26). Christianity is one example of a religious tradition that has built and thrived in communities. In fact, the foundational ecclesiology of the Christian faith is that of the community as the Body of Christ. In community, Christians find identity and their call to mission. Models for Christian community are found in the epistles of Paul, as he wrote to and traveled among the emerging Christian groups of the territories bordering the Aegean Sea. Because he often addressed strife in these communities, particularly between Jews and Gentiles, he has provided some important instructions regarding Christian community, e.g., how traditional ethnic and religious groups are to respond to newcomers or outsiders, how disputes are to be resolved, how agreements can be reached about what the Christian message means, and how to maintain unity in the light of different laws or customs. Paul's teachings can provide some guidance for diverse communities that are striving to find common ground, particularly with regard to ministry.

The communities to which Paul wrote reflect the Christ Church faculty community in a number of ways. The Jews in Corinth or Rome may have seen themselves as insiders because they shared their Jewish-ness with Jesus. Since Jesus was a Jew and this new religious cult of Christianity was based on Jesus' teaching, then surely all who practice it must become Jews. Outsiders, or Gentiles, must become "like

us," they may have thought. This could mean everything from being circumcised to keeping laws of purity to being educated in the Hebrew scriptures. Insiders at Christ Church might be Christians, or Episcopalians, or Christ Church parishioners, or long-time employees, or even those who live in the immediate vicinity. This leaves many as outsiders—non-Christians, non-parishioners, new hires, those who travel from a distance. Teachers with college degrees or administrative certificates may see themselves as superior to those with vocational training or assistant teacher certificates, giving them status as an insider.

Paul and Governor Winthrop, as quoted above, share the common notion that community is about being one body. Winthrop says we must always have this "community in the work as members of the same body" before our eyes while Paul says we must be united in mind and purpose (I Cor. 1:10-11). Paul explains this oneness using the metaphor of the human body. Each part of the body is equal in importance even though it may seem that some should be inferior. All are necessary for the body to fully function (I Cor. 12). Anyone who has suffered an injury to a toe knows that excruciating pain can result and that the whole body is affected by what seems to be an insignificant wound. Likewise, in community we all suffer if one suffers; we all rejoice if one is honored (I Cor. 12:25-26).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul points out that parts of the body have different functions and that the body of Christ is a reflection of the human body such that Christians need to contribute their individual gifts to the overall health of Christ's body. He does not expect every member of the community to be strong in the same way as

others. In fact, he implies that we need our little specialties in order to make the body optimally function. In a publication from the library of the National Association of Episcopal Schools, David Forbes points that out that not only do we need our "Arms and Legs, Heads and Toes" to coexist because they have no choice, but that the body is more than the sum of its parts. We all benefit from acknowledging our "indescribable range of differences" (Forbes).

The habit of some teachers is to judge others by how they compare to their own strengths. A teacher who does a beautiful job of preparing a child-friendly learning environment is critical of a teacher whose classroom is spare or less interactive. Teachers who willingly tromp out into a cold drizzly outdoor play environment in mid-winter are, to use Paul's words, "puffed up" over this sacrifice of personal comfort and enjoy discussing it in comparison to their colleagues who choose an indoor play time on such a day. Prideful celebration of one's gifts does little to build up the community or to promote peace, as Paul would have the church do: "Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another….Let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:13, 19).

Paul judges community members by how they use their gifts. If they speak in tongues but no one can understand them, this contributes nothing to "mutual upbuilding." It actually separates the speaker from the remainder of the group. The gift of prophecy is more useful because it communicates God's message to others, thus strengthening bonds between the prophet and the hearers (I Cor. 14:1-5). This suggests

that the gifts that should be celebrated are those that unite and nurture the community, not those that focus attention on the gifted. Perhaps the teacher whose classroom looks so inviting can share ideas with others in a non-judgmental way. The teachers who are always willing to go outside, regardless of the weather, might communicate their strategy of keeping an extra fleece in the closet or playing on the leeward side of the building. Gifts, when shared, build the community rather than divide it.

Paul addresses the issue of mature Christians versus new converts when he talks about the kind of learning for which people are ready—milk for infants, solid food for the more mature (I Corinthians 3:2). He connects immaturity with the desire to belong to one group or another—a disciple of Paul or Apollos or Cephas. As long as Paul's addressees are intent upon dividing themselves into groups of affiliation, then they are not mature enough for the solid food designated for those who understand that all belong to Christ. Some members of Christ Church's faculty are certainly aligned with others and keep their distance from those who are not part of their self-selected group. Is this immature behavior? According to Paul, as long as jealousy and quarreling are present in the community, then members have divided themselves and are behaving "according to human inclinations" (I Cor. 3:3). Not until they have abandoned affiliations and seen all as belonging to Christ will they attain the maturity that allows them to be fed with solid food.

Benefiel points out that a mature tree begins as a tender shoot, a good visual reminder that mature trees do not spring up overnight. The maturity that Paul writes about may be a slow process for our community; divisions and affiliations will not

disappear simply because we wish them to. Yet, the tender shoot represents hope; growth can happen when we focus attention on the food, water, and light that a living thing requires—in other words, care. The Gospel of Mark provides the image of the blade, then the ear, then the full corn, and finally the harvest (Mark 4:28). Within the scope of this project's timeline we may not reach maturity, but continued growth is assured if seeds are planted and the emerging shoot is tended.

Connecting mature faith with the ending of divisions within the community is not necessarily a common assumption for Christians. I question whether a Christian with a long history in the church would see himself as immature if he behaves jealously or in anger. Yet because these behaviors are present in our community, it means we must be fed with milk. We must grow into the habits of sharing and acceptance in order to attain the mature status which allows one to be fed with solid food. The writer of Hebrews addresses this issue of maturity when he says that his audience has been in the faith long enough that they should be teachers, but instead they need to be taught the basics all over again. The mature are characterized by their practices, which will eventually teach the distinctions between good and evil (Hebrews 5:11-14).

It is interesting that the writer of Hebrews equates length of time in the faith with the expectation of being teachers. The implication is present that *practices* will *teach* and that if one practices long enough, he or she will be mature enough to receive the solid food of the knowledge of God. What will the practices be that can help CCEP teachers distinguish between good and evil and thus attain maturity? Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra caution against focusing on a single practice of faith (hospitality,

forgiveness, singing, keeping Sabbath) but encourage the engaging of practices that weave together to address human well-being and respond to God who unifies all of life (194).

This project focuses on three practices that have the potential to teach and to create some measure of maturity, as advocated in Hebrews. The sharing of stories, meals, and worship are distinct practices but espouse the common goals of the early Christian community--ending divisions, celebrating the gifts of all, and the pursuit of "what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:19).

Jesus' own teachings on community are found in both word and practice. He taught that all people should love one another and treat others as they wish to be treated (Matt. 22:39, 7:12). The commandments to love others and to love God were set apart by Jesus as a full summation of the law and prophets of the Hebrew scriptures. In a culture where the law was intricate, complicated and frequently discussed and argued, this condensation of the law must have been surprising to Jesus' listeners, and no doubt regarded as simplistic. Yet Jesus demonstrated the love he taught by surrounding himself with a community of friends, by visiting in their homes, by welcoming those who were thought to be unimportant or undeserving—children, women, lepers, tax collectors, and ordinary tradesmen. It was important to him that his disciples stay close to one another, even when not in his presence, teaching that when two or three of them were gathered together in his name, he would be with them (Matt. 18:20). He asked that they not seek status or rank in the small community of disciples, but that they willingly become servants. He offered himself as the supreme

example, explaining that he “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

Jesus’ way of living in community with his disciples and others provides an example for the participants in this project. He included everyone in his ministry, not just a select few, and it is significant that that the outcast and lowly were part of his social group. He was their leader, but he expected them to remain in community with one another even in his absence. The practices of Jesus and the community he built will provide a standard and encouragement for our own efforts to treat others as we wish to be treated.

Chapter 3: The Project

What the teachers desire

As part of the process of discernment regarding the need for this project, I invited any teachers who wished to participate in a conversation about work and spirituality to attend an early morning breakfast about 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the regular faculty meeting. Besides me, five teachers attended the meeting. They were eager to share their thoughts about what it should mean to teach in a Christian school (and more specifically, an Episcopal School), and whether they were finding spiritual nurture at work. It was clear that this group, although self-selected and therefore perhaps not representative of the full faculty, was experiencing a disconnect between what they thought their work environment should be and what they were actually experiencing. As a Christian school, they expected their colleagues to be welcoming, inclusive, kind, respectful, and helpful. Moreover, they felt they should be growing spiritually as adults, over and above the nurture of the children's spirituality in chapel and classroom. Instead, they pointed out that the staff (including themselves) did not always treat one another with kindness; in fact, quite the opposite was often true. They noted that although chapel was generally a good experience for them, they were often distracted by their duties to the children at that time. They were critical of the chapel routines as repetitive and sometimes not engaging, either for the children or themselves. They did, however, have some positive experiences to relate. They told stories of teachers going out of their way to help colleagues. They talked about how meaningful it was to place their own hands on their foreheads as the Rector blessed the

congregation at the conclusion of chapel. They enjoyed the silence that was part of the liturgy.

I was encouraged that teachers were willing to talk about these things. I came away from the meeting with the sense that employees would not have shown up for this discussion unless they had a desire to see things change. This realization, along with my own experiences of divisive behavior and attitudes among the faculty led me to begin discussions and planning for a project which would strengthen the community of teachers. The Rector provided input, especially with regard to what "spirituality" means in a Christian school. She stressed her opinion that the common statement, "I'm spiritual, not religious," was at odds with our duty as Christians to unapologetically teach Jesus' love and to focus on love for God as well as for each other.

In a school where teachers come from many religious backgrounds, or none at all, one faces the difficulty of finding common ground for conversation about spiritual matters. The very word, "spirituality," conjures uncomfortable associations for some. Those who are not Episcopalian may fear that an effort to convert them underlies any such conversation. Some non-Christian staff members already feel they should be excused from any specifically Christian practice, such as a faculty chapel at the beginning of the year. A definition of spirituality which does not exclude members of the community will be essential to building a community comprising the entire staff. If we wish to build an inclusive community, we will need to refrain from assumptions that there is only one way to build a community in the context of a Christian school. Nevertheless, such a community, if it is to be true to its Episcopal identity, must be

based on Jesus' teaching about love. Two questions will need to be answered in the affirmative. First, "Can I share my inner life and/or my spiritual needs in a way that does not presume my way is the right or only way?" Second, "If my religious background is not Christian, can I still participate in this conversation comfortably?

The definition of spirituality offered by Ronald Rolheiser might be helpful:

> Spirituality is more about whether or not we can sleep at night than about whether or not we go to church. It is about being integrated or falling apart, about being within community or being lonely, about being in harmony with Mother Earth or being alienated from her (7).

Rolheiser's definition does not invoke Christ, as the Rector would have preferred, but it focuses on unity within a group and being at peace with others and with the world. He uses "Mother Earth," not God, to refer to the source and sustainer of life, but emphasizes harmony with her. He talks about loneliness, alienation, and falling apart when we isolate ourselves from community and from the life source. This definition is in agreement with the ways that Paul advocated for community and that Jesus taught us to love one another. The vocabulary, though, is more welcoming to the non-Christians in our school and may allow us to have a conversation about how we relate to one another and to our own sense of a higher power. With such a definition, I believe both Christians and non-Christians will be able to bring their own sense of spirituality into the community-building practices of this project in whatever way is meaningful to them.

An important question at this point in the process was my own participation in the project. Would I simply impose a plan for community-building activities and then step back and watch its implementation? Would I be a member of a small group? If so, who would facilitate the discussions? Who would lead faculty worship? I believed it would be important to demonstrate my own willingness to share as an example of vulnerability, and so I chose to participate in the small groups. I hired a facilitator to lead these groups and recognized the need to limit my participation to that of any other school employee, not the Head of School.

I believed that I should lead the faculty chapel services because I could not identify a faculty member who would feel comfortable doing this. I felt I had a better understanding of what would be meaningful to the teachers than any of Christ Church's clergy, and I could not afford to hire someone to lead the services. The chapel services were to be designed by seeking input from teachers about what they would find meaningful. I did not wish to impose my ideas about worship on the staff.

I knew that it would not be possible to be both the designer and leader of the project and be a participant in the same way as all other teachers, but to the extent I could be "one of the group," I wished to do so.

The Project Plan

The project I planned will comprise three specific practices. First we will set aside time to meet in small groups to just talk and share stories. The groups will remain consistent throughout the life of the project (one semester) so that relationships may be built over time. Second, we will share meals together during the school day, approximately once every three to four weeks. No agenda will be planned; we will simply sit and eat together as our school schedule allows, recognizing that teaching duties will prevent us from having every person present simultaneously. Third, we will worship together as a faculty five times over the course of the semester. A variety of worship styles and practices will be experienced, with attention given to the teachers' wishes. Faculty chapel services will be scheduled before the school day begins and will necessarily be brief. These three practices will address both individual spiritual needs and strengthening of bonds between and among faculty members.

The project length will be necessarily constrained by the schedule of requirements for completing the Doctor of Ministry degree. Despite the fairly short time span in which this admittedly ambitious project will be completed, the opportunity to spend meaningful time in community-building and spiritually nourishing activities will be sufficient to observe and measure the faculty's response to the interventions. Acknowledging that community-building is an ongoing process, the end of the project will simply mark a point in time when some conclusions can be drawn and new plans can be made for continuing the work.

John P. Kotter suggests that the vision of an organizational change should be easy to communicate to employees. Such a transformation needs a "clear and compelling statement" of where the project is leading (98-99). The simplicity of this thesis project—sharing stories, sharing meals, sharing worship—is straightforward in that it expresses *what activities* will be part of the project, and *how* those activities will be implemented, i.e., through sharing.

Scott Peck argues that communities cannot exist without honest communication and relating to others in a deeper way than is visible on the surface (59). The small group meetings that will be part of this project are planned in order to give teachers time to communicate in this deeper way. A typical day provides many opportunities to talk with children and with one's teaching partner, but not with teachers in another classroom or on another level of the building. Group membership will comprise teachers who do not share a classroom, who teach different ages, and who are not often found on the playground together—in short, those who rarely communicate in deep and meaningful ways. Dan McAdams, in The Redemptive Self, states that sharing stories, because human emotions are engaged, "may improve group morale and enhance the overall emotional quality of everyday life" (58). Brené Brown goes so far as to say, "When we tell our stories, we change the world." She argues that we do not know the impact our stories may have on someone who hears them (*I Thought It Was Just Me* 43). David Gortner argues that it does not matter what happens as a result of telling our stories, nor how people respond. He says it "matters more that we are true to who we are, who we have been made to be, and who we are becoming in Christ—

and that we live that truth openly, in words and deeds, in our sharing with others" (42-43). In other words, sharing is about what happens to us. MacAdams, Brown, and Gortner all imply that the act of sharing stories marks the beginning of some other change, movement, or growth and does not serve as its own ultimate end.

Sharing meals was modeled by Jesus as a way of connecting with others. Robert Karris notes that "In Luke's Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal," and also notes that Jesus told a number of stories (parables) related to eating, such as the prodigal son and the rich man and Lazarus, and included a reference to daily bread in the prayer he taught his disciples (14-15). Sharing meals with co-workers allows conversation to unfold in a relaxed way and provides a topic (the food) that may fill a void when dialogue might otherwise be awkward. It takes attention away from daily tasks and provides a few minutes of enjoyable connection that may help the afternoon go more smoothly. Sharing meals is not new for our faculty, and whenever they have done so in the past, they have been profoundly thankful for the opportunity. I often receive verbal and written thanks for offering them a luncheon. This project will make our shared meals more regular and frequent.

The faculty worship that will be part of this project is completely new for this group. In my five years at Christ Church, we have had only two faculty chapels, both of which were scheduled for the day before the opening of school as a way to launch the year with prayer. Neither time did I feel that the teachers welcomed or appreciated the experience. Worship can be a community-building experience, however, if we focus on how we, as a body of teachers, are responding to God's presence in our school and in

our personal and professional lives. It will be important to listen to the faculty with regard to the form these chapel services will take. Will teachers want meditative, quiet services, or a spoken liturgy with congregational participation? Should music be included? Will they participate or just observe? Ideas and feedback will be solicited during the scope of the project in order to provide meaningful worship experiences.

The project will begin with a day-long retreat prior to the opening of the academic year. A facilitator will guide the activities of the day, introducing each of the three practices that will continue into the school year—sharing stories in small groups, sharing meals, and sharing worship. An introductory letter will be sent to the teachers explaining my thesis project and the agenda for the retreat day (see Appendix A). By holding the retreat off campus, it will be clear to the teachers that this is not to be a traditional in-service day. Because it is a paid work day, all teachers will be expected to attend, although the letter will explain that each person's level of participation will be up to her.

At the retreat, teachers will receive a schedule of the fall's activities and will be informed that small group meetings and faculty worship will happen during normally scheduled faculty meeting times—Thursday mornings from 8 to 8:25 a.m. (see Appendix B). In order to accommodate this schedule, it will be necessary to establish some temporary new ways to communicate important information that would normally have been shared at faculty meetings. Teachers will need to understand that my goal of creating a faculty community and providing them with spiritual nurture is important enough to forfeit a semester of face-to-face faculty meetings.

In preparation for the retreat and for our work together in the fall, I will give each teacher a copy of Parker Palmer's *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life (s*ee Appendix C). They will be asked to read the book or at least portions of it, or to watch the talk by Parker Palmer on DVD, which is included with each copy of the book. In particular, I will ask them to focus on Palmer's description of Circles of Trust as a model for the ways in which we hope to communicate in this project.

Before the retreat, teachers will be asked to complete a survey regarding their sense of faculty community and spiritual nurture as it currently exists in the school (see Appendix D). A small group of parents will also be surveyed to ascertain their views on the current status of faculty community (see Appendix E). These parents will be selected based on having been associated with the school for multiple years and having been frequently present in the school building throughout their child's Christ Church career. Some parents are quite perceptive regarding undercurrents of tension or a sense of harmony among teachers and have shared their thoughts about these issues with me over the years.

Individual interviews with each faculty member will be conducted mid-way through the project in order to receive feedback and suggestions on each of the three facets of the project. These interviews will be conversational and open-ended, with the hope that teachers' positive and/or negative responses will allow opportunities to make adjustments, if necessary, as the project is completed.

How the Project Unfolded

Opening Retreat

The retreat was a full day (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) at an off-site retreat center, the Temenos Community in West Chester, PA (see Appendix F). The rental of the retreat center and the fees charged by the facilitator were covered by a generous grant from the National Association of Episcopal Schools. Teachers were responsible for their own transportation to the center, which was 17 miles from the school. Many car-pooled to the center. Some requested to be reimbursed for mileage and I was happy to do so.

The retreat took the place of an normal in-service day, when we would normally have met for four hours to talk about the opening of school, some goals for the year, new licensing requirements, schedules, and logistics. This day usually includes some fun activities as well (e.g., quizzes and prizes) and then teachers are free to work in their rooms for the afternoon. In-service credit is granted for two to three hours. (The state requires teachers to have 18 hours of annual training, so this is always a good start toward meeting the requirement.) Giving up this in-service day for the retreat meant that we had to communicate in writing about the things that would have been covered in that session. Teachers did not receive any in-service credit for the retreat day, so began the year a bit behind on their accumulated hours.

A facilitator conducted the retreat, although I gave some introductory remarks about why we were there and what we hoped to accomplish (see Appendix G). After my remarks, we opened with *lectio divina* (a time of reading scripture, meditating on it, and praying) and learned a song that was to be included in the end-of-day worship. The

facilitator talked about good ways of conversational sharing, telling our stories, and asking open and honest questions, drawing upon Parker Palmer's Circles of Trust as a model. We practiced talking with one another in twos, threes, fours, and finally in our assigned small groups that would remain constant for the fall. The facilitator asked us to try different ways of listening and responding—sometimes in silence, sometimes only with questions, and sometimes more open and conversational. After each experience of sharing, we came back to the large group and debriefed about the experience. We had a couple of breaks during which people could walk the paths on the beautiful grounds of the retreat center, or just sit and chat. Individual box lunches were served, which I personally prepared as a gift to the teachers. I thought it important to start the year with a gift from me, and the teachers were incredibly grateful. I am still receiving comments on how much they enjoyed their individual gourmet lunches. We learned a second song after lunch. The facilitator provided some photos and postcards for us to choose and invited us to write a brief journal entry about our images of God. We were invited to share our thoughts with the group if we wished. We concluded the day with a worship service. The facilitator provided a liturgy from South India, some of which we read together and some of which was assigned to individual readers.

Small Groups

Faculty and staff members were divided into three groups of seven. This included all teachers (15), my administrative assistant, the food specialists (2), the Rector, the church's children's minister, and me. (All of these people interact with each other to some degree every day with the exception of the Rector. Her participation in

school activities is largely limited to presiding at weekly chapel services. My own interactions with her are more frequent, as we meet from time to time to discuss school issues, attend church staff meetings, and program staff meetings. I offered her the option of participating in small groups and she chose to do so.)

Each group met a total of five times (including the initial small group meeting at the retreat). The same facilitator led each group meeting and generally used the same prompts for discussion with each group. Meetings included some time for silence (sometimes with background music) and some time to talk about a particular theme. For example, the first group meeting after the start of school began with this question: "How have you perceived God's presence in these opening days of school?" Another prompt was an invitation to comment on a short reading. These meetings took place from 8:00 to 8:25 a.m., our normal faculty meeting time. Groups met in a small, privately located conference room with comfortable couches and chairs. A candle was lit prior to the meeting and sometimes small candles were available for people to light individually if they wished. The school day begins at 8:30 a.m., so groups were carefully dismissed on time each week. The group rosters were assigned by me, being careful to assign teaching partners to separate groups, and trying to mix people up according to age levels taught and location within the building (e.g., Primary teachers with Pre-K teachers; upstairs teachers with downstairs teachers).

Faculty Lunches

Lunch was provided for the faculty six times (including the retreat). Tables were set up in one of the parish halls for those who wished to sit and eat together. In prior

years, faculty lunches consisted of teachers ordering from a menu and receiving their own box or bag lunch. In this project, we ordered food in bulk so that teachers all served themselves in the kitchen. The hope was that serving oneself alongside others would tend to encourage eating together as well. Lunches were provided at 12:30 p.m. This is the dismissal time for children who attend the half-day program. Most teachers were able to fix a plate after their children were picked up, but some teachers had recess duty with the full-day children and were not able to sit down and eat with others from 12:30 to 1:00 p.m. I took recess duty for some of the teachers each time in order to make it possible for them to eat together and some parents came in to cover recess duty for the same reason. The final faculty lunch was on an in-service day, so we all went to a nearby restaurant (ordering at the counter), and then sitting together to eat.

Faculty Chapels

Chapel was held for the faculty a total of five times (including the retreat), during the normal faculty meeting slot. The style of worship varied each time with the retreat worship being liturgical in nature. That first chapel was read from the page, and two songs were taught and sung. Two chapels consisted of simple quiet time in the school's chapel. Piano music was played in the background, candles were available to light, reading material was provided (psalms and meditations), and teachers were told to come and stay for as long as they wished. One chapel was held in the church at the high altar and we read Morning Prayer together. The final chapel was a time for optional sharing of "pows and wows," (i.e., something people are finding a challenge at this

particular time of year, and something that is bringing them joy). This service ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Initial Experiences of the Project Activities

The retreat was a relaxed day and provided a foretaste of the sharing activities that we would be engaging in through the fall semester. A humorous, but meaningful moment occurred when the retreat leader quoted from Parker Palmer about how to talk to each other: "No fixing, no saving, no setting each other straight." She gave out small cards with this phrase printed on them to remind us of this rule as we broke off into our groups of two, three, or more. Upon returning from one of these sessions, during the debriefing process, a teacher said, "Can we get t-shirts printed up with this rule on it?" Others chimed in with, "How about lawn signs, coasters, stationery, etc.?" Much laughter ensued, and I thought it significant that they had latched on to this mantra as something needed by the faculty. An issue that I had not anticipated arose, as I became aware that the group was perhaps not trusting the facilitator. I believe that because we were doing a lot of personal sharing, and she was a stranger to the group, they felt a bit cautious about how much to say in front of her. The liturgy at the end of the day did not have a comfortable feel for me, as it was very conventional, quite long, and was not inclusive of other traditions.

The small group in which I participated began the first week's meeting with some general reflections on the start of school and I feared that we were going to fall into the comfortable patterns of talking about the difficulties of the opening days and the inevitable comparing of this year to earlier ones. Yet in a very short period of time, the

conversation had turned quite personal with emotional recounting of challenges individuals were encountering. Some members of the group who had been through similar experiences offered words of comfort and compassion, inviting those who were sharing to say more. Individuals displayed great vulnerability and tears were shed. I was stunned to realize that in 25 minutes we could move past fear and competition to some genuine connectedness, at least regarding these specific issues.

The group had demonstrated what Brené Brown says about a person believing she is flawed and therefore does not fit in (*I Thought It Was Me* 5). A person in the group who was brave enough to share what she perceived as a difference found that the group immediately embraced her and let her know that not only was she not alone, but that others in the group had shared similar experiences.

The facilitator reported that the second group was reticent to talk in their first meeting, but that almost all members lit a candle. When one member of the group expressed pain that she was experiencing at work/school, another member got up and went across the room to embrace her. This experience was also recounted to me by the person doing the sharing, and she found it quite meaningful and comforting. The person who hugged her was someone she never guessed would have done so.

The third group was not eager to talk a lot about the "God" part of the opening of school, but members were happy to talk about the opening of school in general. Conversations within the groups were confidential, so I do not know the specifics of what was shared, although the facilitator generally gave me a report on how well the groups shared and some general themes of conversation.

At the first luncheon, about six people sat down to eat together. All of them expressed how much of a treat it was to have the chance to share a meal with their colleagues. Several people remarked on how rare it was and enjoyable to eat with Camille (my assistant). I took one teacher's duty so she could eat with the others. She was so grateful that she hugged me—something this teacher has rarely, if ever, done. I ate late and thought I was alone, but happened upon two teachers eating in the commons room, so I joined them. We had time to sit and chat and visit in a way we rarely do. I received the following email from one of the teachers that evening: "Thank you for providing lunch for us today and so glad Elizabeth and I could spend time enjoying our lunch together with you !!!!!!"

Before the first faculty chapel, I invited teachers to write down (anonymously) their wishes for how they would like to worship together. I received suggestions from about six people. Several of them mentioned that they would enjoy quiet time for meditation; two asked for quiet music; and one asked for some psalms to read (she added "to myself"). The feedback from this first chapel was overwhelmingly positive. People commented on how the quiet time set a good tone for the rest of the day. They enjoyed the fact that they could experience the chapel in a personally meaningful way by praying, meditating, or just sitting in a quiet space. They were grateful for permission to stay as long (or as briefly) as they liked.

Intermediate Results

Interviews with each faculty member provided helpful information mid-way through the project. Although the interviews began in early November, two members

of the faculty did not schedule an interview with me until December, and then only at my urging. During these faculty interviews I became aware of a level of discomfort with the small groups. Although many people had kind and positive things to say about their groups, the following comments helped me to understand that this was the area teachers were finding most challenging:

1. My last group meeting felt like Sunday School and was not enjoyable. I enjoyed the others though.
2. I'm not a fan.
3. My group doesn't feel comfortable; no personal stuff is brought in. Participation is minimal.
4. Being in an assigned group makes it hard to trust. Self-selected groups might trust each other more. Not everyone feels 100% comfortable with each other.
5. The 8:00 time was challenging. I needed to get to class. The time was too short.
6. Group silences are awkward. Some people have barriers and won't share with this group of people.
7. The 8:00 time is not good. There's too much to get done. All I think about during silence is how much I need to be in my classroom.
8. It's too much to the "God" side.
9. It's great that you've done this, but it is not bringing people together.
10. We needed to get to the next level and the short time did not allow this.

11. I didn't want a therapy group. I'm not going to share my personal, private thoughts with a group; maybe one on one.
12. It was too structured, not a free-flowing conversation. You can't structure what you want to happen.
13. Small groups are not my thing. I like to choose the people I share my innermost things with.

As a result of this feedback, I asked the facilitator to allow some more freedom in what people were asked to talk about. She did so, but reported that the level of sharing did not change significantly.

In addition to the feedback on small groups during the interviews, teachers provided their thoughts on the retreat, lunches, and chapels. One person noted that she had grumbled about having to go to the retreat, but enjoyed it very much after arriving. In fact, all comments about the retreat were positive with one notable exception. A teacher remarked, "Even there, there were detractors. Some experiences were contrary to what a sacred circle is. There is no trust when people are mean-spirited and catty. Who's going to feel safe there?" I was very surprised by her comment, as I had not been aware of any mean-spiritedness at the retreat. Although this discovery was very bothersome, it was the only one of its type and came from a person whose comments in general about all areas of school life are negative.

Likewise, the comments on shared lunches were overwhelmingly positive. One teacher said that this was "the main place where community has happened." Teachers spoke about sitting with someone new each time or opening a time and place for

interaction and dialogue. One teacher said "the last one was a blast!" They were very grateful for parents coming in to cover duties so that they could eat together. In spite of this favor from the parents, one teacher took her lunch and ate alone in her room each time.

The interviews revealed that chapel was well-received. Some people remarked on the enjoyment of quiet or music, while some enjoyed Morning Prayer and readings. Many talked about having time to reflect and about the "beautiful way to start the day." There were a few negative comments about the timing, as teachers felt they should be in their rooms preparing for the day. The final chapel, when teachers shared "pows and wows" (challenges and celebrations), was meaningful for many. One person said that she has been praying for people based on what they shared. She saw and felt others' pain. Another said she enjoyed chapel because "I get to light a candle," and "I have my own prayer on my phone I like to use; it's a prayer to St. Joseph."

The interviews were helpful as the questions were open-ended and people said as little or as much as they wished. Because they were face-to-face, the responses may have been skewed in a positive direction, as teachers may not have felt comfortable complaining to me in person about something they knew I cared about and had high hopes for. I heard the negative comments clearly, though, and was surprised at the depth of feeling expressed by some. I was disappointed in the initial outcomes and confused about how the project could be having an effect that seemed to be counter to its purpose.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Survey Results

At the end of the project, teachers were asked to complete a follow-up survey (see Appendix H). The first part of this survey contained the same eight questions asked in the original survey. The second part asked teachers to rate whether the project activities had changed their sense of our community, and whether they had been spiritually nurtured. Finally, they were asked to comment on each activity and on the retreat.

The results of the two surveys follow. The first number in each block represents responses to the survey conducted in August; the second number represents responses to the survey conducted in December.

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The sense of community among our faculty and staff is strong.	0/2	16/10	0/0	3/7	0/0
CCEP faculty and staff members are likely to help one another when the need arises.	9/5	10/12	0/1	0/1	0/0
My coworkers and I have a good working relationship.	11/7	8/11	0/0	0/1	0/0

Faculty and staff members treat each other with respect.	3/2	14/12	1/1	1/4	0/0
This school gives attention to my spiritual needs.	12/9	4/7	3/3	0/0	0/0
I am growing spiritually as a result of working in this school.	5/5	10/5	3/8	1/1	0/0
Our faculty lunches enhance our sense of community.	13/7	4/6	1/4	1/2	0/0
This school positively impacts my life.	13/11	6/5	0/3	0	0
Total	66/47	72/58	8/16	6/15	0/0
The following questions were asked only in the second survey.					
Our small group meetings this fall have strengthened our community.	/4	/4	/4	/4	/3
Our faculty lunches this fall have strengthened our community.	/7	/5	/7	/0	/0
Our faculty chapels this fall have strengthened our community.	/0	/9	/6	/3	/1
Total	/11	/18	/15	/7	/3

It should be noted that one teacher, who was hired in late August, did not complete the initial survey, but did participate in the follow-up survey. My interview with her in November revealed that she was surprised and disappointed in the level of community she was finding here. Her participation in the follow-up survey may have had a small effect on the negative results seen here.

The post-project survey completed by parents allowed a comparison of their current impressions of faculty community and spiritual engagement with the impressions held at the beginning of the project. Their responses are shown here. (15 parents were polled each time; 10 parents responded to the first survey, and 9 responded to the second survey. Because responses were anonymous, it is unclear whether the respondents to the follow-up survey were the same parents who responded to the first survey.) The first number in each block represents responses to the survey conducted in September; the second number represents responses to the survey conducted in December.

Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The teachers at CCEP seem happy in their work	7/8	2/1	0/0	0/0	1/0
The teachers at CCEP seem to work well with one another	8/7	1/2	1/0	0/0	0/0
The teachers at CCEP embrace the spiritual component of the school program—chapel,	8/7	1/1	0/1	0/0	1/0

prayers, Godly Play, etc.					
The teachers at CCEP foster the school's Episcopal identity in the classroom	6/6	1/2	2/1	0/0	1/0

In the faculty survey, the decrease in positive ratings of the faculty and staff community and spiritual nurture experienced were surprising, but had been hinted at during the interviews. The number of people who responded positively to the sense of community declined from 16 to 12 and the number of negative responses rose from 3 to 7. A pattern of decreased positive responses occurred in all other questions as well, but in a less dramatic way. These trends might lead one to suspect that the project interventions *caused* a weaker community and worked *against* the spiritual nurture attempted. That conclusion must be considered, along with several other possibilities.

Survey Analysis

I will present four independent interpretations of the survey results.

1. As stated above, the interventions *caused* a weaker community and *decreased* spiritual nurture.
2. Because we *focused* on community and spiritual nurture this fall, people became more *aware* of the weak community and spiritual nurture that actually exist.
3. The community became weaker and spiritual nurture declined *in spite of* the interventions, and perhaps because of unrelated mitigating factors.
4. The initial survey was conducted in the summer when teachers were not at school experiencing the day to day connections with their colleagues. The

follow-up survey came during the school year. Survey results could have been skewed by these different conditions.

It is impossible to know to what extent the project interventions actually caused a weaker community.[6] The project, while carefully designed, did not control for all possible independent variables that may have impacted the sense of community (dependent variable), such as the condition of participants' personal lives, or parental demands on teachers during the project. It is also important to distinguish between correlation and causation. If the project did cause a weaker community, it would likely be the result of faculty members feeling coerced into participation in the activities. Their resentment, however, would properly be directed at me, as I am the one that required their attendance, yet I experienced almost none. How resentment toward me might have affected their relationships with others is not clear. Perhaps teachers took the opportunity to express their distaste for the project by responding in negative ways on the survey. This would be quite disappointing, in that it does not really speak to the sense of open, honest community that the survey attempted to measure.

With regard to spiritual nurture, the project clearly provided more intentional opportunities for prayer and worship than have ever been experienced within the

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[6] The survey asked teachers to rate the community's strength, but did not define what a strong community might look like. This left each teacher to interpret the adjective for herself. In conversations with teachers, most all indicated that they thought a strong community was one in which members treated each other kindly and with respect. A weak community, then, would presumably be a place where kindness and respect were not practiced.

school. It is more likely that a resistance to any spiritual nurture in the workplace or to the specific spiritual opportunities offered is being expressed here, and perhaps some discomfort with the unfamiliar. A larger negative shift was evident in responses to, "I am growing spiritually as a result of working in this school" than in the statement, "This school gives attention to my spiritual needs" perhaps as if to say, "You offered me some spiritual practices, but they didn't help me grow" (in the time period I am assessing).

Awareness of community, or lack thereof, was certainly part of the learning experienced by me and by the teachers this fall. Because they knew that a stronger community was the desired outcome of my project, the possibility exists that they did a better job of assessing true community in the follow-up survey. Likewise, the awareness of where we are as a spiritual community might have increased and become more grounded through the course of the project, making the follow-up survey a more reliable measure.

Another possible explanation of the weaker sense of community and spiritual nurture may be that these aspects of our community declined in spite of the project interventions. David Forbes states that a school is re-created every year when teachers and students return (Forbes). It is true that some change of personnel occurred between the last school year and this one, with one teacher being dismissed, two others moving away, and a new teacher added. A few classrooms were also rearranged and reassigned. Almost every teacher in the school received either a new teaching partner or a new classroom or both. These changes certainly caused a level of disruption for returning teachers, and a different way of relating to others on a day-to-day basis for a

number of the staff. Even without the implementation of the project activities, community may have still declined.

The original survey of faculty and staff was completed in July and August of 2015. Most all teachers were off for the summer, vacationing or spending time at home with family. It would make sense that the staff felt more relaxed about school and their coworkers when this survey was conducted. Daniel Heischman writes that, "There is a freshness to the new academic year, with faculty feeling idealistic—some of those problems that seemed intractable last spring are now a thing of the past—as well as reinvigorated by the summer months" (Heischman). The follow-up survey was sent out on the last day of school before the Christmas vacation. To say that teachers were feeling stressed is an understatement. Many Christmas activities were occurring that week—pageants, parties, family events, removal of classroom decorations as the children walked out the door, etc. This list does not include the personal stresses of the holidays that many people experience at this time of year, such as family expectations, tight schedules, travels, and emotional burdens. Their responses to the second survey may have been influenced by these kinds of stressful themes.

An additional way of interpreting the data, which gives some credence to all of the above explanations, is to look at Scott Peck's progression or sequence of forming true community, which begins with pseudocommunity and moves next to the stage of chaos. Did this group begin the process as a pseudocommunity? Are they moving through Peck's stages? Is chaos where we are now?

Pseudocommunity is that stage where a group pretends to be a community. They treat each other politely and with respect, at least on the surface. They say they are a community. Individual differences are suppressed and conflict is avoided (rather than addressed and resolved) (Peck 88-89). Our teachers certainly have the pseudocommunity act mastered. Many days go by with no conflict, laughter in the hallways, and the signing of birthday cards for one another. When a teacher appears at my door to make a complaint, however, it is often a familiar one. Lynn isn't sharing responsibilities; Rachel is gossiping in a hurtful way; Maggie is being harsh with the children; Louisa won't share; Mary and Amanda are telling me how to run my classroom. Combing through old employee files, I have discovered that my predecessor as Head of School addressed some of these very same issues with the same employees. They are able to keep differences hidden for a while, but they eventually surface once again.

If we have moved from the pseudocommunity stage to the chaotic stage, could it be the project interventions that caused this movement (progress, as Peck would say)? Have the activities in which we have engaged this fall brought our individual differences to the surface? Are we ready to acknowledge the differences, something which is necessary to move to Peck's next stage of community: *emptiness*? John P. Kotter concurs with Peck about changes requiring a certain sequence of phases. Although Kotter is referring to changes in business practices, I believe his comments are on the mark with regard to any change being attempted in an organization: "The most general lesson to be learned…is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in

total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result" (93).

My administrative assistant, Camille, provided a great deal of insight into the stage of community at which we find ourselves at the conclusion of the project. She is in the unique position of unofficial "listener" to the faculty. Many confide in her and she generally has a good sense of what the community is feeling at any point in time. She proposed that people have been "stirred" as a result of the project. She explained that term by saying that many are feeling uncomfortable because going deeper inside themselves is a fearful exercise. Nevertheless, they have learned something about their colleagues and some people have softened their way of relating to those who have shared. She noted that "the patient people are more patient." The learning she took away from the project was this: "We put on smiles but we saw that people are hurting." She stated that without the chapels, lunches, and small groups, we simply wouldn't connect with one another. Her insights hinted at movement within the community. Being "stirred" implies we are not stagnant, and it could be that we are being stirred by what David Gortner calls a "God-given restlessness" (34).

Negotiation and Conflict

Three members of the faculty can be characterized as "resistors" to the project, with a fourth member tending more toward "skeptical." Although 15 staff members demonstrated buy-in to the project, it is hard not to focus on the three that resisted. Their response to the project became a process of negotiation. I wanted them to become part of a larger faculty community, but by sharing my goals with them, the

"resistors" saw this as an opportunity to say no. For me, it felt as if they were saying, "If you want us to be a better community, that will require that I change, and I don't think I need to change or I don't want to change. In fact, I resent the implication that there is something wrong with the way I relate to others at work."

Bernard Mayer points out that framing something in terms of a negotiation automatically implies that there will be winners and losers (211). Fisher and Ury describe this negotiation as a "game" in which the purpose "becomes scoring points, confirming negative impressions, and apportioning blame at the expense of the substantive interests of both parties" (Chapter 2). If members of the group decide to relate to each other in new and improved ways, then I win a point; if they refuse, I lose the point. My negative impressions of how faculty members currently relate to one another are confirmed when I see no efforts being made to change. Internally, I blame those who choose not to work at relationships and I experience them as blaming me for trying to force them to see their workplace as anything more than just that. The act of blaming wipes out any possibility of substantive interests being realized.

As Mayer notes, however, negotiations do not always involve a "fixed pie" where one party's win means that less satisfaction is available for the other party. The possibility may exist for all parties to have their needs met, even if not fully. My sense that our staff would benefit from the improvement of our community does not mean that others, who do not agree, will lose something valuable if an improved community is realized. In fact, I hope for quite the opposite: a stronger community which is

appreciated and enjoyed by everyone. Mayer would call this an integrative solution, where what is available for everyone is increased (219).

Some faculty members were able to see the project as a gift, i.e., something being offered without any cost to them. They perceived the building up of our community as a positive addition to their professional lives and accepted the opportunities to worship together and to share stories and meals as a means of living together richly. Without naming it as such, they practiced an ideology of abundance, unlike some of their peers who seemed to feel that getting something means giving something up. This "fixed pie" mentality grows out an ideology of scarcity: "There will never be enough to go around, so I need to hold on to what I have." Those who felt that they would be required to give something up did not trust that the value of what they were receiving was equal to anything they might need to give. Sadly, this is a reflection of the possessiveness that is characteristic of a number of teachers. In the process of seeing the project as a negotiation, they missed an opportunity to receive a gift.

Fisher and Ury's advice for negotiating agreements falls short when applied to a people problem. They advocate separating the people from the problem and developing relationships with the "other side" in advance so that negotiations are more likely to succeed. In my project, it was the very developing of relationships that was the problem. When Fisher and Ury suggest getting to know the other side, learning their likes and dislikes, and finding time to chat, they are proposing that this is the easy part;

negotiating agreements will be facilitated by such efforts (Chapter 2). This project showed that the "people" part of the problem is not always easily solved.

Conflict Avoidance

The problem of living in a weak community (or as Peck would have called it, a pseudocommunity) provided the rationale for my project. I believed that others wished to address the problem too. This conclusion was drawn from the many complaints I heard regarding how staff members related to one another, or how people felt hurt, dismissed, or angry because of the ways in which they had been spoken to. (These complaints were never made publicly.) I also listened to the group of teachers who spoke openly about their desire for us to live out our Episcopal identity more intentionally and effectively. (In retrospect, I see that it makes sense for those who wish to see change to express this desire to me, while those who were happy with the status quo to say nothing.) My intervention strategies were designed, in part, to address the frequent conflicts present in our community, both the visible and invisible. It took some time for me to become aware of the avoidance of conflict strategies employed by many members of the staff. Bernard Mayer classifies avoidance strategies according to eight different characteristics: aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, hopelessness, use of surrogates, denial, premature problem solving, and folding (44-46). Following are some examples of how each of these strategies was employed by staff members:

Aggressive avoidance: One employee barks orders at colleagues she considers to be weaker, younger, or not likely to respond. She does not behave similarly with colleagues her own age or with someone who is likely to engage with her over an issue.

Passive avoidance: Several employees walk away from conflict and in many cases I have not even learned of the situation until months or years later. A young teacher confided in me how small she had been made to feel by her teaching partner in her former classroom, where she had worked for two years. She was only willing to talk about this when she could express how happy she was with her new teaching partner. Another teacher described a conflict in which the other party walked away from a difficult conversation, saying "whatever…" as she disappeared into her classroom.

Passive-aggressive avoidance: A teacher frequently writes me sarcastic or mean-spirited emails from home that she is unwilling to further discuss face-to-face. She has written similar notes to colleagues but then says she is "over it" when confronted. She is also famous in the community for her eye-rolling. I have observed this behavior in faculty meetings as others are talking, and in chapel. Moreover, when a teacher comes to me to complain about a colleague, that teacher is rarely willing to confront the colleague herself. She is hoping that I will do so on her behalf.

Hopelessness: A number of people have written off the conflicts in the community by saying, "Well, what do you expect from a staff of all women?" Or, "It's always been this way; I don't think it will ever change."

Use of surrogates: Sometimes complaints come to me through an indirect route. A teacher will express how another teacher has been insulted or treated badly. She generally wants me to address the issue with the offender, making this issue between two people into an issue involving four. A teacher who is not assertive might depend upon a more outspoken colleague to take up her cause.

Denial: One teacher has told me how she just goes into her room and closes the door because, "When I'm in my room, the world is fine; I just don't come out." She is not fully denying that a problem exists, but her tactics are a way of pretending that "the world is fine."

Premature Problem Solving: I have often addressed conflicts between two individuals without allowing time for a full exploration of the issues at play, which, according to Mayer, could include feelings, values, significant expressive elements, and more deeply entrenched issues (45-46). I have brought parties together and allowed each to talk and then created a solution that was not necessarily acceptable to all, but which was accepted out of deference to me. Such solutions are rarely enduring.

Folding: Surprisingly, the same employee described above as being aggressive is quick to fold when confronted by me. "Yes, I know, you're right; I need to change" is a typical response when I have brought her inappropriate behavior to her attention. Yet, sadly, her behavior doesn't change. Likewise, the teacher who writes mean-spirited emails insists "it's no big deal," quickly apologizes when questioned about them, and resumes her former behavior.

These forms of avoiding conflict provide examples of Peck's pseudocommunity, where members of a group are not ready to confront their differences. It feels safe for them to tell me about conflicts but they are unwilling to discuss them openly, either with the person with whom they are experiencing conflict, or in small groups. The awkward silences experienced in some of the small group meetings may be a result of this unwillingness to discuss differences.

Peck points out that the stage of chaos is not necessarily a bad place. It generally means that members have chosen to stay together, even while they struggle. They recognize that they are not in a healthy place but that they need to move beyond their conflicts. He describes this as hope. If group members were totally comfortable with staying where they are, no movement toward community would be possible (93-94). Even when teachers bring their complaints to me, few of them seem hopeless. They are looking for a solution, which, in my view, communicates optimism and a commitment to stay together.

While it is easy to focus on the negative comments and ratings of the surveys and interviews, one must also appreciate the positive outcomes of these instruments. Taken as a whole, more people are experiencing a strong sense of community than are not. In the follow-up survey, those who "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" that our community is strong outnumber those who feel that it is weak by a margin of 12 to 7. Likewise, those who say that faculty members are likely to help one another when the need arises outnumber those who do not by a margin of 17 to 1. The seeming contradiction between these two items may represent what Fred Dervin and Mari Korpela call the imagined and concrete aspects of the construction of a community, which they say are both significant (9). We think and say that we are one kind of community, but our concrete actions demonstrate a stronger one. Another survey item supports this interpretation as well: The number of teachers agreeing that "My co-workers and I have a good working relationship" is 18, while only one disagrees.

Given the timing of the first and second surveys, as well as the sense that teachers were rating a different community in December than the one they rated in August, I am inclined to place more faith in the interviews conducted in November, at least with regard to the effectiveness of the project activities. Gravenkemper notes that depending on hard data only may result in telling a partial story and could also result in measuring only the lagging indicators (205). The questions asked in the interviews were specifically about the individual teachers' responses to the interventions and gave a fuller picture of how the project was being received at that time.

Survey Comments

In addition to the Likert items on the follow-up survey, participants were asked to comment on the retreat, small groups, lunches, and chapels. The retreat received positive comments from 9 of the 19 respondents, while 6 comments were negative. Other comments were either neutral or did not specifically address the retreat. Those who enjoyed the retreat or gained something of value spoke mainly of the opportunity to learn something new about their colleagues and to strengthen their relationships. Those who offered negative responses focused on discomfort in sharing and lacking a sense of safety because of the attitudes of some colleagues. One person spoke about the emotional aspect of the day being difficult, as one-on-one conversations went on too long for people who were not willing to share openly. Several people spoke about the day being too long. Two people remarked briefly: "not remotely my thing" and "did not enjoy it."

When asked about the small group experience, the number of positive comments was roughly equal to the number of negative ones (provided on pp 38-39). Positive responses included the following:

1. It's nice to come in and be silent because the morning can be frantic.
2. The silence was awkward at first, but now I think, "This is nice."
3. I loved the small group experience.
4. I enjoyed having different people in my group that I don't often connect with.
5. I like finding out about other teachers.
6. The small groups are good; it takes time to build trust.
7. I'm sad that the groups aren't continuing.
8. Seeing where others are coming from is a good thing.
9. We had a great group with no judgment.
10. I get to sit and talk with people I don't normally see.
11. I've developed new relationships.
12. I've connected with people more deeply.

Responses which were negative provided an impetus to modify the small group topics and means of facilitation for the last two meetings.

The comments regarding shared lunches were overwhelmingly positive. The few complaints centered on the logistics of arranging for all teachers to be together simultaneously. Only one teacher addressed the tension of being together at lunch time. She said, "There's always push-back on these occasions—an energy when we're together that's negative." Having not heard this sentiment from any others, I believe

this to be something experienced primarily by her. Several respondents observed that one teacher always took her lunch back to her room to eat alone. When we went off-campus for lunch, a few opted out because of scheduling difficulties, or not feeling well, but those who went remarked repeatedly on how enjoyable the experience was.

I expected chapel to be the place where most resistance occurred, but this was not the case. Even those teachers who are not regular church-goers had some positive things to say about their enjoyment of the quiet, meditative times, the opportunity to visit "the big church," and the saying of Morning Prayer. The sharing of "pows and wows" at the final chapel was enjoyed by many. (In a sense, this service provided a group experience of sharing that I had hoped for in the smaller groups.) Complaints centered largely on the time of day (when "I needed to be in my room"). One person felt that requiring people to be there defeated the purpose, although she was a person that welcomed the opportunity for herself. Finally, the questions on the survey that asked teachers to rate whether the project interventions had strengthened our community were mostly aligned with what I had heard in the survey comments. Roughly equal numbers across the scale were provided in response to the effectiveness of small groups in strengthening our community. With regard to lunches, the ratings were more positive; no one disagreed with the statement that the faculty lunches were strengthening our community, although seven were neutral. Faculty chapels were rated more positively than negatively (9 to 4) with 6 neutral responses. Totaling all responses to the effectiveness of the interventions, 29 positive responses were given versus 10 negative ones; 15 were neutral.

Looking at Results Using Kirkpatrick's Four Levels

Kirkpatrick's *Implementing the Four Levels: A Practical Guide for Effective Evaluation of Training Programs* provides some helpful strategies for evaluating the project's outcomes. Although my project was not definitively about training, it was certainly about changing behaviors and attitudes. The sequence of evaluating programs presented in this book offers some concrete ways of judging whether we have succeeded.

First, the Kirkpatricks recommend soliciting *reaction* from trainees. In my case, this was accomplished through my interview questions to the teachers in November: "How are these activities going for you?" "Do you have feedback for me?" I also spoke with the facilitator of the small groups after each session and asked her for feedback on participation and engagement in the small groups as she perceived them. As noted above, some adjustments were made to the practices in small groups based on the reactions that were shared with me. Moreover, having learned from many faculty members in the interviews how much they enjoyed the quiet, meditative chapel services, I planned the remaining services to include this kind of experience. My own reaction to the chapel service at the retreat (from South India) was not a positive one, as I sensed discomfort from the participants in this rather structured, and very Christian liturgy. (It included a creed and a confession.) This informed how I planned the chapels that were conducted on campus, as I generally tried to use Psalms and inclusive readings and meditations going forward. I continued to work throughout the semester to bring in more parents to cover duties for teachers so that they could sit and eat

together. I achieved 100% coverage for the last two lunches, allowing everyone who wished to do so the opportunity to eat together. I also moved the location of one of the lunches from the parish hall to the classroom area in order to make it easier for teachers to take a few minutes to be together while still accomplishing what they needed to do to prepare for the afternoon. All of the reactions that were captured helped me to modify and improve the ways in which the project unfolded.

Kirkpatrick's Level 2 is about measuring learning. The learning that needed to take place in this project takes on a few different characteristics. First, learning about one another was a key goal, and many teachers mentioned this as something they were enjoying. They were learning about people with whom they do not usually engage—teachers on a different floor or of a different age level. They learned about each other's pain. They also learned something about our Episcopal identity, as we worshipped in a number of different ways, trying to honor the different traditions of the teachers and making the experience comfortable and meaningful for those who are not Christian. A pre- and post-project survey was administered, which did not measure learning, but rather attitudes. It encouraged teachers to reflect on our community and on our common spiritual life. It was not learning that was expressed in the surveys, but their sense of awareness was probed. Beyond the survey, teachers have used "community" in their vocabulary a great deal, both during the project, and in the time since the project ended. They have provided feedback to me on a number of different issues by talking about whether we are successfully building community. For example, an in-service training in February (two months after the project ended) was about *Conscious*

Teaching: Bringing Mindfulness into the Classroom to Help Students and Teachers Thrive, and a number of teachers mentioned how timely this training was, given our efforts to deepen relationships and practice self-care. I believe that this demonstrates an awareness of community that reflects learning.

Level 3 in Kirkpatrick's taxonomy is the measurement of changes in behavior. As I have reflected on how members of our community might be changing their behaviors with one another, I made a list of instances in the fall semester of teachers being short with one another or with me, complaining about one another, having confrontations, etc. I am not aware of all interactions in the school, but of those on my list, it is striking that most of these occurred in the early part of the semester. More recently, we seem to be in a better place with our behaviors. In spite of the heavy load surrounding Green Show[7] and Christmas, teachers have generally limited their complaints to the work or to conditions in the building, and have not lashed out at one another. Since the project ended, the only issues I have noted concerning how teachers are treating one another have been unkind statements from three teachers who resisted the community-building efforts from the beginning. No one has come to my door specifically to complain about

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[7] The Green Show is a long-running (90+ years) outreach event run by Christ Church which requires the use of our classrooms. Until 2013, we closed the school for an entire week and dismantled our classrooms to the bare walls in order to accommodate the Green Show. For the last two years, we have negotiated a schedule which allows us to remain open for 2.5 days during Green Show week, but we are still required to take down all items on the walls and to store furniture in bathrooms, closets, workrooms, offices, etc.

others; this is a new and very encouraging development. The parents who completed the pre- and post-project surveys provided insight into observed behaviors and the changes they perceived over the life of the project.

Finally, the Kirkpatricks advise the measurement of outcomes. This is the most difficult area to assess using their model because we are not looking at costs, profits, productivity, or measurable tangible benefits. A successful outcome for CCEP is an organization that attends to the soul, as Benefiel puts it. It is a healthy place where individuals are nurtured and community forms. It is demonstrated through our behaviors, but also has a sense of safety and wholeness. I believe that our follow-up survey can provide a glimpse into whether this "sense" is present. Taken as a whole, it provides teachers' overall opinion on what CCEP feels like as a place to work. It asks for responses related to community, respect, helpfulness, working relationships, growth, spiritual nurture, and the positive impact of the school. Remarkably, the survey shows 105 overall positive responses versus 15 negative ones. Neutral responses total 16. Although the small group meetings and chapel services were not optional activities, I believe it is significant that very few absences occurred. Twenty-one teachers, participating in five small group meetings each, provided 105 opportunities for attendance. We had only six absences during the entire scope of the project. Although lunches were optional, most everyone partook of the shared food, even when they could not sit down to eat together. Each shared meal garnered more and more group participation, in which people chose to sit and eat together. One teacher continued to take her food back to her room to eat alone throughout the project.

Because community comprises human beings who grow and change and experience all kinds of life events, it is a living organism that will never stay in one place or condition. It will be important to continue to evaluate behaviors, allow time for new habits to develop, and adjust the ways in which we address needs. Setting goals, as a group, for desired outcomes will help to guide future community-building practices.

Analysis of Outcomes

The Issue of Time

Before conducting the follow-up survey at the conclusion of the project, I had already discerned that time—especially the time of day set aside for the project activities—was problematic for many. Just as in the broader world, the complaint "I don't have enough time!" is heard frequently during the school day. Teachers often speak of not having enough time with their children: "How can we have meaningful classroom activities and enough time outdoors when we have to go to music and P.E. and chapel, all in one morning?" Just as frequently, they speak of the time they need without children: "I have so much prep work to do in the mornings, I can't have children arriving earlier than 8:30." Or they complain about not being able to depart from school early enough: "That family was late picking up their child again." Sometimes complaints are about time on the surface, but are really just opportunities to throw a colleague under the bus: "My class didn't have enough time on the playground today because the Angels class stayed outside for an hour." They speak of not having enough time for sleep, for housekeeping, for helping their children with homework, or just relaxing.

The very *rhythm* of our week is centered on schedules, rhythm being a word about how time passes—the long and short of it. Some children attend three days a week, some five; some stay half-days and some stay full-days; children arrive for early-birds, or stay for after-care. Teachers work various schedules of days and hours. Life has a rhythm, both in school and out, and interruptions to the rhythm are jarring and unwelcome.

When the schedule for the thesis project activities was distributed at the retreat, concern was immediately expressed about how we would have time for these gatherings. The rhythm of the day was being interrupted. Even though the introductory letter to the faculty explained that we would devote our faculty meeting times (Thursday mornings from 8:00 to 8:25) to our small groups and faculty chapel services, a few teachers offered the opinion that we *need* our faculty meetings. "How will we communicate? How will we have a chance to discuss things?" I tried to reassure the faculty that we would communicate in writing and if we needed a face-to-face meeting, we would call one. At the end of the retreat, the facilitator spoke to me about the concern she heard expressed. Not knowing the teachers personally, she noted, "I sensed one person was truly concerned about the faculty meetings and another was just being prickly." This turned out to be a prescient comment.

Teachers have often complained about faculty meetings and rejoice when they are occasionally canceled. (I believe this is because days without faculty meetings seem to have a more relaxed start.) I thought that giving them time to meet for conversation or to have a chapel service together would be more welcome than the meetings they

appeared not to enjoy. These would be "Sabbaths," so to speak, when they could step away from their normal schedules and duties and rest. I could not have been more wrong. A large number of teachers insisted that they could not enjoy the small groups or chapels when they needed to be in their rooms preparing for the day. Paradoxically, if we had been in a normal faculty meeting, they would not have been in their rooms. These complaints were about something else.

I perceived these early morning meetings to be Sabbath because they were about refraining from work. The teachers would have no responsibilities at this time other than presence. But traditionally, the Jewish Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, although restful and joyful, has certain expectations for rituals and activities—lighting candles, sharing a meal, saying traditional prayers, and enjoying a festive time. Dorothy C. Bass proposes that in order to experience the goodness of the Sabbath, you must enter into its activities: "To find Sabbath peace, you must keep the Sabbath holy" (81). Entering into the project activities was possible for some, but others resisted and insisted that the problem was all about time.

The discomfort with sharing stories in small groups or the resistance to the project in general meant that the gift of Sabbath was not received by some. Happily, some were able to enter into the peace and joy of the time together, offering feedback such as, "It's nice to come in and be silent because the morning can be frantic," and, "We had a great group with no judgment." Such comments reflected an acceptance of the gift of Sabbath. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "It is for the law to clear the path; it is for the soul to sense the spirit" (qtd. in Bass 81). I cleared the path by making the

time available; some souls indeed did sense the spirit by entering into the space that had been opened.

The tyranny of time works against us in finding new ways to create community. Unless we spend time together, connections are unlikely. If we do not devote time to worship, our spiritual nurture will need to come in some other form. As we move forward and explore how to keep the community-building efforts alive, the problem of time (and its corollary, choice) will have to be considered. Optional gatherings are likely to attract those who have already accepted the gift of Sabbath time, while allowing those for whom connections are not a priority to choose to be elsewhere. Nevertheless, allowing this choice takes away the feeling of being forced to participate and perhaps, in time, more will begin to see this as a gift.

A Leader's Role in Nurturing Soul at Work

The organizations described by Margaret Benefiel in *Soul at Work* that are successful in keeping their "souls thriving" do this in the following ways:

1. they attend to soul in their official documents,
2. they hire for congruence with their mission,
3. they devote time and attention to nurturing organizational soul,
4. they dedicate personnel to the task, and
5. they create specific structures and processes that nurture the soul of the organization (149-150).

These organizational characteristics are developed largely through leadership. In a small preschool, such as CCEP, a leader wears many hats and few staff members are

available or equipped to see that each of these actions happen. Therefore, in addition to admissions and enrollment, curriculum design, scheduling, hiring, marketing, communication, and other tasks, it generally falls to me to "attend to soul" in the organization. In my vision for the future, more people will be engaged, providing leadership that will improve our sense of community and spiritual nurture of individuals.

All of the "many hats" listed above are important for the school to survive and thrive, and to carry out its mission, but I believe that hiring the right people—hiring for congruence with mission—will have a large impact on how successful a leader will be in the other areas. Without a staff that is committed to the mission, the school may lose its focus and identity, i.e., survive without thriving, and be a Christian school in name only.

After hiring the "right people," an effective leader must provide the vision and tools that make it possible for these people to carry out the mission of the school. In the execution of this project, conveying what a community will look and feel like (the vision) and providing opportunities for teachers to practice and experience community (the tools) are essential components of the leader's job description. For the vision to be embraced by those who will be affected by it or expected to advance it, conversations need to happen with each of them. Kotter advocates discussing with each employee during his/her performance review, how that person is helping or undermining the vision (96).

Thirdly, an effective leader attends to her own spiritual grounding, according to Benefiel. She believes that the organizations and companies described in *Soul at Work*

have been able to integrate spirituality into the workplace because of their leaders' own attention to their inner lives (146). Benefiel names individual spiritual practices and spiritual community as the key ways in which leaders "stay in touch with their spiritual center and their moral compass" and argues that these need to be experienced both inside and outside the workplace (147).

Benefiel writes about Southwest Airlines as an example of a fun work environment.[8] In fact she attributes the success of the company to fun people doing fun things and to "fun, caring relationships—between top management and employees, among employees, and between employees and customers" (25). It is evident that Southwest hires people who can support this desired atmosphere of fun and who can form caring relationships. What can be learned from Southwest's hiring practices?

The first step in hiring the right people is to know the kind of atmosphere that is desired. Although community is defined in many ways, it is clearly about the ways people relate to each other. In the context of this project, people are being encouraged to relate to one another in positive ways. Should this affect the hiring practices of the school? Of Benefiel's five characteristics of organizations whose souls are thriving (listed above), "hiring for congruence with their mission" stands out as an area where we have sometimes failed. Because I am responsible for hiring at CCEP, I bear the responsibility for ensuring that anyone added to our staff embraces the mission of creating community and honoring and nurturing children in the Episcopal tradition.

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[8] Benefiel describes Southwest's culture as one of "encouraging creativity, joy, passion, teamwork, and *esprit de corps*" (65). These characteristics may reflect what Southwest calls "fun."

Steve Gravenkemper states that community is created and developed when the right individuals are attracted and persuaded to embrace it (203). I have hired eight of the eighteen people who currently report to me. This includes two food specialists and six teachers. The employees I have identified as resistors to the project and the one I have characterized as a skeptic, are people who were hired by one of my two predecessors. Their tenure at the school is long, arriving in the first or second year of the school's existence (2006 or 2007). While I do not believe that employees hired by me were receptive to the project only because they were my hirees, I must consider the possibility that those not hired by me resisted the project for reasons rooted in their history. Five current members of the faculty shared the tentative start-up years of the school when the first Head of School resigned on opening day, and two interim Heads led the school in quick succession. These experiences certainly informed their relationship with the school's administration. It may have compromised trust or created a bond based on surviving an ordeal together, which those of us who came later could not understand. Brené Brown writes that a fear of scarcity can be the result of having experienced too much together, and "rather than coming together to heal...we're angry and scared and at each other's throats" (Daring Greatly 27). The persistence of a powerful memory can prevent us from inhabiting the present and looking toward the future, as Constance Fitzgerald notes in a discussion of John of the Cross' ideas about *purification of memory*. If we reside in our memories, we limit our horizons and can reach an impasse—the inability to move forward until a barrier is lifted (Fitzgerald). It is possible that a barrier based on having survived the school's earliest years and not being

able to share that memory and experience with latecomers has been erected by those who are resistant to this project. Moreover, two members of this group were candidates for the position of Head of School when I was hired and may harbor resentment toward me, even these five years later. (It should be noted, though, that one of these candidates fully embraced the community-building efforts.)

The faculty Christmas party in December 2015 was, as always, held in the home of a faculty member and consisted of a potluck dinner, a gift exchange, and fun conversation and sharing. Only 10 of the 19 invitees attended, but those who participated agreed that it was one of the most fun times the group has had together. People ate, exchanged gifts, laughed long and hard, and stayed late. The enjoyment experienced by this group helped me to understand that a self-selected community of workplace colleagues is very different than the full faculty being required to be somewhere together. The social nature of the event was, of course, also in play here. No work was waiting in the classroom and people were relaxed and in the holiday spirit. Nevertheless, among the people who chose to attend the party, all were on board with the community-building efforts of the thesis project.

Establishing trust among CCEP's employees is one way of increasing the likelihood of a successful community-building effort. We need to trust one another in order to facilitate cooperation, develop an open school culture, and promote group cohesiveness (Hoy 182). Trust involves risk-taking and vulnerability (Hoy 183), something for which the long-tenured teachers may have needed to gauge their tolerance upon my arrival. Being vulnerable, Brown points out, requires sharing feelings

and experiences "with those who have earned the right to hear them," something I may still need to prove. Mutuality is a characteristic of vulnerability, but boundaries are another (*Daring Greatly* 45). Recall Rilke's description of bordering, protecting, and saluting another's solitude (Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness* 64). Sharing—yes, but with boundaries and protection, would result in the vulnerability that builds trust, and it seems that not all teachers were ready for this step.

Whatever the reason for resisting the efforts to build community and provide spiritual nurture, such behavior is lacking congruence with our mission, and even opposes it. Trust, either in me or in their colleagues, seems to be lacking.

Beyond hiring, a leader needs to communicate a vision and provide the tools to realize the vision. Prior to this project, the faculty and I discussed our mission statement a few times, usually in the context of an in-service session. The mission can be recited by most members, with some needing a bit of prompting. Knowing the mission, however, is only the beginning of understanding a vision (mine, in this case) for how we can accomplish the mission. I attempted to provide this vision when I introduced the thesis project to the faculty. In a letter to them dated July 15, 2015 (see Appendix A), I pointed out that the planned project grew out of conversations I had had with some of them about our spiritual life and our community, as well as my own sense of how we might become closer as a faculty and staff community. I made clear the intention to provide some nurture for their own spiritual journey. The three basic practices of the project were described—sharing stories, sharing meals, sharing worship—and I reassured them that the project was not intended to convert anyone or to teach

religious doctrine. I intentionally drew attention to a central purpose being my desire to become the kind of leader who could help them realize their fullness and integrity as a human being, teacher, and spiritual person. The letter explained the scheduling of the project activities and addressed concerns that I expected might be present regarding their participation. I concluded with a paragraph about why I wanted to do this project:

> It grows out of my love and respect for you as teachers and colleagues. I want to work with you to create a community marked by peace and generosity, a community in which we can each be an integrated person who finds meaning and satisfaction in her work and in life. Ultimately, this benefits not only you and me, but our children and parents as well. All the "little communities" in our school make one large community that we have the power to strengthen by sharing and growing.

The letter provided my vision and described the tools, or methods, we would use to realize the vision. In retrospect, I recognize that some questions were left unanswered. Teachers were invited to ask me questions about the project or chat with me about it before we began, but none did. It became evident late in the project that the very understanding of community was not clear. When teachers told me during their interviews that they “were not looking for more friends” or that they “didn’t want a therapy group,” I understood that we did not all have a common understanding of what the desired community would look like. The conversations which I invited, but did not happen, might have clarified the intent of the project as Gravenkemper says that “real change occurs through conversation between individuals” (205).

The community I envisioned was not about friendship (or therapy), but was like the one described by Governor Winthrop: one in which we "delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body" (26). Genuinely getting along better was to be a key indicator of whether true community had been attained. Winthrop's description is largely about respect, something all faculty members agreed to practice when they signed their "Covenant for Christ Church Teachers" (see Appendix I). Community does not preclude friendship, but friendship is not a requirement for attaining it.

In addition to hiring the right people who will support the mission, and communicating a vision, leaders need their own spiritual grounding in order to be effective. Margaret Benefiel shares the story of Genny Nelson, leader of a number of advocacy organizations that serve the homeless, who says that her "spiritually grounded leadership" is rooted in her personal transformation (29). Examples of some leaders' spiritual grounding include making time for running, journaling, praying, worshipping, and meeting with others who can provide inspiration and wisdom.

My own "spiritually grounded leadership" is nurtured in both the Christ Church community and in my parish community, where I sing in the choir, have served on the vestry, the rector's search committee, and Christian formation committee, and have directed the church school. My "spiritual community" is the choir, which provides for me profound moments of God's presence in both the music and in the community of my fellow-singers. I have consulted with my priest on numerous occasions about work-

related matters where I've needed clarity and guidance. I also find spiritual nurturing at Christ Church when I lead the school chapel service or the daily office attended by a few parishioners, walk the labyrinth, and connect with parishioners who happen to be in the building.

Outside of the church, I renew myself by running, meeting friends for coffee and conversation, and spending time at my cabin in the mountains. I have also found support for my personal journey through counseling. Like Genny Nelson, I believe that a personal transformation has been part of my spiritual grounding. Having experienced a tragic loss in my life seven years ago, I have done a great deal of reflecting and praying about how the rest of my life will play out. The decisions I make as a leader at CCEP are based on strength I have found through healing.

Sharing Leadership

Although I wear the many hats of leadership described above, I have made some tentative efforts to include more people in leadership roles. I have asked teachers to be involved in tours and interviews, to answer questions from prospective families, to represent the school at a camp fair or a preschool fair, and to organize faculty committees. In truth, though, these are not so much leadership roles as they are visibility opportunities. They do not involve decision-making, for the most part, and until I practice shared leadership in a more intentional way, our organizational chart is very much a pyramid. Having planned the thesis project without much input from the teachers, and facing the reality that some of them did not embrace the project, I am

eager to explore a more effective way of involving others in planning how we can carry out our continuing mission to create community.

John P. Kotter says that transformation in an organization often begins well when a new leader is in place who sees the need for change, communicates a sense of urgency for the project, and secures "the aggressive cooperation of many individuals." Even then, the effort is likely to fail if a powerful guiding coalition is not in place (94). It seems clear that success of this project could have been enhanced by collaborating with more members of the faculty during the planning stage. I believe that even among the majority who embraced the project fully and would like to continue to work toward a stronger community, more input about the specific form of the project activities would have resulted in broader support.

David Hagstrom has written an inspiring story of his tenure as principal at an Alaskan elementary school where he learned to build what he calls a "Community of Leaders" (Hagstrom). The very name implies more than multiple leaders; it speaks of a shared experience of leadership. The book offers a blueprint for how I might do more to include others in shaping our community.

Hagstrom identifies the most important element of building a community of leaders as an attitude of service. Finding out what others are passionate about and giving them the support to develop their gifts is a way of serving them and serving the community. After accepting an attitude of service, one must continually ask community members what they want. What do you want for the school? What do you want for our children? What do you want for the adult community? The questions must be repeated

over and over until answers begin to come together. Then, community members must identify what it is they need to learn. Hagstrom insists that learning something new is essential for everyone, including the principal. I believe this places everyone on a level playing field and may be the first indicator to the community that the principal is working alongside the other adults, not just directing their efforts. Hagstrom states that individuals will then begin to step forward to offer their unique skills to improve the overall organization. If they do not, then he suggests the questions have not gone deep enough and need to be explored further.

For Hagstrom, the fifth step is to "lose yourself in the work of the group." Immerse yourself in what the community has identified as its desired work and encourage every person in what needs to be done. The principal faces the risk of the work not being what he or she would have chosen at the outset, but if people have agreed on a path and are passionate about it, the outcome is more promising than one which focuses on "what's mine" (159-164).

Hagstrom's steps to building a community of leaders may provide some valuable guidance on the next steps to be taken in CCEP's faculty community. Although the thesis project felt to me as if I were offering service to the teachers, some indicators show that this is not what was truly desired by all of them. Providing service to someone in a way that is not welcome is not received as service at all. I asked for early feedback on our professional and spiritual community, but only a fraction of the teachers were involved in the conversation. This meant that some of them did not have an opportunity to provide input as the project was planned. The needs that were

expressed by the small group of teachers last spring were not necessarily representative of the larger faculty community. Kotter argues that urgency for a transformation process is not strong enough unless 75% of those who are capable of implementing the change are convinced that the status quo is unacceptable (93). For a faculty of our size, 75% would be 13-14 people. I continue to believe that the teachers are interested in a stronger community, but the way in which I approached it did not unequivocally inspire the level of passion about which Hagstrom writes.

Questions that could have been posed as the project was in the thought-stage might look like this: What do you want to encounter when you arrive at school in the morning and greet your colleagues? What would make you feel supported and valued in our community? What would make you jump out of bed and eager to come to school in the morning? What would make us an enviable faculty community that people can't wait to become part of? Such questions, even asked at this stage, might provide some innovative ideas and strategies that we have not considered. Having come from the teachers themselves, these ideas and strategies might be embraced more readily. (One still faces the reality of not being able to implement the suggestions of every teacher, however. Asking for input and then choosing a different path can result in frustration or anger from those who were bold enough to share ideas.)

Learning something new is often uncomfortable. People rarely want to risk failure, so continuing down a familiar path feels like the safe option. This was borne out in the discomfort that people expressed about sharing stories in small groups. It was a new experience for many and because it was not something they had chosen to learn,

they resisted it. Long silences in the small groups spoke to the fear or unwillingness of opening oneself to colleagues in a personal way. If teachers had chosen the new thing they wished to learn, it could have looked entirely different than what was chosen by me, but would almost certainly have inspired their participation. I can imagine such new learning to include an outdoor activity like a ropes course, or a learn-a-new hobby day where one teacher shares her special talents with the group. These ideas come from my own imagination, though, and could be totally off base. Hagstrom talks about this step being fun, so the possibilities are endless. If I am committed to learning something new alongside the teachers, the leadership and learning begin to be demonstrably shared.

Hagstrom's fourth step, where everyone steps forward to offer her unique skills for the benefit of the school seems the most tentative to me. I consider a number of CCEP's faculty members to be shy, self-conscious, and retiring. Some, though more outgoing and confident, have a tendency to offer nothing of themselves to others. They prefer the "side by side caves" mentality where they run their classrooms like small kingdoms and let others flounder, rather than offering help. Perhaps I am not trusting enough in the second step where we ask questions over and over until a path or a plan becomes apparent. This is easily the most neglected area of my project, as opportunities for others to teach were absent entirely. As we move forward, I will challenge myself to not settle for the easy plans that can be carried out by me or a few other staff members. Hagstrom advises asking teachers how they would like to become involved in a developing project—where their skills might best be used. In the CCEP

community, I believe this would involve quite a few one-on-one conversations with teachers who are hesitant to lead, continuing to invite them to identify an area of passion.

Finally, losing oneself in the work sounds like fun, which is how Hagstrom characterizes it. Gravenkemper even calls this a qualitative measure of how engaged people are with a community, citing "excitement" and "buzz level" as indicators. This involves a great deal of trust and giving over of the control I am accustomed to practicing. I never lost myself in the work of the thesis project. I guided, adjusted, and encouraged throughout the project, but I did it alone, even advising the facilitator of the small groups about how to improve the experience for teachers. Trust requires risk-taking and the willingness to be vulnerable. In this case, we are talking about my own tolerance for risk and for being vulnerable. What Parker Palmer has written about the fear of connection has, up until now, been my way of characterizing the faculty's reticence to become a community. Brené Brown argues, though, that what I have experienced as a leader is best remedied by accepting that "we are all in this together and that something greater than us has the capacity to bring love and compassion into our lives" (73).

Leadership and School Culture: Our Episcopal Identity

Hagstrom's plan for building a community of leaders straddles the line between the practical steps one might take in encouraging everyone to contribute to whatever the school has identified as its passion, and the culture that is built in the school that allows people to feel safe enough to join the effort. Brené Brown calls culture "the way

we do things around here" (*Daring Greatly* 174), and I believe she is referring more to the embedded traditions and behaviors that make us feel a certain way than to the operational guidelines that are in place for running the school. For example, the Covenant for Christ Church Teachers (see Appendix I) is purportedly the document that guides our behavior, but often lives only on the page. It is not part of the culture because it is not a reflection of "the way we [actually] do things." In order to put Hagstrom's blueprint into action, a certain culture has to be in place.

Examining the culture of CCEP, "the way we do things," it has become clear to me that a unanimous buy-in to the Episcopal identity of our school is lacking. This is partially a result of not understanding what Episcopal identity is, but also a reaction against anything that smacks of religion. One teacher, a resistor to the project, and a professed aetheist, complained that the thesis activities were "too much to the God side." She also remarked that the retreat was "not remotely my thing." These are troubling comments because they are so much at odds with who we desire to be as an Episcopal school.

What we desire to be (as an Episcopal school) is an institution that draws from the Episcopal church the traditions of worship as a unifying practice; service, both inside and outside the school; welcome for people of all faith traditions, understanding that we all grow from learning about one another's beliefs; and the teaching of God's love through Jesus Christ. As an inclusive body, I recognize that not all members of the school population will interpret our Episcopal identity as I have, but I am wary of opposition to these distinctive characteristics when it is expressed by faculty members.

Jessica Clark, Dean of Students of the National Cathedral School, recently told me the story of how the community dealt with the death of a well-loved faculty member: "When Bill died, we immediately set about the process of being an Episcopal school. The faculty met early in the morning to talk and pray and cry. We talked about how to frame this event for the students. We met with them so that they could talk and pray and cry and sing" (Clark). Dean Clark's background is not Episcopalian, although she has worked in that school for 12 years. I was struck by her explanation of how they "became an Episcopal school." This was a perfect example of Daniel Heischman's statement, "What we do tells who we are" (Heischman). Our rituals help to define us in our own eyes and in the eyes of all who are watching. Having something concrete to do and knowing what it was came from the rich tradition of the Episcopal Church. Durkheim says that the ritual itself helps to join us to a higher power and he connects that power to the people who practice it, a human community (225).

I wondered if our faculty would know how to do that—become an Episcopal school. I believe they would support each other and our students and families in a crisis, but without an understanding of how this is Episcopal in any way. They may respond to my leadership in framing our response in spiritual/religious terms, but such an approach would likely not arise from the teachers themselves.

Dean Clark also spoke of the faculty community that exists at NCS when she answered my question about whether faculty members attend chapel services. She said that all faculty members were expected to be in chapel, but that in reality some opted out. She said, "There are enough faculty members there for supervision, so the Upper

School Head doesn't make a big deal about the absences." I asked her why some chose to go, if it was so easy to stay away. Her answer was, "Because it's all about community, of course." I understood this to mean that faculty members chose to worship together in order to be with their colleagues (and students) because the *worshipping* community was a central part of their *school* community. Her response absolutely silenced me as I reflected on the lack of this kind of commitment at CCEP.

At our most recent Board of Directors meeting,[9] I presented a brief overview of the National Association of Episcopal Schools *Episcopal Identity and Culture Self-Study*. We are not yet ready to take on the full process of conducting a self-study, but I wanted the directors to know what our goals were in the key areas outlined by the study. These areas are mission, governance, school ministry, chapel and worship, study of religion, and equity, justice, service, and service-learning. I made a list of the things we are doing well and the things we could do better. Following is a list of the things I identified as areas for improvement which involve a change in faculty culture (and behavior):

1. Provide more spiritual nurture for children *in the classroom*.
2. Improve the faculty community.
3. Provide training for teachers in Christian formation for preschoolers.
4. Engage the faculty more effectively in the chapel services.

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[9] CCEP is governed by two boards, the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors. The trustees meet monthly and are responsible for the day to day operations of the school, while the directors meet bi-annually. The directors comprise the full vestry of Christ Church and four independent members of the trustees.

5. Help teachers feel more comfortable with sharing religious stories and recognizing seasons.
6. Help teachers feel more comfortable talking about religion.
7. Work to obtain a commitment from the faculty to live/work together in harmony and collegiality *in practice*.

Looking at this list with regard to the thesis project, several of the goals align with the interventions that were implemented. We provided chapel services for teachers that were focused on them, rather than the children, hoping that this would be spiritually nourishing in a way that is not possible in the children's chapel (#4). We talked about and worked on community by sharing lunches and providing opportunities to share more closely in small groups (#2, 7). The remaining items (#1, 3, 5, 6) related more to the children but could only succeed with new behaviors on the part of the teachers. Their comfort with teaching religion and religious stories and seasons, as well as simply talking about God with the children is yet to be addressed.

The question that arises for me out of this process is whether attention given to teachers' ability to share religious stories and talk about God would have an impact on the faculty community and their own engagement with and commitment to our Episcopal identity. Who the teachers are, what they believe, and how they engage the Episcopal identity of the school are important factors in the manner in which they commit to faculty community. Perhaps the "learning something new" that Hagstrom talks about when building a community of leaders could become an intentional focus on equipping the teachers to share religious stories. And if that were my goal, the faculty

would need to answer the question of religious commitment for themselves. As Hagstrom advises, “Keep asking the question until the answers begin to come together” (161).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Movement Toward the Goal

The thesis statement proposed that the practices of sharing stories and listening to one another, as well as participating in communal prayer and worship would create a community in which teachers could be their authentic selves and live in harmony and peace with their colleagues. The impact of the project activities to date was measured by a pre- and post-project survey, interviews with each individual teacher, and informal observation by the project director. Spontaneous, unsolicited comments from teachers throughout the semester provided additional data. I was also able to determine the number of and timing of faculty conflicts and complaints for the time period of the project. A small group of long-term parents from the school was asked to complete a pre- and post-project survey regarding their sense of the faculty community and the spiritual engagement of the teachers.

Taking into consideration all of these sources of data, I believe that the activities to date have begun to create movement toward the project's goal, but it is evident that continuing attention will need to be given to ways to create a community that supports and nurtures teachers in their collegial relationships and connects their faith and work. For those teachers who welcomed and participated happily in the project activities, a sense of gratitude and optimism was expressed, while for the few resistors and others who were not fully dedicated to the purpose of the project, the activities were merely tolerated. The parents' responses to the surveys showed a more positive impression of movement toward community and of spiritual engagement of the faculty than the one

expressed by the teachers themselves. I am particularly heartened by the apparent drop in number of confrontations between teachers since the project began, perhaps because the importance of community is now a more explicit value in the life of the school. Regardless of our "sense" of community (assumed or imagined), our behaviors (outward and visible signs), speak more definitively about the true state of relationships.

Reflecting on Themes

The major themes which have arisen from the project and upon which I am now reflecting are our "oneness," (integration of the body as described by Paul), yearning versus hopelessness, shared leadership, hiring practices, our Episcopal identity, and time (the right time, enough time, and time yet to come).

Oneness

Parker Palmer's book *A Hidden Wholeness* was a key inspiration for this project, and the book was given to the teachers in advance of the school year. Sadly, some of them saw the reading as an assignment or homework, and did not fully engage with it. I believe that some did not even read it. Nevertheless, as I read and re-read the book, I was struck by the descriptions of dis-integration, i.e., the division of our lives into onstage and backstage realities. We are who we are on the inside and we can choose to either integrate that with our work, actions, and relationships, or we can play another role hidden beneath a more public face. Even when we wish to integrate the two parts of ourselves, our intentions do not always carry over into action.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul writes about how difficult it is to do what we know is right and what we want to do when he says, "I do not understand my own

actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate…I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom. 7: 15, 18). Paul is pointing toward the "divided life." He does not delve into why it is we cannot sustain our intentions, other than to say it is because of the sin that dwells within us. I would call the sin that he refers to weakness and fear. We become weak and fail because doing what we know to be right is hard work. It is often easier to fall back into old habits than to press ahead with new ones; old habits are comfortable and familiar. They do not require as much effort or thought. Likewise, we fear doing what we know is right because we cannot predict the outcome. Relating to others in a new way is scary because we do not know how it will be received. We are vulnerable when we reach out to someone with whom we have never been close or with whom we have a history of conflict. What if our overtures are refused? Will the effort be mutual? It will take experimentation and practice to overcome our fear. If we reach out in a new way one time and our efforts are not rebuffed, we are more likely to try it again. Slowly confidence builds. As the work of building community proceeds, Paul reminds us that we are one body and that not only are all parts required for the body to function optimally, but that the body is stronger than the sum of its parts. When all parts work well and work together, we are more than we can ever be by ourselves. We need to keep a vision of what is possible in front of us if we are to risk taking the actions that will provide for the mutual upbuilding of the body.

Yearning versus Hopelessness

The yearning for true community and for spiritual nurture in the workplace is a theme that will not die. I long for it myself, and I recognize the longing in others, while acknowledging that there are some currently on my staff for whom this is not a priority and may even be resisted. Critical mass is on the side of change, though, as shown in such comments as, "I wish we could do more of all three of these in January," and, "We are making baby steps." A significant challenge for me is to listen to the voices of those who continue to express hope, as well as to those who are resistant to change. I need to remind myself that the majority of faculty members were committed to the project and that the project was born out of their articulated desire. If we were to stop all efforts to provide the nurture of individuals and community in which we engaged this fall, it would be equivalent to giving up, acknowledging hopelessness. It was tempting to succumb to hopelessness when I first looked at the results of the post-project survey. A decline in community seemed inconceivable to me. How could we be moving backward? A few weeks of reflection have provided more clarity about what was being expressed. Taking into account the surveys, comments, interviews, observations, informal conversations with teachers and their personalities, I found the following comments constructive:

1. The time of day wasn't good, but I enjoyed getting to know people.
2. The time of day wasn't good, but I enjoyed beginning the day with quiet, meditative worship. Sharing "pows and wows" helped me to feel others' pain and I prayed for them.

3. I loved our lunches, especially when we could all sit down together.

These comments encourage me to continue the efforts. Time, which will be addressed in further detail below, will be a continuing challenge, but I believe just taking a few minutes for sharing at the beginning of faculty meeting on a regular basis will keep the possibility alive for nurturing one another's spirits and encouraging us to be authentic in our work and relationships. We have already begun to know each other better, even if in halting ways in the small groups. As Parker Palmer says, it is very difficult to hurt or harm someone when you know her story (*Hidden Wholeness* 123).

I am also encouraged by Benefiel's image of the tender shoot, in which there is great hope for maturing. When a teacher said, "We are taking baby steps," I felt a sense of optimism for learning to walk and run. Anyone watching a baby take her first steps cannot help but smile. It's a great accomplishment, but we expect even more. That baby will learn to be steady on her feet, and having gained a little confidence, will eventually run. We are "waking up," as Clemens Sedmak says in *Doing Local Theology,* and waking up is a way of being mindful; he states that "a mindful person can make all the difference in the world" (1).

So I am not hopeless, nor are the majority of the teachers. We are being honest about where we are, perhaps more honest now than ever. That honesty inspires us to keep working for the mutual upbuilding of our community.

Shared Leadership

Much of what I have read about leadership reveals a better way of maximizing engagement from those I am attempting to lead. Just putting the chairs in a circle,

Palmer argues, does not necessarily eliminate the inner hierarchies and can lead to a false sense of community (*Hidden Wholeness* 25). If the Head of School instructs you to put the chairs in a circle and talk, you do, or you at least sit in the circle, but the hierarchy of employer/employee is very much in place. Being invited into conversation about circles or some other shape allows individuals some choice, some input into how we move together as a group. People are committed to that which they help design, and the more people involved in the discussion, the more likely it is that passion for the initiative will grow. Kotter says a guiding coalition is needed to ensure successful transformation efforts (94). If I had sought input from the people who would be participating in and affected by the project, we may have identified up front some of the time issues that were problematic. We may have made different decisions regarding the facilitator's role in the retreat and in small groups. We may have devised a way for those who were reticent to share to feel more comfortable. The interviews that I conducted part way through the project were so helpful that I made adjustments in how the interventions were being implemented. Earlier interviews would have allowed more time for improvement, and pre-project interviews would have provided even better information, allowing maximum time for the project to unfold along the lines that people could be passionate about. Sedmak reminds us that doing local theology is not a private struggle; rather, it is the communal vision of a community (8).

My role as a leader in the project activities had to be carefully balanced among imposing my ideas, listening to the faculty, and being one of them. My earlier reflections on whether participating in the small groups would serve as an example to

the teachers turned out to be on-target. The group facilitator reported that conversations in my group were more lively and included more participants than those of the other groups. The faculty's desire for chapel services that were quiet and reflective was an indication of their desire for private worship. I believe that I was the most appropriate leader in our community for this type of worship and that this was due, in part, to my careful listening to what they wanted.

Hiring Practices

As much as shared leadership might be helpful, some areas of running the school fall squarely on my own plate. Personnel decisions, both hiring and terminating, are my responsibility. I have sought input from teachers when hiring, by having them share in the interview process and give feedback on candidates, but the final decision has always been mine. This is my sixth year as Head of School, and during my tenure I have terminated two employees—one food specialist and one teacher. These were not difficult decisions, but the actual termination process was far from easy. I learned a great deal about how to do this part of my job better—to begin the process sooner and to lay out improvement plans for employees that are clear and have known consequences. This project has caused me to reflect on personnel decisions I have made and not made, as well as ones that were made before my arrival. When Benefiel says that "hiring for congruence with mission" is the hallmark of an organization that attends to soul, I cannot help but recognize that some of CCEP's employees are not a good fit with our mission.

Our Episcopal Identity

Simply not being on board with the project activities is insufficient evidence that an employee's behavior is incongruent with our mission, but vigorous opposition to the creation of community is quite clearly the opposite, as is a rejection of our Episcopal identity. I can understand a teacher's need for solitude when she takes her lunch to her room to eat alone. Everyone needs time to regroup, and as much as I would like for this person to sit and be part of a group at lunch time, that action alone does not defeat or destroy community. She is simply opting out of an opportunity for herself. Even a teacher who retreats into her classroom, closes the door, and pretends that the world is fine, is making a choice for herself. She is not hurting others. Vigorous opposition to community occurs, though, when teachers are repeatedly unkind and disrespectful to each other. When a teacher rolls her eyes in chapel in response to a lesson or story told by the Rector, I become aware of her distaste for all things religious. Her remarks about our activities being "too much to the God side" are a righteous expression of intolerance for those who desire to bring God into their conversations. I have been aware of these behaviors for a very long time, but this project has caused me to focus on exactly which actions and attitudes are lacking in congruence with our mission and to see them differently than other kinds of shortcomings.

As I meet with teachers for mid-year conversations, I will ask them about our mission—how they are working to uphold it and whether there are components of the mission with which they struggle. I am hoping to open a space for honest communication, self-examination and recommitment to what our school strives to be. I

will ask myself the hard questions about continuing employment for some. For those whose actions show disrespect, I have already begun conversations about what changes are expected.

The final words of our mission statement are "in the Episcopal tradition." As I have noted, many members of our staff do not identify themselves as Episcopalian. (Seven employees, including myself, attend Episcopal churches.) Most are affiliated with some Christian denomination. A few profess no affiliation, and one identifies herself as "basically an aetheist." The Episcopal church is broadly inclusive and Episcopal schools perhaps more so. In the article, "The Idea of an Episcopal School," produced by the Oregon Episcopal School and posted by the National Association of Episcopal Schools on its website, the Episcopal church's roots in Anglicanism are identified as providing "room inside the Church for differences of practice and even differences of belief so long as there is agreement on the fundamentals" (Oregon Episcopal School 1). What are the fundamentals? We do not expect our children, their families, or our faculty to subscribe to Episcopal creeds and Christian teachings, but "the fundamentals" include a common set of values, respect for the many traditions represented in our school population and support of the Episcopal tradition which undergirds the school. The values which are treasured in the Episcopal tradition include our inclusivity, our rituals and worship, our use of reason to seek truth, and our concern for society. The infusion of religion and spirituality into the curriculum is a hallmark of Episcopal education (Oregon Episcopal School 2-3). I would add to that list of values the ones cherished in our own school, and which are outlined in our Covenant for Christ

Church Teachers (see Appendix I). These include treating every member of the community with respect (children and adults), practicing confidentiality, kindness, civility, responsible carrying out of duties, and the modeling of appropriate behavior for children. At the beginning of the school year, we reviewed this document as a faculty, putting each item on the list into our own words, providing examples, and deciding whether the full document was still acceptable to each of us. I believe that when we live by our covenant, we are being an Episcopal school.

The thesis project helped me to identify where our Episcopal identity is informing our actions and where it is not. Listening respectfully to one another in small groups and attending chapel and recognizing that all can participate in meaningful ways are times when we are true to our values. Being with and supporting one another, whether enjoying lunch together, or when taking another's duty so she can have lunch with the group, reflects our values. Our values are represented less well in the discomfort some feel with our school's religious life. Resentment of being required to be in chapel, or feeling ill-at-ease in talking about (or listening to someone else talk about) spirituality are at odds with the values that define us as Episcopal.

I have learned through this project that I need to do a better job of articulating how certain things we do grow out of our Episcopal identity. Dean Clark, of the National Cathedral School, explained the faculty's acceptance of their Episcopal identity by saying, "Well it doesn't hurt that we have a big Cathedral looming over our school as a reminder" (Clark). My response was, "Well we have a big, beautiful, historic church right next to our school and a children's chapel that inspires awe in everyone who sees

it." To myself, I wondered why those physical structures do not remind us of our Episcopal identity. I have an opportunity to educate and encourage our faculty about the particularity of being an Episcopal school. This will be a goal of the next phase of building community.

Time

I have written about the tyranny of time—never having enough, and using it in ways of our own choosing as opposed to being told how to use it. Time can be a gift, as when we find a few extra minutes to relax or grab coffee with a friend, or time can be an enemy, as when it passes too quickly to allow us to complete our to-do lists. The time devoted to this project was perceived as both gift and as time stolen from some other activity. To whom does the time belong in the first place? Teachers are paid to be at school for a certain number of hours; does the school thus own the time? Teachers have freedom to implement curriculum according to their own lesson plans; surely the time spent planning must be theirs. The key to perceiving time as a gift seems to be choice. A person choosing to observe Sabbath revels in this special time set aside from work and normal activities. A person required to be at a meeting is resentful and impatient. I believe the solution may be allowing people to opt in or out, but making the experience meaningful enough that more and more people will choose to join in. Those teachers who opted in for the Christmas party had a wonderful experience of community and sharing. In a small community like ours, such an experience is talked about freely; it is certain that those who did not attend heard how enjoyable it was. If such enjoyment happens frequently enough, even if it is just breakfast in the kitchen

together, perhaps more people will make the choice to spend “their” time in community.

When planning this project, I focused on three practices that I assumed needed to occur at three different times. With time being such a detracting factor in the project, perhaps we might consider combining the practices, making it easier to enjoy all three in a more relaxed manner. I provided breakfast for the teachers in the kitchen at 7:30 a.m. prior to our first faculty meeting in January. No agenda or purpose was at play; it was just a fun social time. Teachers came for some food and a few stayed and chatted longer than normally happens around the coffee pot in the mornings. I left to go attend to another task and was heartened to hear the conversation and laughter continuing in the kitchen. I can envision doing this on a regular basis. That time of day is not paid work/planning time, even though quite a few teachers are present by 7:30. No one needs to have a duty covered in order to participate. One of the chapel experiences people enjoyed and talked about was sharing “pows and wows.” Perhaps faculty meetings can begin with a few minutes of optional sharing of a “pow” or “wow.” This might make it easier to flow from sharing to prayer. I am continuing to reflect on ways to use time to our advantage—to attend to the soul of the school and to the individual souls who work there. Those who see community and spirituality as going hand in hand with their work will receive such opportunities as a gift, and it is my hope that the resistors, skeptics, and those just being “prickly” might begin to accept them as such too.

Final Thoughts

One of my favorite prayers from the Book of Common Prayer is the one that comes at the end of the baptismal rite. It is this prayer that guides my educational philosophy and my leadership practice. It reads, in part:

> …Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. Amen. (308)

This prayer comes to mind frequently as I reflect on where our school community is at this point in time and where we wish to move in the coming years. It is a prayer for my own inquiring and discerning heart, that I might practice more inquiry with all those whose lives are affected by walking through our doors in the morning, and that I might discern what it is God is guiding me to do. It is also a prayer for my faculty's inquiring and discerning hearts. I pray that they will be seekers, always looking for ways to grow and love, and that they will be discerners of truth. The truth may be uncomfortable if we are honest, but discomfort is not a bad thing if it moves us toward a better place. The prayer for *courage and will to persevere* is so very important when I recognize that we are only at the beginning of this journey toward community. Courage means not giving up, either on my part or the teachers'. Knowing that we need courage is a recognition of how hard the work is. It is not to be pursued by the weak at heart and we need God's strength to bolster our own. We need the will to persevere, to keep going when it seems easier to stop.

Though the formal project is over, I am praying that we will keep finding better ways to be with one another, be they informal or planned. I pray for *a spirit to know and love God* even in the lives of those who are difficult. I pray that they will have that spirit too, recognizing that God is waiting to bless their work with each other. The God they know and love might have a different name or might be simply love itself, but a higher power from which we all derive strength is what connects us, especially in the context of this Episcopal school. Finally, I pray for *the gift of joy and wonder in all God's works*. These are not just the works of the physical world, although the beautiful setting of our school certainly gives us joy. The work of God is also the work of community. We were made to love one another, and "where love is, there God is also."[10] If we learn to love one another, we will be a spiritual community. Joy is contagious; if some of us experience the joy of community, we will want to share it with everyone. That will be a gift of wonder.

Another part of the baptismal rite provides a reminder of how we are to be with one another in the Kingdom of God. The baptismal covenant asks us whether we will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being (305). The word "strive" is not simply about trying; it's about trying very hard, even struggling to attain something. Striving for justice and peace was a goal of this project, and it is not yet fully achieved. The striving continues, though, on my part and on the part of many members of the faculty who truly care about attaining justice and

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[10] From the hymn, *Ubi Caritas*

peace in CCEP's little corner of the world. The goal is reachable if we "respect the dignity of every human being," even those who oppose us and resist community. Significantly, the baptismal covenant is a question. We agree to do what is asked by saying, "I will, with God's help." Implied is the understanding that we cannot do it without God's help and this should remind us to ask for it.

The writer of Lamentations encourages all who are tempted to focus on afflictions or hardship with these words of hope:

> My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.
>
> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
>
> The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;
>
> They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
>
> The Lord is my portion, says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."
>
> (Lamentations 3:19-24)

The writer implies that a cycle of renewal is available to those who hope—God's mercies are "new every morning." In a school setting, newness is fairly easy to discern. We have a new day, a new week, a new season, a new school year, all of which cycle continuously and give us opportunities to start again, to do things better, to learn and practice more effective ways of sharing God's mercies and love. The mercies of God have been richly bestowed upon me as I have conducted and learned from this project. I have confidence that God's mercies will continue to bless my work as a leader and that the fellowship and faith of our faculty will grow.

Appendix A

Introductory Letter to Faculty

15 July 2015

Dear Friends,

I have just returned from my 3 weeks at the seminary and it has been very good to sleep in my own bed the last couple of nights. Dorm life is for those who are younger than me!

I hope that over the last two years, you have seen how my work at the seminary has inspired me to do some new things at CCEP. Our Parenting & Faith initiative was a direct result of a class that I took in my first year, and some new ways of leading have grown from the many organizational and leadership classes I have taken. Now, as I prepare for my final project and thesis, I am turning to you with a plan for building our faculty & staff community and providing some spiritual nurture for all of us adults at CCEP. A number of you have been gracious enough to talk with me about the spiritual life of our community and I appreciate your insights into what this means, where we are now, and where you might like to go in the future. Here are some of the things I've heard:

- Yes, there should be something different about working in a Christian school.
- I'm not sure what this "something different" is.
- There should be some continuity between our faith and work.
- It is shocking how we treat each other sometimes.
- My best moment of the week is placing my hand on my forehead when we receive a blessing in chapel.
- Being an Episcopal school means being accepting and inclusive of everyone.
- People here are so possessive.
- We want more opportunities to just sit and talk with one another about things that are important to us.

Spirituality is one of those terms that has a thousand meanings; to some it is about taking care of your inner self; to others it has more religious overtones. It can be a scary word for some, as we suspect that it might have evangelistic motivations. I recognize that our diversity as a faculty makes it likely that we are not all on the same page with what spirituality means and whether it has any implications for our work together as a community. Given the input from you, however, and our desire to fulfill our mission to "create community among families, school, and church," I have planned my thesis project as a specific act of ministry to bring us closer together as a faculty & staff community and to provide some nurture for your own spiritual journey.

I want to assure you that this is not about converting anyone or teaching any religious doctrines. It is about me becoming the kind of leader who can help you to realize your fullness and integrity as a human being, teacher, and spiritual person. We will be doing this in three

ways: **sharing stories, sharing meals, and sharing worship**. This fall, we will devote our faculty meeting time to just talking with one another in small groups. We will share at least one meal together each month--two if we can fit them into the schedule. We will have some faculty-only chapel times, designed and led by members of our community to represent our individual traditions and needs. Our retreat on September 2 will be a jump-start to this community-building effort, with a little bit of each of these sharing activities introduced. Our retreat leader is Francie Thayer, whom some of you will remember from her parenting class offered back in February. She is a genuine and loving person and is very excited about helping us launch this effort.

Some of you are probably asking, "Do I have to participate?" The answer is yes and no. You will never be asked to share your story if you don't want to, but because we will be meeting in small groups during faculty meeting time, you will be expected to be present. You will never be asked to plan and lead a faculty worship time unless you want to. When these are held during faculty meeting time, you will be expected to be present, but your participation will be up to you. You will never be asked to eat a meal with your colleagues--but wait!--no one has EVER asked to be excused from eating! Our shared meals have been some of our richest times together and I've never been thanked so profusely as the day I first provided a faculty lunch. So, I suppose you could opt out of shared meals if you wish, but I am hoping you will not do so. The retreat day is a paid faculty day and all are expected to attend. Once again, your level of participation will be up to you.

In order to help me discern where we are at this moment with our sense of community, I will be sending you a link to a survey, which you may complete anonymously. *Please* complete the survey, as it will help me measure our progress and it could open my eyes to an existing sense of community that I'm not aware of. I will ask you to do another survey later in the fall, after we've had a chance to experience our sharing activities. You can be assured that participation in the survey and this year's community building program will not be used in any way in your performance evaluations.

Finally, let me just say a word about why I want to do this ministry. It grows out of my love and respect for you as teachers and colleagues. I want to work with you to create a community marked by peace and generosity, a community in which we can each be an integrated person who finds meaning and satisfaction in her work and in life. Ultimately, this benefits not only you and me, but our children and parents as well. All the "little communities" in our school make one large community that we have the power to strengthen by sharing and growing.

Please feel free to ask me questions about this plan. Give me a call, drop me an email, or come in to sit and chat face-to-face. I am in the office for the rest of the summer with the exception of August 11-14.

Enjoy these leisurely days; I can't wait to see all of you again on September 2.

Sincerely,

Jo W. Harney
Head of School

Appendix B

Faculty Meeting Schedule for Fall, 2015

September 2, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.	Retreat (all)
September 10, 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
September 17, 8:00 a.m.	Group 1
September 24, 8:00 a.m.	Group 2
October 1, 8:00 a.m.	Group 3
October 1, 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
October 8, 8:00 a.m.	Faculty Chapel
October 15, 8:00 a.m.	Group 1
October 22, 8:00 a.m.	Group 2
October 22, 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
October 29, 8:00 a.m.	Group 3
November 5, 8:00 a.m.	Faculty Chapel
November 12, 8:00 a.m.	Group 1
November 12, 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
November 19, 8:00 a.m.	Groups 2 & 3
November 25 (Wednesday), 8:00 a.m.	Faculty Chapel
December 3 (Green Show Week), 8:30 a.m.	Faculty Chapel
December 3 (Green Show Week), 9:00 a.m.	In-service day
December 3 (Green Show Week), 12:00 noon	Lunch
December 10, 8:00 a.m.	Group 1
December 17, 8:00 a.m.	Groups 2 & 3

Appendix C

Book Enclosure Letter

Christ Church Episcopal Preschool

4 August 2015

Dear Friends,

Wow—we are only a month away from the beginning of school! This summer has flown by. I'm going to get a few days of vacation next week and am very much looking forward to it. I hope you have all had some time to rest and relax.

I am sending along a book which I think you will enjoy very much. It is *A Hidden Wholeness: Welcoming the Soul and Weaving Community in a Wounded World by* Parker Palmer. I'd like you to take a look at it before our retreat on September 2. My guess is that once you start, you'll want to read the whole book, but it's okay if you don't get to all of it. Read what you can and what appeals to you. The description of "Circles of Trust" is very informative in terms of how we will work together in small groups this fall.

I loved this book because it made me ponder all the different strands of myself and gave me ways to think about pulling them together. I hope you will find something that speaks to you as well. I'd love to have your feedback.

Our retreat will be at the Temenos Retreat Center, 1564 Telegraph Road, West Chester, PA. Directions can be found here:

http://www.temenoscommunity.org/directions.html

Note that we will be at the Retreat House, NOT the Farm House. When I visited the center, I got a little lost because I mistakenly went to the Church and Farm House. I suggest using the directions that say "From the South." If you are interested in carpooling, please let Denise know and we'll try to put together some groups of people who can travel together. Please arrive by 9 a.m. We will depart by 4 p.m. Snacks and lunch will be provided—no animal crackers, I promise!

Please let me know if you have questions.

Take care,
Jo

Appendix D

Faculty, Fellowship, and Faith – Initial Survey

1. The sense of community among our faculty and staff is strong.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional comment

2. CCEP faculty and staff members are likely to help one another when the need arises.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

3. My coworkers and I have a good working relationship.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

4. Faculty and staff members treat each other with respect.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

5. This school gives attention to my spiritual needs.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional comment

6. I am growing spiritually as a result of working in this school.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

7. Our faculty lunches enhance our sense of community.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

8. This school positively impacts my life.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

Appendix E

Parent's Perceptions of Faculty Community – Initial Survey

1. The teachers at CCEP seem happy in their work.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○	○

Comments

2. The teachers at CCEP seem to work well with one another.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○	○

Comments

3. The teachers at CCEP embrace the spiritual components of the school program--chapel, prayers, Godly Play, etc.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○	○

Comments

4. The teachers at CCEP foster the school's Episcopal identity in the classroom.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
○	○	○	○	○

Comments

Appendix F

Retreat Agenda (prepared by Francie Thayer)

Plan for Teacher's Retreat
Christ Church Episcopal Preschool
September 2, 2015

9:00 Gather
Jo-- Welcome all. Teach us a song!
Prayer
Set situation, invitation for the day

Focus: building connections, creating a sense of community
Interdependence-- kind of counter-cultural
Mutual relationship includes receiving-- which is not always easy.

Jo-- speaks for 10 min, give or take, re-naming her D-Min project, her desire for the community that comes out of their own feedback/remarks.

9:20 Lectio
Explain, give hand out, talk about silence

9:40 Launch into Parker Palmer and his story about his granddaughter, the human experience of True Self, remembering who we were before anyone told us who we were, etc. Merton quote on True Self. Martin Luther quote On the road.

9:50 So let us begin…
Pairs Share most life-giving, least life-giving experiences from the summer.
Regroup in large group to share as led. Partner shares about partner if permission given.

10:20 Break (Rest room, snacks, coffee)

10:35 ***Jo--*** Teach us another song!
Reminder of Parker Palmer's understanding of the "shy soul." Talk about listening, giving the gift of being heard.
Pairs Share something a grandparent, parent, mentor taught you when you were younger that you still carry with you. Describe a recent (last 3 months) experience when you remembered that teaching and it influenced your choice in the situation.
Return to group and share as led about the experience of listening.

11:05 Talk about the importance of confidentiality. As we look to our groups we will be part of in the fall, explain "double confidentiality."

Pairs Share about something you are currently wrestling with-- a decision, a relationship, an idea. Remember, No fixing, no saving, no advising, no setting each other straight!

Return to group and share as led about the experience of listening. Remember about confidentiality.

11:35 Restroom break, visit, walk outside, breathe, chat, be with one another until lunch. (12:00?)

12:45 Regroup
Sing
Images of God exercise

1:15 Talk about open, honest questions. The importance of silence.
Real play-- offer a story,
group works together to fashion open honest questions.
Try them out, critique them… open? honest??

Another Real Play offer another story
group works together to fashion open honest questions
Try them out, critique them. open? honest?

1:40 Pairs Try out this open honest question thing…
Each one is the speaker and is the listener.
Return to group. Share as led about the listening experience.

2:10 Talk about the groups for the fall.
Jo-- hope, intention, for these groups for individuals.
scheduling, timing
Importance of confidentiality-- remember the shy soul?

Talk about "third things" and how they will play in these groups. You can choose—I will have some "third things" if you choose, or I will have some Lectio verses if you choose, or you can share about your own journey/experience/questions. You decide!

Reminder of taking the extra 2 minutes to ask "How'd we do with non-judgmental listening?"

Into groups Jo will have created. Choose between the three offerings given-- a Lectio, a "third thing," personal sharing.

Restroom break?

2:45 Return to large group.
Debrief on the experience.
Talk about how it will play going forward.
Other?

3:15 Worship service together in the tradition of South India.

Appendix G

Introductory Remarks at Retreat

One of the things I've loved about my work in the Doctor of Ministry program at Virginia Theological Seminary is the practical application of my coursework and reading to my day-to-day work at CCEP. I've not read a single book without thinking about how it could help me be a better leader. Every paper I've written has been connected to my context at CCEP. I've been inspired to look at how I'm doing things, how we're doing things, how the parents are doing things, how we are teaching, communicating, relating, and carrying out our mission.

Can you fill in the blanks of our mission statement?

Christ Church Episcopal Preschool _____ young children, _____ among families, _____ and church, and _____ and _____ children in the _____ _____.

I've looked at this statement over and over again to check up on how we're doing. Are we educating children? Of course we are. All the schools that our children move on to tell us how well prepared our children are. They clamor to get our kids. Are we creating community? Yes and no. We've worked hard to help children create classroom communities, teaching them to treat one another with kindness and respect, to use their words to solve problems, to remember that everyone is a child of God. We've brought families into our spiritual life with family chapels, parenting classes, service projects. We've tried to build bridges with the parish by inviting parishioners to our events and classes, encouraging our families to join in with parish events. Yet, I would say no in one important area. That is creating a community with you, the teachers. We do enjoy some social events and are mostly "nice" to each other on a day to day basis, but not always. We have our moments when we're impatient, possessive, and self-centered, me included. We can definitely do better.

Some of you were kind enough to sit down with me last spring and talk about what it means to teach in an Episcopal school, and whether or not you are looking for spiritual nurture in your work. I was heartened by your responses, even while some of them were sad. What I heard was that you do believe there should be something unique about teaching in a Christian school, unlike a corporate child care center down the street. You said you thought there should be a connection between your soul and your role. You thought the Episcopal church was welcoming and inclusive and that that was what you were looking for in this community. Yes! I was happy to hear this. But at the same time, you said we weren't always succeeding in these areas. You said it was "shocking how we treat each other sometimes." You said there wasn't much opportunity to nurture your own spirituality when you were busy just trying to keep your students quiet for a 15 minute chapel. You said that prayers in the classroom have become rote and without much meaning. This I saw as an opportunity.

We stay so busy in our classrooms and with our children that we don't have time to just sit and talk with one another. We have a few faculty lunches each year, but some teachers just take their lunch and run, foregoing an opportunity to enjoy one another's company. We never really pray or meditate together. Time is our enemy in almost all of these areas.

So what is the answer to creating community among the teachers and nourishing our spirits? Giving some focused and dedicated time to the process. Time to talk, share, eat, laugh, and worship. Today we will begin to experience some of these community-building and spirit-building activities.

[Introduce Francie]

Appendix H

Faculty, Fellowship, and Faith Follow-Up Survey

* 1. The sense of community among our faculty and staff is strong.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional comment

* 2. CCEP faculty and staff members are likely to help one another when the need arises.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 3. My coworkers and I have a good working relationship.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 4. Faculty and staff members treat each other with respect.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 5. This school gives attention to my spiritual needs.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional comment

* 6. I am growing spiritually as a result of working in this school.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 7. Our faculty lunches enhance our sense of community.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 8. This school positively impacts my life.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 9. Our small group meetings this fall have strengthened our community.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional Comment

* 10. Our faculty lunches this fall have strengthened our community.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Optional comment

* 11. Our faculty chapels this fall have strengthened our community.

- ◯ Strongly agree
- ◯ Somewhat agree
- ◯ Neither agree nor disagree
- ◯ Somewhat disagree
- ◯ Strongly disagree

Optional comment

* 12. Please comment on the faculty retreat.

* 13. Please comment on the small group experience.

* 14. Please comment on the faculty lunches.

* 15. Please comment on the faculty chapels.

16. Please add any additional comments you wish.

Appendix I

Covenant for Christ Church Episcopal Preschool Teachers

As members of the Christ Church Episcopal Preschool, teachers will model Christian virtues for the benefit of all members of our community. The following, although not exhaustive, are expectations that govern our interactions, responsibilities, and support for our school.

~~~~~~

I commit to abiding by these expectations in all of my words and actions:

I will respect every member of the CCEP community—parents, children, colleagues, church staff, and administration.

I will treat sensitive matters in a confidential manner.

I will treat my colleagues with kindness and civility.

I will teach children to manage problems positively and respectfully, modeling this behavior myself.

I will bring concerns to the attention of the administration and will not gossip or engage in conversations that diminish the reputations of my colleagues.

I will be a responsible member of the faculty, paying special attention to attendance, promptness, preparation, and fulfillment of classroom duties.

I will share all school-owned materials in a collegial fashion with other teachers as needed.

I will respect shared property and return it to its assigned storage area promptly when finished.

I understand that I will be asked to perform duties outside of my normal classroom responsibilities on occasion (playground supervision, setting up mats, etc.) and I commit to fulfilling these responsibilities daily as assigned.

I will do all in my power to maintain a safe environment for children and adults.

_____ _____

Teacher's Signature Date
~~~~~~

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Email: [redacted]

Attachment A
Identification of Content

Title of Content: Faculty, Fellowship, and Faith: Creating a Spiritual Community of Teachers

Author(s): Jo W. Harney

Date Content was Created: 3/31/16

Description of Content: In addition to educating and nurturing children, Christ Church Episcopal Preschool (CCEP) seeks to create community among families, school, and church. This thesis describes a program designed to strengthen the faculty community and provide spiritual nurture for it by offering new opportunities for sharing stories, meals, and worship. Teachers became more cognizant of their personal commitments to community and those who embraced the mission welcomed opportunities to become closer to their colleagues and to experience spirituality. Findings suggest further attention needs to be focused on nurturing the collegial relationships between teachers, and helping them connect faith and work.