

unConventional Prayer Practices

by

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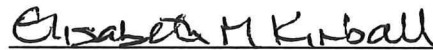
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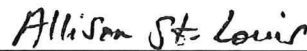
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ABSTRACT

How do we as people of faith keep ourselves in tune with the rhythm and mystery of God while being inundated with increasing levels of information, noise, frantic motion, and jobs that are more connected to the flow of information than to the flow of body, mind, and spirit? How can communities of faith offer sanctuary to those yearning for it? Learning from monastic communities that help connect individual lives with the Divine by keeping the seven hours, and mingling work and prayer, this project explored the possibility that a modern, accessible retreat could help participants reconnect body, mind, and spirit.

In a one-day retreat in an Anglican Cathedral setting, 42 participants, ranging in age from 7 to 86, loosely kept the seven hours and engaged in creative activities: self-directed art projects, needlework, labyrinth walking, illuminating letters, baking, gardening and making rosaries. Participants rated their levels of peacefulness upon arrival and departure, and explored the areas where they had experienced stress during the day, and what they felt led them to a deeper peace.

Contained encounters with stress helped participants move to deeper levels of internal peacefulness, as did support and feedback provided through the structure and experience of the event.

Seasonal one-day retreats which mingle prayer, creative activity and silence offered in the intrinsic beauty of our churches can help increase inner peace in ways that spill over into daily lives, and can strengthen the ministries of the churches themselves.

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Of all that God has shown me
I can speak just the smallest word,
not more than a honeybee
takes on his foot
from an overflowing jar.
– Mechtild of Magdeburg, “Of all that God has shown me”

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PRELUDE

Praying

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.
– Mary Oliver, *Thirst*

Church doors have always seemed to me to be beautiful invitations, beckoning bypassers to come closer – to touch, to open, to enter into a sacred realm. Throughout my life, I have found refuge and sanctuary in that paradoxical space which embodies light and darkness, silence and presence, sin and salvation. I have never hesitated to check if the doors to a church were open, or to knock if they were not, but, after many years of ordained ministry, I have met many people who would like to come in, but are uneasy with asking, seeking and knocking. These pilgrims need visual, verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal invitations, if they are to find their way into that space. And once they find their way in, then what? Does the space speak for itself? I think it does, and that by its very presence gives people permission to explore their sacred inner space,

to give voice to the “primary speech”¹ that is prayer – but then what? How does entering into external and internal sacred space transfer to the other parts of our lives? As a young girl, I loved spending time in churches, praying in the pews, participating in worship, and I was always sad to leave. I was looking for ways to bring that sense of peace and well being into my life outside of that sacred space.

Praying the hours in an unconventional way was a discipline that I fell into unknowingly, but once I was there found it an essential part of my life. As an adolescent, I had discovered the music of John Michael Talbot and his recording of the hours that form the album *Come to the Quiet*.² I think it was the title that first attracted me. These 12 songs shaped my days and my life as a high school, and then university student. I listened to them waking and going to sleep; the sounds lingered in my mind, heart and spirit throughout the day. That was in the 1980’s, and I listened to the cassette on my Walkman.

I was reminded of my introduction to the daily office when I began working on this project, and my advisor, Dr. Lisa Kimball, asked me how I had learned to love and pray the hours. In the silence that followed her question, I frantically searched my brain: “how did I learn to pray the hours?” Then, I quietly heard the ringing of a church bell that opens *Come to the Quiet* and the rich tones of Talbot’s voice singing, “Come, worship the Lord, for we are his people, the flock that he shepherds. Alleluia” and the accompanying instruments as clearly as if the foam covered Walkman discs were still extensions of my ears. Later that day, I downloaded the digitally mastered version of

¹ Ann Bedford Ulanov and Barry Ulanov’s term for all forms of prayer (individual, corporate, silent and shouted) as discussed in their book *Primary Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982).

² John Michael Talbot, *Come to the Quiet* (Chatsworth, CA: The Sparrow Corporation, 1980).

Come to the Quiet and nervously opened it in my computer's music library. Would it live up to my memory?

The two plus decades that had elapsed from my first hearing those prayers evaporated as I listened to and loved them all over again, surprised at my brain's happy recollection of the words of the psalms and the accompanying tunes. My Walkman may have long since disappeared, but the prayers, chants and psalms were anchored in my being. What lingered in me when I heard the music again, was not the adolescent angst I had experienced in those years, but the real gift of loving presence I had known through those songs and prayers.

In the notes for this recording, Talbot writes:

The monks of the early Church were men and women of God called to the quiet to hear the living word of Jesus' simple love. Fostering a love relationship with Jesus through prayer was the primary occupation of these monks, yet the study of sacred Scripture, the composing of songs of worship and praise, and menial tasks of basic survival and loving charity were also included in their quiet daily life.³

As a child, I discovered a "soul-shaking, heart-waking, world-changing God to fall in love with,"⁴ and, as a teen, I looked for ways to sustain and nurture that relationship for the long term. I was in need of a formal way to regularly reset my inner compass to the life-giving, life-saving, life-sustaining love of God. I was hungry for the daily bread of prayer that connected me to the great cloud of witnesses. Talbot's voice introduced me to the Psalms and to the ancient hours through the then modern context of my Walkman. While I never regularly kept the hours in a rigid way, my days began to be marked by connecting with God at regular intervals. I did not call these encounters by

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The Godbearing Life* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998), 9.

their Latin names (*Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers* and *Compline*) – more likely they were waking, walking to school, gathering, going to class, lunch, walking home and falling asleep.

Suzanne Guthrie’s book *Praying the Hours* provides a glimpse into her daily practice of keeping the ancient hours in a contemporary context.⁵ Guthrie writes:

The ordinary day is a vehicle of transcendence, hour by hour; the Christian prayer hours, a timepiece of eternity. To subvert time, we must enter into time itself. For engaging the sense of reality behind time in prayer does not require that we learn to walk in two worlds at the same time, but rather that we learn to walk in two times in the same world.⁶

My project at its heart embodies this same yearning and my desire to share the ancient practice of praying the hours in internal and external sacred spaces with those who are looking for ways to keep time faithfully.

*Pax Intranibus*⁷

⁵ Suzanne Guthrie, *Praying the Hours* (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2000).

⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

⁷ “Peace to all who enter here” – words frequently carved above church entrances.

INTRODUCTION

A church is a recognition, in stone and wood and brick, of spiritual awakenings. It nods, to each individual person. If the building has been created within a cultural and religious tradition, it constitutes a collective memory of spiritual insights, of thousands of mystical moments. A church reminds us of what we have known. And it tells us that the possibility of the door swinging open again remains.

– Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love*

Architecturally, churches are designed to reflect the integration of body, mind and spirit, while also emanating the transcendence of time.⁸ The inherent directionality of churches seeks to orient those who enter the space in a threefold remembering of where they have been, where they are, and where they are going. This complex integration of space and time, of ephemeral and eternal, points us both inward and outward.

The integration required for us to love God with body, mind and soul, and neighbor as self⁹ is mirrored in the church, each part distinct and focused yet merging with the others in ways that enhance the whole. In Christ Church Cathedral, in the Diocese of Ottawa, Ontario, there are soaring beams and clerestory windows, marble

⁸ Ibid, 15.

⁹ “Principles of Good Practice for an Inter-generational Christian Retreat in an Anglican Church” – developed and written by Dawna Wall to meet the requirements for the Virginia Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry course “Teaching the Bible Across all Ages,” Summer Term, 2011, taught by the Rev. Dr. Roger Ferlo and the Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams – see Appendix 7.

arches and stained glass, the deep darkness of the crypt where the columbarium holds the ashes of the departed faithful, and, on the main level almost directly above the crypt, a font, all speaking of light and life, death and resurrection, hope and healing. There is a holy silence that swirls around, even amid the bustle of activity. In Margaret Visser's book *The Geometry of Love*, she writes, "The building 'refers' to things beyond itself, and it deliberately intends to be a setting where spiritual knowledge receives explicit recognition and focal attention."¹⁰

The "unConventional" project was designed as an inter-generational, day-long retreat that would offer participants an opportunity to experience silence and the keeping of the hours in the beauty of a church setting, unplugging from the whirlwind of daily responsibilities and technology, and sinking into the rhythm and mystery of God through prayer, singing, movement, creative activities and interaction within the gathered community. It was an opportunity for people to enter into a space and tradition both ancient and modern in order to stretch their imagination and understanding of God.

A church, Visser says, "is a recognition in stone and wood and brick, of spiritual awakenings."¹¹ The church intentionally embodies and invites mystical experiences, standing, writes Visser, "in total opposition to the narrowing and flattening of human experience."¹² The unConventional project sought to recognize the busy, stressed realities of participants and offer them a space where silence, creativity, work, prayer, singing and community would mingle in ways that would help them to live out Jesus' Great Commandment: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your

¹⁰ Ibid, 14.

¹¹ Ibid, 13.

¹² Ibid, 14.

soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹³

In living this experience, it was hoped that participants would be stretched and expanded in ways that would help them to know self, other and God more fully. Ann Ulanov expresses the power in helping people to find and know their core self in God:

The excitement and inward gladness of being, the energy and freshness of instinct, the spontaneous gestures to communicate that arise from this core of ourselves in some tiny way reflect the unspeakable energy of God that only the word *love* captures. Jesus says he comes to give us abundant life, that in loving God with our whole heart, mind and strength and our neighbors as ourselves, we will find this precious all-out living, the pearl for which we will gladly sell all else, the true life for which we easily lose everything else.¹⁴

The unConventional project took place on the feast day of Teresa of Avila, who as she aged, became more fully herself and lived into her agility as a theologian, a reformer and a mystic. “Her humor, her vigor, her common sense, her practicality all emerge in a prose as colloquial, as earthy as any writer.”¹⁵ Teresa’s writing explores her faith life – the ecstatic and mundane moments and everything in-between and helps connect the presence of God in all circumstances. Utilizing the works of Teresa of Avila in the unConventional hours, as well as those of earlier Medieval mystics, helped to ground the day in the lives, experiences and words of those whose lives were stretched, blessed and enriched by their intense listening, questioning and encounters with God.

One goal of the unConventional project was to help participants begin to live into, examine and be at peace with their own listening and questions, and to know that God

¹³ Luke 12:29-31, NRSV.

¹⁴ Ann Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God and Psychic Reality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 130-131.

¹⁵ *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday Image books, 1991), 53.

delights in this process with them in developing a real, earthy and authentic relationship with others.

“To speak of the other is to be open to otherness within myself, to the possibility of a foreigner within my own unconscious self.”¹⁶ Being aware of and open to the gift of otherness in the people around us and in ourselves is one of the gifts and challenges of being in community, whether it is at a family gathering, in a work setting, or on a retreat. Being intentionally silent with others in creativity and prayer offers opportunities to see and connect and experience the other without the cushion of conversation. Silence can emphasize the power of eye contact, the hum of movement and the wondrous diversity of God’s creation.

As the church doors swung open, the unConventional community stepped into sacred space, welcomed opportunities to live into the intersections and interactions between prayer, work, play, silence, eating and singing, aging and youth, and glimpsed through a glass darkly the grace of living in an intentional inter-generational community for a day.

¹⁶ Denise M. Ackerman, “Who is the Other?” in *Loving God with Our Minds: The Pastor as Theologian*, ed. Michael Welker and Cynthia A. Jarvis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 7.

CHAPTER 1
THESIS AND PREDICTION

It is but lost labor
that we haste to rise up early,
and so late take rest,
and eat the bread of anxiety.
For those beloved of God
are given gifts
even while they sleep.
– Psalm 127:2, *A New Zealand Prayer Book*

In 2008, in Lisbon, Portugal, an exhibition at the Centro de Arte Moderna at the Gulbenkian Foundation featured three main pieces by artist Susana Anagua, all reflecting her theme, *Desnorte* (“Northless”).¹⁷

A large, painted panel featured a white bug on a white leaf on a white tree against a white sky, and indicated how the bug faltered, without environmental cues to tell it who and where it was. Another feature in the exhibit was a radar antenna endlessly searching for a signal. A third wall was filled with 2,400 small compasses, all pointing in different directions, even though they had been mounted in the same direction on the same vertical

¹⁷ <http://www.gulbenkian.pt/section149artId871langId2.html> and <http://cam.gulbenkian.pt/index.php?article=69422&visual=2&langId=2&ngs=1&queryParams=,autor%7CAn%20Susana&queryPage=0&position=1> (accessed January 25, 2013).

plane – a magnetic anomaly distorted and confused signals for the compasses and for those who saw them.¹⁸

Through her art, Anagua questions the trustworthiness of those things on which humans have learned to rely to tell them where and how and what they are. Anagua’s art evokes a conversation about innate and acquired wisdom and the relationships between metaphors for emotional and technological awareness. She introduces dysfunction into that which is generally experienced as reliable and trustworthy, and creates a jarring recognition of those times in our lives when we have known ourselves to be “northless.”¹⁹

Barbara Cawthorne Crafton describes the “northless” North American in a Lenten reflection:

We didn’t even know what moderation was. What it felt like. We didn’t just work: We inhaled our jobs, sucked them in, became them. Stayed late, brought work home – it was never enough, though, no matter how much time we put in. We didn’t just smoke: We lit up a cigarette, only to realize that we already had one going in the ashtray. We ordered things we didn’t need from shiny catalogs that came to our houses: We ordered three times as much as we could use, and then we ordered three times as much as our children could use ...

We redid living rooms in which the furniture was not worn out. We threw out clothing that was merely out of style. We drank wine when the label on our prescription said it was dangerous to use alcohol while taking this medication. They always put that on the label,’ we told our children when they asked us about this ...

There were times, coming into the house from work or waking that early when all was quiet, when we felt uneasy ... when we wondered if the mad slalom between fevered overwork and excess of appetite were not two sides of the same coin. Probably yes, we decided at these times. Suddenly we saw it all clearly: I am driven by my creatures – my schedule, my work, my possessions, my hungers. I do not drive them, they drive me. Probably yes, certainly yes. This is how it is.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

We arose and did twenty sit-ups. The next day the moment passed; we did none.²⁰

Educator Parker Palmer identifies, explores and addresses the floundering that he sees as prevalent in many people's lives through his writing and establishment of the Center for Courage and Renewal.²¹ In his book *A Hidden Wholeness*, Palmer looks at the dynamics which he feels cause people to become divided from themselves and the complicated patterns that keep them from reintegrating.²² A few examples he cites include:

- work that is diminished and in which we're not invested and distancing ourselves from the people we're meant to serve;
- earning wages at jobs which violate our basic values, even when our survival doesn't demand it;
- staying in relationships and settings that destroy our spirits;
- harboring secrets to achieve personal gain and at the expense of others;
- hiding beliefs from those who disagree with us to avoid conflict, challenge and change; and
- concealing our true identity for fear of criticism, shunning or attack.²³

To describe a society shaped by people living divided lives, Palmer quotes Leonard Cohen's lyrics, "The blizzard of the world/has crossed the threshold/and it has overturned the order of the soul."²⁴

Palmer then goes on to describe the image of farmers tying a rope between their house and their barn when a blizzard was imminent in order to care for the lives entrusted to them and for themselves. Palmer finds this a pertinent image as he looks at

²⁰ Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, *Living Lent* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998), 1-3.

²¹ <http://www.couragerenewal.org/> (accessed January 25, 2013)

²² Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004), 4-8.

²³ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁴ "The Future," in Leonard Cohen, *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs* (London: Random House, 1993).

contemporary life and the need for a rope amidst the current blizzard, so that people might find their way to safety and wholeness.

The African word *mzungu* is used to describe restlessness, a rushing from one thing to another without stopping.²⁵ While many in our North American culture might call this multi-tasking and an efficient use of time, others are beginning to recognize the toll it is taking on their bodies, minds and spirits, and their deep need for a safety rope to reconnect them to their most vital selves. “Indeed,” writes Palmer, “the outward life of our time is so frantic and fragmenting that it does not readily support the presumption of human unity.” Another aspect of the problem Palmer sees is that the secularization of society has resulted in a public realm “stripped of those symbols which might remind us of our God-relatedness to one another.”²⁶

Ursula Franklin, an experimental physicist and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, explored information technology and the way it is reshaping society in her 1989 Massey Lectures, compiled in *The Real World of Technology*. In a 1999 coda to the expanded edition of the lectures, Franklin discusses her growing concern for “the fate of people and communities caught between the bitsphere²⁷ and the biosphere.” She wonders, “how much asynchronicity people can tolerate before being socially and morally dislocated.”²⁸

²⁵ Esther de Waal, *Lost in Wonder* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003), 38.

²⁶ Parker J. Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981, 1991), 30.

²⁷ Bitsphere is a word used to describe a world architecture where one’s email address is the place one abides – in William Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Time and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

²⁸ *Ibid*, 178.

Alan Lightman, a professor of physics and creative writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), writes, “In earlier centuries, physical space and soul space were united in a whole way of being in the world, of understanding the world. That dualism and wholeness are what I’ve lost.”²⁹ Lightman’s colleague at MIT, William Mitchell, discusses this lack of wholeness in his 1995 imagining of a world where one’s e-mail address is the place where one resides.³⁰ As envisaged by Mitchell (and described here by Ursula Franklin):

There are no seasonal rhythms, no presence of the land nor the ebb and flow of individual lives, even though those are the synchronous patterns that have shaped culture and community throughout the [sic] time and, through their patterns, have provided a source of meaning to people for many generations.³¹

While people in every age and culture struggle with “northlessness” of one kind or another, my context for ministry is North American. The parish where I serve consists of primarily well-educated, upper middle class people. While the majority are white, there is a diversity of races and cultures in the congregation, in part because Ottawa is the capital of Canada, a nation whose ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious diversity continues to increase³² and, as the capital, it is home to embassies from around the world.

The congregation’s challenges, like those for many in the developed world, are the product of privilege and wealth, but challenges that are also life-threatening and destructive. A World Health Organization study on mental health indicated that those in nations with more economic wealth struggle more with anxiety and depression than those

²⁹ Alan Lightman, *A Sense of the Mysterious: Science and the Human Spirit* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005, 191).

³⁰ William Mitchell, *City of Bits: Space, Time and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

³¹ Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Toronto: Anansi, 1990, 1999), 153.

³² Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2007-2008, 2006 Census Statistics, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/multi-report2008/part1.asp> (accessed January 25, 2013).

in developing nations.³³ “On one level, it seems counterintuitive that people in high-income countries should experience more stress than those in low- to middle-income countries. However, it has been suggested that depression is to some extent an illness of affluence.”³⁴

In the opening chapter of the book *Practicing Our Faith*, Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass write about the dilemma they see engulfing people from all ages and stages of life: “we turn from one task to another, doing as well as we can but increasingly uncertain about what doing things well would look like.”³⁵ In the midst of juggling our personal and professional lives and all that entails, “an uneasiness lies just below the surface – an uneasiness made of personal restlessness, worry about our loved ones, and apprehension about the well-being of the world.”³⁶ Dykstra and Bass, having known that apprehension, envision a life shaped by faith practices that bring integrity and wholeness in the midst of the struggle: “In all the communities we know, people yearn for a deeper understanding of how to order human life in accord with what is true and good ... we recognize that the good of all people, indeed of all creation, may depend on our ability to order our lives well.”³⁷

“Ordering our lives well” is a consummate challenge and blessing, but one that can be helped by the practices of our Christian tradition. Recognizing that “practice” is a

³³ Evelyn Bromet, “Cross-national epidemiology of DSM-IV major depressive episode,” *BMC Medicine*, July 26, 2011.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing Our Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

term more familiar to philosophy and the social sciences, Dykstra and Bass define and describe their use of “practices” this way:

1. Practices address fundamental human need and conditions through concrete human acts; they have practical purposes: to heal, to shape communities, to discern.
2. Practices are done together over time; they are ancient and fresh, internal and external, and weave the people of God together across time and space.
3. Practices possess standards of excellence; they shine God’s light on the work we do and the money we spend so we can shape them in response to God’s call to us to help care for the world.³⁸

Kathleen Norris, a poet, writer and Protestant, was surprised to find herself in need of Christian practices. Coming of age in the 1960s, she was stunned to find that the freedom her generation had used to define itself left her feeling unmoored. She was even more surprised years later to find herself taking vows as a Benedictine oblate, but in sharing the Benedictine practices she found a deepening appreciation and understanding of the “sanctification of time”³⁹ as lived out in the Liturgy of the Hours, as well as a grounding for her faith. She writes, “In our culture, time can seem like an enemy: it chews us up and spits us out with appalling ease. But the monastic perspective welcomes time as a gift from God, and seeks to put it to good use rather than allowing us to be used up by it.”⁴⁰

Every generation searches for God, for meaning and understanding over and within that which seems so often to be without meaning. Joan Chittister, in her book *The Monastery of the Heart*, says, “The search for God is an attempt to complete the

³⁸ Ibid, 5-8, enumerated and summarized by Dawna Wall.

³⁹ Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996) xviii.

⁴⁰ Ibid, xiv.

incomplete in us. And it never stops eating away at the innards of our soul.”⁴¹ As a Benedictine, Chittister’s life and ministry have been shaped by the Rule of St. Benedict for more than fifty years.⁴²

Benedict of Nursia recognized the “northlessness” of sixth-century Italy and sought to find a way of reorienting himself in living each day, each moment and each action, and weaving together work and prayer, by his setting down and living his rule and inviting others to do the same.⁴³ The rule, Chittister writes, “developed at a time when Europe lay in political, economic, communal and social disarray.”⁴⁴ The Rule of St. Benedict did not eradicate the chaos, but offered a way to live faithfully in the midst of the chaos, without being defined by it. Chittister adds, “The Benedictine way of life ... is credited with having saved Christian Europe from the ravages of the Dark Ages. In an age bent on its own destruction, the world could be well served by asking how so simple a system could possibly have contributed so complex a thing as that.”⁴⁵

Ellen Clark-King traces several Christian spiritual traditions in her book *The Path to Your Door* and notes that when *The Cloud of Unknowing*⁴⁶ was written in the fourteenth century, “it was no easier for men and women to step away from the press of concerns and the demands of daily living in order to find space for inner silence than it is for us today.”⁴⁷ Confronted with great social change, unrest and loss following the Black

⁴¹ Joan Chittister, *The Monastery of the Heart* (Katonah, NY: Bluebridge Books, 2011), viii.

⁴² Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict* (New York: Crossroad, 1992, 2010), xvii.

⁴³ Chittister, *The Monastery of the Heart*, viii.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, vii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, xiv.

⁴⁶ *The Cloud of Unknowing* is an anonymously written treatise on prayer written in the late Middle Ages and forms the foundation for the contemporary practice of Centering Prayer. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, James Walsh, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981).

⁴⁷ Ellen Clark-King, *The Path to Your Door* (London: Tower Books, 2011), 33.

Death,⁴⁸ time for peaceful reflection and prayer must have seemed indulgent or elusive, and yet people were seeking ways of knowing God more intimately and were longing for their lives to be shaped by that reality and relationship.

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), whose childhood would have been shaped by the Black Plague pandemic, wrote, “This is the reason why we have no ease of heart or soul, for we are seeking our rest in trivial things, which cannot satisfy, and not seeking to know God, almighty, all-wise, all-good. He is true rest.”⁴⁹

Each generation of humanity is, in part, shaped by the trauma, disease and innovations that occur prior to and during its era. Wars, economic depressions, plagues, revolutions and inventions all help mould the way people encounter, experience and define their existence. In his book *The Spirit of Silence*, John Lane adapts George Orwell’s description of a society grown demented:

Ours is a restless, cultureless life, centering around convenience foods, the television set, the computer game and the mobile phone. It is a civilization in which the children grow up with an intimate knowledge of Star Wars and a complete ignorance of the Bible. To that civilization belong the people who are most at home in, and most definitely of, the modern world: the technicians and the higher paid skilled workers, the experts in IT, rock stars, footballers, and compères of some of the most popular entertainment on television.⁵⁰

The drone and pace of our modern everyday life are hectic for many – helped and hindered by technology – making space for inner or outer silence, quiet, reflection and contemplation seem a far off and unattainable goal. When doing research for his book *In Pursuit of Silence*, George Prochnik found that nearly everyone he spoke to sighed

⁴⁸ The Black Death pandemic swept across Europe, peaking between 1348 and 1350, and killing millions of people. The aftermath of the plague created a series of economic, religious and social upheavals.

⁴⁹ Julian of Norwich quoted in Esther de Waal, *Lost in Wonder* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003), 22.

⁵⁰ John Lane, *The Spirit of Silence* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2006), 18.

longingly when asked about their experience of silence, which led him to ask, “But if everyone values silence so highly, why is there so little of it?”⁵¹ We seek white space in our schedules and white noise to lull us to sleep because there is a scarcity of quietness in our lives and we crave it – spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Even when we make space for silence, we may encounter a challenge in staying focused. In 2001, Belden Lane, who teaches theology in St. Louis, Missouri, was staying at a ranch in Wyoming for rest and renewal. Before long, he found himself collecting pamphlets and booklets which shouted to him about all the exciting, world-changing things there were to do while he was there. It was, he realized, “another form of consumer frenzy, the fervid acquisition of knowledge, boogie fever. Even though I’d entered the wilderness, I was still compulsively ‘shopping,’ filling the cart with new experiences and frantically heading for the checkout lane.”⁵²

And yet, despite our ability to recognize the importance of silence and our deep need for it, it is still elusive. My family and I were travelling along the trans-Canada highway and, as we stopped at a rest area to use the washrooms and have lunch, we were inundated by country music piped through the entire building; by eating areas dominated by large screen televisions blaring news in tones that indicated crisis (although they were not, in fact, reporting a crisis), and by decibel levels of the washroom hand dryers which exceeded that of jet engines. “Rest area” became a contradiction in terms, and returning to the relative quiet of the car was a relief.

“Noise is now natural to us, while silence is strange and foreign. We have come

⁵¹ George Prochnik, *In Pursuit of Silence* (New York: Anchor Books, 2011), 14.

⁵² Belden C. Lane, “Invitation to Sabbath: Holy Silence,” *Christian Century*, October 24-31, 2001, 24.

to accept the current noise level as part of the natural order of things ... it is a product of the mechanized world, and that world is, on the time scale of history, still very new.”⁵³ The last two centuries are the loudest in history,⁵⁴ although cities throughout history have struggled with noise levels. Pompeii’s patrician House of the Fauns was located across from blacksmith shops, the Greek city leaders of Sybaris zoned industry away from the places they lived,⁵⁵ and “areas of urban congestion were often interspersed with patches of undeveloped land, an open riverbank, commons, temple yards, and cemeteries.”⁵⁶

Franklin addressed the contemporary need for a commons in her lecture “Silence and the Notion of the Commons,” which was presented to a conference on acoustic ecology in Banff, Alberta in 1993. She argued that, not only have “we seen the deterioration of the commons⁵⁷ as far as silence is concerned,”⁵⁸ we have also seen the pollution of our soundscape, as public space is manipulated by sounds to promote moods, products and conditions. Franklin believes that this is an area which calls for civic anger. We have the right, she says, “not to be assaulted by sound.”⁵⁹

Palmer believes that an important part of renewing public life lies in reclaiming the “hospitable space it requires.”⁶⁰ He cites the essential role of good urban planners who recognize society’s need for healthy neighborhoods and their capacity to stabilize

⁵³ C.W. McPherson, *Keeping Silence* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

⁵⁵ Prochnik, 282.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ Franklin uses the historical term “commons” to describe a place that was “common” to the whole community, where sheep could graze, a place shared by all.

⁵⁸ Ursula M. Franklin, “Silence and the Notion of the Commons” in *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map*, Ursula Franklin (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006).

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 163.

⁶⁰ Parker Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2012), 108.

communities.⁶¹

Prochnik discovered that prehistoric peoples used “reverberation, amplification, and resonance” to induce “a state of high emotion and minimal reason.”⁶² Prochnik notes that this description is not unlike what happens at shopping malls.⁶³ He tells the story of noise activist Julia Rice, who, in 1906, began mapping the increased noise levels she had noticed around her New York City home.⁶⁴ Inspired by the adage, “It is the worst sign of all when men submit to a torture because it is general and not particular,”⁶⁵ Rice founded the Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise⁶⁶ and for two decades campaigned to ease unnecessary noise in and around the city. Her story, like ours, is complicated by embracing new technologies (in her time, including the automobile, phonograph and airplane), while lamenting the noise they add to the soundscape.⁶⁷

Prochnik wonders whether we are misallocating our resources in mapping, measuring and studying noise, and if a better investment would be creating and promoting spaces for silence.⁶⁸ “What we do need is more spaces in which we can interrupt our general experience of noise. What we must aspire to is a greater proportion of quiet in the course of everyday life.”⁶⁹

John Lane underlines this point, saying, “So silence and solitude have never been more important. They preserve us from exhaustion, fanaticism, from restlessness – from

⁶¹ Ibid, 109-113.

⁶² Prochnik, 96.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 206-208.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 280.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 283.

excess. They remain the fertile ground of creation, the source of contemplation, the place of mindfulness.”⁷⁰

Throughout its history, the church has provided sanctuary for a variety of people facing different dilemmas. One contemporary need for sanctuary is to provide space where the people of God can enter into a rhythm of quiet and reflection, which can allow them to reconnect with their own inner rhythms and, in turn, with the rhythms of God and creation.

In 1954, Jacques Ellul’s book *The Technological Society* was published, detailing his grave concerns that technological advances were destroying the environment and people’s capacity to reflect and think, leaving society with “no intellectual, moral, or spiritual reference point for judging and criticizing technology.”⁷¹ Lightman disagrees with Ellul, based on his own capacity to step back from the Wired World, to intentionally question his engagement with technology, and to seek to reflect on it with others through his writing and teaching.⁷² He explores the change he has seen in the world and in himself with the advent of technology: “The underlying malaise of the Wired World is not primarily economic or legal. Rather it is philosophical, psychological, and spiritual It is the slowness and silence and privacy for reflection on those values that we must regain.”⁷³ In a foreword to the revised American edition of Ellul’s book, he seems to agree with Lightman, with a passionate appeal for humans not to concede their freedom to technology, but to transcend it by seeing the challenges technology presents, naming

⁷⁰ John Lane, 19.

⁷¹ Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 306.

⁷² Lightman, 204-205.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 205-206.

them, studying them, and engaging with other disciplines in conversations about how transcendence might be accomplished.⁷⁴

Sherry Turkle, a psychologist and professor also at MIT, has researched and written extensively about the effects of technology on human life. Her book *Alone Together* argues that with some guidance people can lead examined lives about the use of technology. The important thing, she writes, is to find ways to shape the use of technology, rather than allowing it to shape us.⁷⁵ One way to do this is by establishing “sacred space” in our lives, where we can disconnect from technology and reconnect with ourselves, the world and the people around us.⁷⁶

While a fellow at Harvard University’s Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, journalist William Powers’ research led him to write *Hamlet’s Blackberry: A Practical Philosophy for Building a Good Life in a Digital Age*, in which he asks: “In a world where it’s increasingly hard to escape the crowd, can you still build a refuge, a place to go inward and reclaim all the things a too-busy life takes away?”⁷⁷

Increasingly, I have noticed that people seem to be using their smart phone technology as a refuge, a way not to feel alone in a crowd, or, alternatively, as a way to escape a crowd. The tendency for groups of people who have chosen to be together (for dinner, drinks, or meetings) and then spend their time in private cyber conversations seems to be increasing. I have been encouraged to hear adolescents and young adults

⁷⁴ Ellul, xxxiii.

⁷⁵ Sherry Turkle interview by Krista Tippett on Speaking of Faith, April 7, 2011, <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2011/alive-enough/> (accessed January 25, 2013).

⁷⁶ Sherry Turkle interview by Krista Tippett on Speaking of Faith, April 7, 2011, <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/2011/alive-enough/> (accessed January 25, 2013).

⁷⁷ William Powers, *Hamlet’s Blackberry* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 181.

discussing the etiquette they have had to devise for these situations, and my family has discussed when it is acceptable to check for messages during meal time (we have settled on doing so when there are urgent, critical situations which need our input, and, surprisingly, have found this to be much less often than we expected). Lightman suggests that an awareness of the choices we face regarding use of machines, time, money and communication, even when they seem trivial, is one of the ways we can begin to reclaim our souls.⁷⁸

The frenzied pace of post-modern life allows little space for quiet, silence, or reflection. This is not so different from ancient life, even in monasteries and convents, where prayer life was wrapped around the quest for survival – even then, the daily trials can be seen as familiar to every age. Spanish mystic Teresa of Avila, who sought to reform her Carmelite order amid the tumultuous unrest of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation and Spanish Inquisition, wrote:

How is it God, that you have given me this hectic busy life when I have so little time to enjoy your presence? Throughout the day people are waiting to speak with problems. During sleep itself I am still thinking and dreaming about the multitude of concerns that surround me. I do all this not for my own sake, but for yours.

To me my present pattern of life is a torment; I only hope that for you it is truly a sacrifice of love. I know that you are constantly beside me, yet I am usually so busy that I ignore you. If you want me to remain so busy, please force me to think about and love you even in the midst of such hectic activity. If you do not want me so busy, please release me from it, showing others how they can take over my responsibilities.⁷⁹

Today, many people seek the peace and solace Teresa sought through prayer in other ways, including going to spas and learning yoga, some of them repeating the

⁷⁸ Lightman, 205.

⁷⁹ Attributed widely to Teresa of Avila.

mantra, “I’m very spiritual, but I’m not religious.” The challenge this creates, writes Ralph Heintzman, is that, “Non-religious spiritualities often miss the spirit of spirituality, which is spiritual habits, spiritual exercise, spiritual discipline, spiritual behavior, and action in the world.”⁸⁰ But the yearning that draws people to seek peace and solace should be recognized and addressed by a church which understands and defines that ache with the prayer of St. Augustine, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”⁸¹

The circadian rhythms that inform and shape our living are hard for those living in the twenty-first century to name or recognize. We find ourselves pushing the natural rhythms of life – scorning aging on one hand and, on the other, watching as attire and expectations for younger and younger children take on adult sensibilities. There is now, as there has always been, a need for sacred sanctuary and spiritual disciplines. Finding accessible ways to offer these to people who are already stretched in many directions is, I think, one of the largest challenges and opportunities facing the church.

Social theorist Hannah Arendt, in her 1958 exploration of the shifting rhythms in humanity, wrote:

There is no lasting happiness outside the prescribed cycle of painful exhaustion and pleasurable regeneration, and whatever throws this cycle out of balance – poverty and misery where exhaustion is followed by wretchedness instead of regeneration, or great riches and an entirely effortless life where boredom takes the place of exhaustion and where the mills of necessity, of consumption and digestion, grind an impotent human body mercilessly and barrenly to death – ruins the elemental happiness that comes from being alive.⁸²

Spiritual quests span ages, continents and religious traditions, and have led some

⁸⁰ Ralph Heintzman. *Rediscovering Reverence* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 2011), 188.

⁸¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 1.

⁸² Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 108.

to take vows and live within a particular community, while others have found associate or tertiary membership as a way of connecting themselves to community in a more flexible way. Ian Mobsby and Ian Adams have been exploring the emergence of “new monasticism”⁸³ and, in *Ancient Faith, Future Mission*, they assert that “a new kind of techno-consumptive-mysticism is arising which, surprisingly, has much in common with the spirituality of pre-modernity.”⁸⁴

For those wanting to live faithfully within the communities of which they are already a part, seasonal retreats that honor the Benedictine rule could help expand and deepen a sacramental understanding of life and time, and incorporate peace, work and prayer into daily rhythms and routines in a deliberate, thoughtful and healing way.

Seasonal retreats that mingle prayer, silence and creativity could also appeal to people beyond the church, who might be intimidated, unable, or disinclined to enter sacred space for “regular” worship services. After school pick-up time at my daughters’ local public school, I have been fielding questions from other parents who are struggling to find ways to shape their children’s spiritual understanding (and yearning in many cases) in the midst of over-scheduled lives. They wish to ground their children in faith, but, for a variety of reasons (hockey, soccer, work, etc.), cannot come to church on Sundays. When I describe an inter-generational, seasonal event, the comments combine to sound like this: “Yes, that’s exactly the kind of thing that I’m looking for –

⁸³ “New monasticism” is a term developed by Jonathan Wilson in his book *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1988), which built on an idea of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who used the term to describe those who seek to live in accordance with the Beatitudes.

⁸⁴ Steven Croft, Ian Mobsby and Stephanie Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission* (New York: Seabury Books, 2010).

thoughtful, orthodox and flexible.”⁸⁵

Another aspect of the problem is helping people reconnect with the power and affirmation in engaging in creative work; in working with their hands to create, build, prepare, or fix something. Philosopher and mechanic Matthew Crawford laments the movement away from teaching crafts and skills and, instead, steering young people toward “the most ghastly kinds of work.”⁸⁶ Crawford writes, “there are fewer occasions for the kind of spiritedness that is called forth when we take things in hand for ourselves, whether we fix or make them.”⁸⁷ He outlines how few people are called to exercise competence in a meaningful way and makes the case for manual competence as a way to find significance and connectedness in life.⁸⁸

Crawford writes that “Craftsmanship entails learning to do one thing really well, while the ideal of the new economy is to be able to learn new things, celebrating potential rather than achievement.”⁸⁹ In the public and private sectors, people are often promoted quickly, expected to “learn” a new portfolio, and then moved after several years to another level, leaving workers without a collective memory or deep understanding of their department or responsibilities, and, on a personal level, without a lasting sense of having made a difference through their work. John Lane writes that “to work at something in which one has little or no belief, no commitment, no delight ... is to bring about an incorrigible paralysis of one’s personal well-being ...”⁹⁰

⁸⁵This is a synthesis of their statements – actual comments included, “Flexible, but not flaky, that’s what I’m looking for!” and “I want them to get something real.”

⁸⁶ Matthew Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 2.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁹⁰ Lane, 75.

Arendt's 1958 book *The Human Condition* was, in part, an early analysis of this problem. She wrote, "The universal demand for happiness and the widespread unhappiness (and these are but two sides of the same coin) are among the most persuasive signs that we have begun to live in a labor society which lacks enough laboring to keep it contented."⁹¹

A resurgence in the popularity of handcrafts over the past decade is in part the result of economic turbulence and recession, but also reflects the desire of "information" workers to "make something that feels real. To feel back to the land. To make community."⁹² The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 2003 that the number people under the age of 35 who were knitting had doubled in the preceding five years – knitter Anita Goswami said that knitting's appeal was twofold: making something herself, and "getting away from the pressures of living in this society."⁹³

The church is, by definition and design, a physical space of sanctuary, and historically has been a space where those in danger or need could find asylum. The church is also a place of community where creative interaction happens through liturgy, making music, arranging flowers, gardening, needlework, cooking, baking and caring for people. As a changing society has left the church struggling to recognize its role and place among people who have become indifferent to it, there are opportunities for the church to reclaim its role as a sacred space of refuge for those who are caught in the blizzard of the sometimes destructive and soul-destroying effects of internal and external

⁹¹ Arendt, 134.

⁹² National Public Radio, "On Point with Tom Ashbrook," February 15, 2011, WBUR, Boston.

⁹³ *The Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 2003, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/nov/20/news/wk-alt20> (accessed January 25, 2013).

noise pollution.

Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby has spent 25 years researching religious and social trends. In his book *Beyond the Gods and Back*, he writes that, while our secular society is mostly indifferent to church, it is “open to groups that are in touch with and can respond to their spiritual, personal, and relational needs.”⁹⁴

In offering quiet days, retreats and opportunities for silence, the church can help to infiltrate the noise – actual and technological – which pervades contemporary lives, and, in so doing, help people to encounter, taste and see the mystery and rhythm of God with us. In shaping those opportunities, care should be given to incorporating silence, creativity and community, and to infusing these with prayer.

The church has within its repertoire an ancient pattern and rhythm of prayer that offers holistic connections for those who share in it. However, many are unaware of these patterns and have never encountered them. In an essay entitled “Ancient Faith, Future Mission,” Tickle writes:

To bring into one’s body the signs, marks, and diurnal rhythms of one’s religion is to form and direct one’s innate, human potential for spirituality to some definition outside of the self and the self’s experience or purposes. It is, in a sense, to offer constant hospitality to the divine, to furnish one’s interior receptively, to grant one’s inner being the gracious accoutrements of cleanliness and stability. To assume into one’s self the spiritual disciplines of Christianity is also to peruse the self with the music of common or shared story.⁹⁵

Lightman writes, “I look at my bright young students, so full of life, and wonder whether they can slow down enough to think about the purposes of their studies, think

⁹⁴ Reginald Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back* (Lethbridge, AB: Project Canada Books, 2011), 212.

⁹⁵ Steven Croft, Ian Mobsby and Stephanie Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission* (New York: Seabury Books, 2010), 104.

about what is truly important to them, as individuals and as members of a society.”⁹⁶

Convenience innovations – including the ways we buy, prepare and eat our food, travel, and communicate – have contributed to a sense of being “northless.” Because of our capacity to stretch time in helpful and unhelpful ways, many of us have lost touch with the natural rhythms of life and are surprised by those experiences and events, which leave us floundering in our primal natures. Many find that positive and negative life-changing events – including illness, birth and death – can refocus energy and perspective in ways that spill over into other areas of life.

Primal instincts which orient, disorient and re-orient us are always wrestling with other ways of knowing, and we assign and reassign significance to all of them. Ann and Barry Ulanov write that prayer is “primary speech” for human beings, grounding us and telling us “who in fact we are – not who we should be, nor who we wish we were, but who we are.”⁹⁷ And yet, so many people seem to have a confused relationship with their understanding and practice of prayer, saying that they do not know how to pray and that they pray regularly – even as the disciples, after watching and listening to Jesus pray, said, “Teach us to pray, like John taught his disciples.”⁹⁸ As natural as the inclination is, there is also something that makes us worry that we are doing it wrong or at least not as well as others. Roberta Bondi, who has written extensively about ancient and modern prayer and those who pray, writes:

... many praying Christians have one thing in common: they lack confidence in their prayer. Even though they may pray daily, in many cases enjoying a deep

⁹⁶ Lightman, Alan, *A Sense of the Mysterious: Science and the Human Spirit* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), 198.

⁹⁷ Ulanov, 1.

⁹⁸ Luke 11:1, NRSV.

relationship with God, they believe that they are not praying ‘right.’ Somehow they have become convinced that they ought to be praying harder, or more unselfishly, or with more concentration, or with more faith, or more systematically, or in a more centered way. Some of them are truly demoralized about prayer, as much as they want it; others feel vaguely guilty; still others, sad.

Finally, there are people whose experience of prayer is blessedly happy. Whether we learned to pray as children or as adults, from others or by ourselves, prayer is now as natural and unproblematic for us as breathing and eating.⁹⁹

Throughout my ministry, I have repeatedly heard people express a desire to pray more regularly, or for their spiritual lives to be deepened, but how they have “no time.” Probing into their use of time reveals that they are working (at home and at their place of employment), or relaxing, and see prayer as something they do at church or in crisis (good and bad), but are less aware of prayer’s potential to be a transforming part of each of the areas of their lives. These conversations have covered a broad spectrum of personality types – which, I think, indicates that all of us experience restlessness and longing for God.

Twentieth century hermit Carlo Carretto (1910-1988) recounts similar conversations with correspondents about prayer in his 1975 book *In Search of the Beyond*. While some of his writing reflects the sensibilities of a different era, much of it is achingly familiar:

In our evolving society, enormous pressures are exerted on certain nerve centers of society, and underneath there is an individual bearing the brunt of it all One often wonders how people manage to put up with pressures like these. Some doors and some telephones are real instruments of torture; calculating machines and assembly lines can be real crosses for contemporary man. How is one to pray in situations like these?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Roberta Bondi, *To Pray and to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 9.

¹⁰⁰ Carlo Carretto, *In Search of the Beyond*, trans. Sarah Fawcett (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975), 105-106.

Caretto's question, "how is one to pray," is one that Anne Lamott has frequently asked herself. She writes that, after twenty-five years of wrestling with how and what to pray, she has come to believe that "there's something to be said for keeping prayer simple."¹⁰¹ Lamott proposes that the three essential prayers we need are: "Help. Thanks. Wow."¹⁰² For Lamott, honesty mingled with humour grounds her prayer life in the light that illuminates the dark and scary parts of herself, her life, and the world.¹⁰³

Palmer describes the restlessness and division people feel from their deepest selves as a "Catch-22," using the image from Joseph Heller's novel about war and the odd mixture of lunacy and sanity that are mingled in that experience.¹⁰⁴ Palmer writes that people who know their lives to be "fragmented and frenzied" find that those are the very things which keep them from being able to connect with that which would help heal their souls.¹⁰⁵

Arthur Paul Boers, a Mennonite Pastor, discovered the ancient hours of prayer as an adult, "These regular prayers keep reminding me that God is present, at work and reliable. Thus such prayers call me to pay attention and to trust that God is active, even when I cannot discern God's activity for a long, long time."¹⁰⁶

The cultural shift away from the church as a focal point in communities has created an opportunity for the church to reintroduce itself to new generations who are open to and searching for sanctuary, guidance and a safe place to re-orient their spiritual

¹⁰¹ Anne, Lamott, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 100.

¹⁰⁴ Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Self* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 83.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Paul Boers, *The Rhythm of God's Grace* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003), xix.

and moral compasses. As the church wrestles with how to be relevant within its new cultural context, offering sanctuary, safe harbor and hospitality are areas where the church can find significant response, affirmation and appreciation.

In 2012, Theos Think Tank¹⁰⁷ and The Grubb Institute¹⁰⁸ published *Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals*, which explores attendance levels at English Cathedrals over the past ten years and delves into the significance of these findings. The statistics show that attendance at English Cathedrals has increased by thirty percent over the last decade.¹⁰⁹ The Theos Head of Research and Statistics, Bev Botting, said, “These figures demonstrate how cathedrals are very much a vibrant centre of spiritual life in our cathedral cities.”¹¹⁰ The summary of the report says, “Praised for their architectural magnificence, aesthetic appeal and historical significance, this report shows that their impact on and significance for English life extends far beyond their role as tourist destinations.”¹¹¹

While visiting the United Kingdom in 2012, I had an opportunity to administer bread at a Sunday morning Eucharist at Westminster Abbey in London. I was surprised at the number of young adults who were coming forward, and tenderly noted that many needed quiet instruction on how to receive. Many of them also sought a blessing, and the

¹⁰⁷ Theos is a “Christian think tank which engages in the battle of ideas from an open, orthodox, non-denominational Christian position. It was launched in 2006.” www.theosthinktank.co.uk (accessed January 25, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ “The Grubb Institute is an applied research foundation working globally to mobilise faith, values and beliefs as a resource for the transformation, healing and repair of organisations, people and society.” www.grubb.org.uk (accessed January 25, 2013).

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/publications/2012/10/12/spiritual-capital-the-present-and-future-of-english-cathedrals> (accessed January 25, 2013).

¹¹⁰ <http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2012/03/cathedral-attendance-statistics-enjoy-over-a-decade-of-growth.aspx> (accessed January 25, 2013).

¹¹¹ <http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/publications/2012/10/12/spiritual-capital-the-present-and-future-of-english-cathedrals> (accessed January 25, 2013).

openness with which they approached the altar was poignant and beautiful. Afterwards, I asked the presiding priest about this phenomenon, and he said that it has become far more prevalent in the last few years – young pilgrims who step into that sacred space and slip out again. He added, “We trust that there are seeds planted and know that we will probably never know if those seeds took root.”¹¹²

Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa sits at the edge of the city center, in a metropolitan area of over one million people. In many ways, the pace and activities of this Cathedral reflect the busyness of the city around it, with meetings, rehearsals, concerts, lectures and a host of worship services through the week. Step into the Cathedral, and you might hear young choristers warming up to sing, a harpist tuning up for an evening event, or a gathering AA group making coffee and greeting one another. The noise of downtown traffic sometimes infiltrates the Cathedral walls and pierces the quiet space. Inside, people can be seen and heard texting, talking on cell phones, blackberrying and technologically checking-in, in and around the Cathedral, even during worship. But in the midst of that, the graciousness of the space – with its soaring wooden beams, stained glass windows, wooden carvings and wide floors – seems to stretch those inside in different directions, and whispers an invitation to step into another reality.

The Cathedral is in the midst of a development project to use the land around it to generate income to help care for its heritage buildings. Demolition and excavation began in the spring of 2012 (vastly decreasing the capacity to experience quiet during the week). During the years of construction, the Cathedral plans to continue a visioning process that began the project, and has been looking at ways to welcome the new

¹¹² Conversation at Westminster Abbey, August 19, 2012.

community that will be formed around it (in townhouses, condominiums and an office tower) and how to the current offerings of ministry can be to maintain, expand, change, and reshape current ministries to meet the new reality that will emerge. Town Hall conversations and surveys have indicated that a majority of people treasure the Cathedral as sanctuary, and feel it has much to offer to others in the community who are also in need of sanctuary.

The Cathedral's vibrant music ministry, outreach projects and location in the heart of the capital of Canada give it a mission that continues to expand as the community around it grows and changes. A 2010 survey of the congregation conducted by the Parish Council Executive Committee indicated that the members of the parish have a very clear understanding of the mission of their role in offering sacred musical training to young people (including sixty choristers) and in offering rich and beautiful liturgies for the Ottawa community and the many tourists who visit throughout the year. Variations of "beautiful music, thoughtful preaching, and sanctuary" were themes repeated by 89 of 92 survey respondents.¹¹³

The unConventional project emerged out of this understanding. The Cathedral has from its inception offered sanctuary to those seeking peace, healing, hope and understanding. It is now seeking to offer sanctuary in the twenty-first century in ways that honor its historic context and meet the contemporary needs of people in the wider community, many of whom feel ostracized from or skeptical of the church. In doing this, the Cathedral's space as a living place of prayer can effect change in the lives of the

¹¹³ Survey of Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa, conducted on three consecutive Sundays in 2010 by the Parish Council Executive Committee.

people who encounter it, and, through them, in the world beyond.

In their introduction to *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Anthony Meisel and M. L. del Mastro write about the power of keeping the rule, “The energy generated by this kind of living produces effects with the individual member, with the community and to some extent upon the world at large.”¹¹⁴ Meisel and del Mastro see the effects of living the Rule as “rich and varied: theology, philosophy, art, architecture, music, science, history – all were marked and some reshaped by the contributions of the monks.”¹¹⁵ They go on to explore the sanity of Benedict’s approach and suggest that, “for the man of the twentieth century, rootless and isolated, such a vision may need transformation before it can be made real, but its appeal is undeniable.”¹¹⁶

A mingling of work and prayer in quiet space and an opportunity to work with the hands, chant the Psalms and connect with others through the liturgical year in day-long retreats can be a way of introducing, honoring and transforming Benedict’s Rule to those who are searching for another way to live.

The Thesis Statement

In every age and generation, human beings struggle to find ways that help them orient and re-orient themselves with the divine realm when they are confronted with personal, political, industrial and technological shifts and dysfunction that leave them floundering and “northless.” Within the Christian faith tradition, there are ancient

¹¹⁴ St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, trans. Anthony C. Meisel and M.L. del Mastro (New York: Image Doubleday Books, 1975), 9.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 11.

practices of prayer that help people find sanctuary and live into the creative, life-giving mystery of God, practices that honor and reflect what it means to love God with body, mind and soul. Modern, relevant, accessible opportunities to live into the rhythm of these Christian faith practices could help create/foster an internal rhythm and routine of work and prayer that could help inform and strengthen the spiritual, professional, personal and emotional lives of participants.

CHAPTER 2

ACT OF MINISTRY

O Taste and see that God is good!
– Psalm 34:8a, NRSV

On the Feast of St. Teresa of Avila, October 15, 2011, 42 people gathered at Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa for the “unConventional,” a day-long retreat in which ancient hours of prayer were kept in a modern context, with creative work opportunities taking place in-between.

The event was advertised within the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa (posters – see Appendix 1 – and postcards were distributed to colleagues at a Clergy retreat and a notice went out on the Diocesan e-mail list), on Facebook and on the Cathedral and Diocesan websites, and fifty promotional postcards were left at three local coffee shops and two yoga studios.

The purpose of the event was to offer participants a time out from technology and incessant busyness and to open the sacred space of the Cathedral for prayer, silence, reflection and creative activity. One intention was to assess if experiencing sanctuary in the fullness of prayer and creative work helps to increase inner peace. In pre and post-surveys (see Appendices 6 and 7), participants were asked to rank their state of mind as

distracted or peaceful on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being extremely distracted and 5 being very peaceful.

In preparing to shape the retreat, I drew on Joan Chittister's books *The Rule of Benedict*¹¹⁷ and *The Monastery of the Heart*¹¹⁸ as well as my personal experience with praying with the women mystics, including Teresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Catherine of Sienna and Julian of Norwich. Ann and Barry Ulanov's book *Primary Speech*¹¹⁹ and John Lane's *The Spirit of Silence: Making Space for Creativity*¹²⁰ were also instrumental for organization. Music played a large part in the day, and was chosen in conversation and partnership with the then Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral – we felt that a mixture of ancient and modern music would reinforce our ideas about ancient and modern prayer forms working together.

I considered the set-up of monasteries and the work that they do when organizing the activities of the day, and sought to incorporate hospitality, study and reflection into the planned rhythm of the day.

The majority of participants came from across the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, a few were ecumenical participants (Roman Catholic and United Church of Canada) and from upper New York State. The forty-two participants ranged in age from 7 to 86, and were predominantly female. The following charts help to illustrate the participant demographics:

¹¹⁷ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: Spirituality for the 21st Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Joan Chittister, *The Monastery of the Heart* (New York: BlueBridge, 2011).

¹¹⁹ Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982).

¹²⁰ John Lane, *The Spirit of Silence: Making Space for Creativity* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2006).

Figure 1. Gender distribution of 42 unConventional participants.

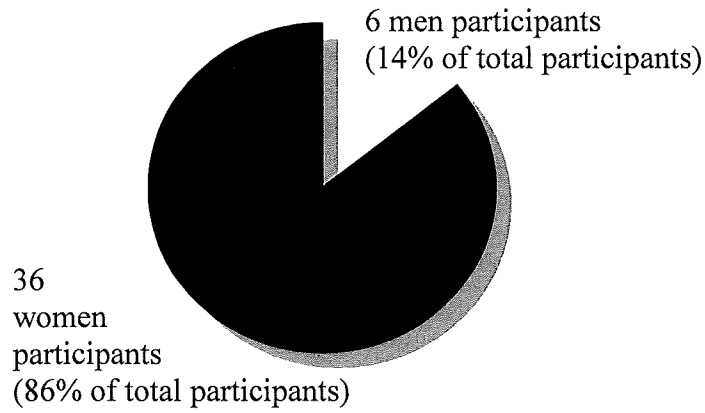
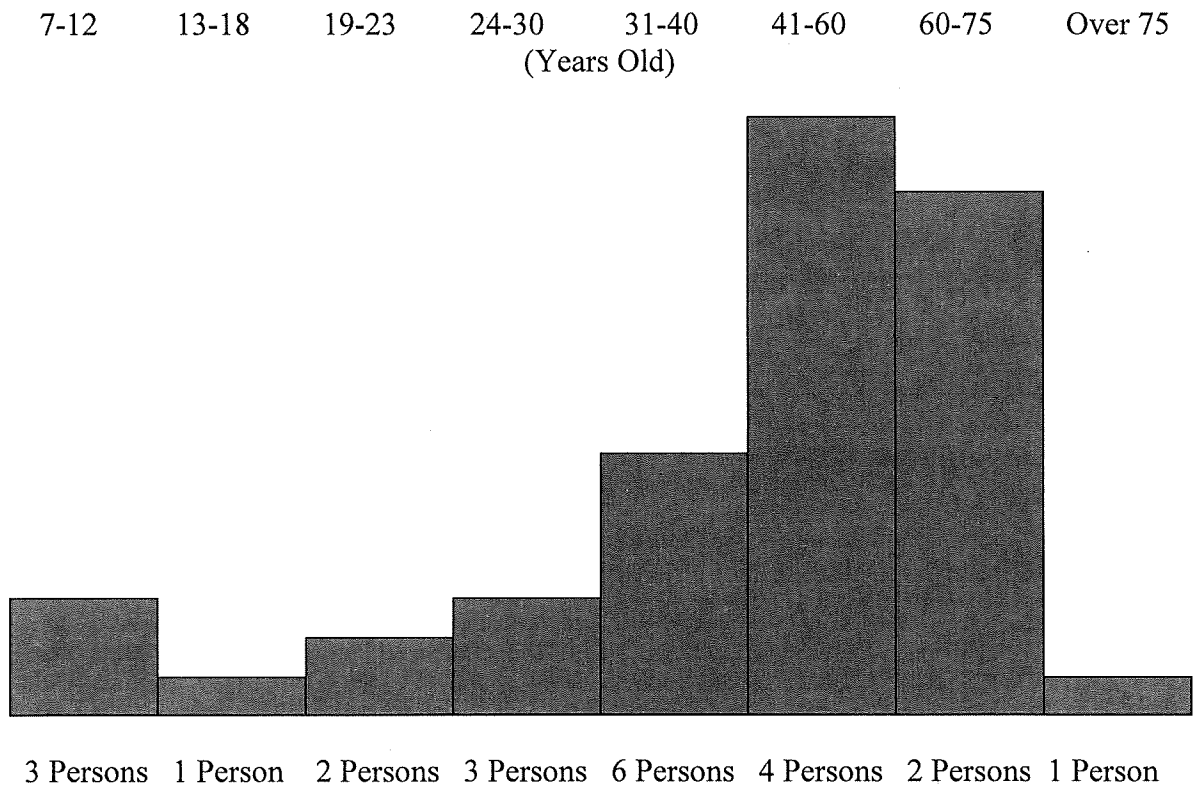


Figure 2. Age distribution of 42 unConventional participants.



Of the forty-two (42) participants, twenty-three (23) people completed the pre-survey and twenty-four (24) completed the post-survey (see Appendices 5 and 6).

As registrants entered the Cathedral foyer, a medieval-style map greeted them, on brown paper, with illustrations in words and pictures of the activities and locations that would shape the day. In retrospect, it also would have been helpful to list the activities and their locations beside the schedule (one participant noted that she had not realized there were snacks and coffee until 11:30 a.m. and another said that she had forgotten about bread-making because it was not an obvious station).

Participants were also greeted by a large (48 inch by 40 inch) vibrant painting by Ontario artist Monika Seidenbusch entitled “Offering of Faith.” It features three women mystics – Mechtild of Magdeburg, Teresa of Avila and Brigid of Kildare – seated in a “Rublev’s Trinity” formation, with a golden bowl in the centre of the table and a fruit tree in the background. The painting was present for the day and was used in the publicity for the event.

Figure 3. Offering of Faith, by Monika Seidenbusch.



Commissioning the painting was an important part of the project, bringing together cherished hopes I had about introducing the women mystics to a wider audience through music (including the “Mystic Centre Cantata”¹²¹ produced at Christ Church Cathedral) and the arts, which connect us more fully to the beauty and wonder of God as expressed in different ages.

I first saw Monika Seidenbusch’s artwork at a studio in 2009 and was immediately drawn to the jewel tones and whimsical, thoughtful figures she paints. I contacted her and she expressed interest in the commission of a “Rublev’s Trinity” featuring three mystics. I sent her a copy of the Mystic Center Cantata and she researched the women mystics featured in the cantata. After a few months, she wrote to say that she would like to paint Mechtild, Teresa and Brigid. Monika Seidenbusch utilizes texture as well as bright colors, and the rosary, wooden cross and feather featured in the painting beg to be touched. She finishes her work in a way that touching does not harm the painting, which is ideal, since many are drawn to trace those images with their fingers.¹²²

¹²¹ The then Assistant Director of Music at the Cathedral, Timothy Piper, who directed the Girls’ Choir, and I (as their chaplain) had looked for ways to encourage the girls’ faith lives. Out of our conversation came a 10-movement cantata with the words of five mystics set to modern music. As part of the preparation for the cantata, I led a workshop introducing the girls to the mystics and found that their interest and enthusiasm surpassed my own. Many choristers now know by heart the words of Julian of Norwich, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Teresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen and Catherine of Sienna. The Mystic Centre Cantata is available through <http://ottawa.anglican.ca/cathedral/>.

¹²² Monika Seidenbusch’s art and contact information can be found at <http://www.kaleidoscopestudio.ca>.

Table 1. Schedule for the unConventional.

9:00 a.m.	Registration and Introduction to the Day
10:00 a.m.	1 st Hour <i>Matins</i> (Theme: “Awakening”)
10:15 a.m.	Activity
11:00 a.m.	2 nd Hour <i>Lauds</i> (Theme: “Praising”)
11:15 a.m.	Activity
12:00 noon	3 rd Hour <i>Terce</i> (Theme: “Dancing”)
12:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	4 th Hour <i>Sext</i> (Theme: “Illuminating”)
1:15 p.m.	Activity
2:00 p.m.	5 th Hour <i>None</i> (Theme: “Transforming”)
2:15 p.m.	Activity
3:00 p.m.	6 th Hour <i>Vespers</i> (Theme: “Magnifying”)
3:15 p.m.	Activity
4:00 p.m.	7 th Hour <i>Compline</i> (Theme: “Returning”)

A range of activities were available to the unConventional participants – they were advised that each of the activity hours would include questions for reflection and were invited to explore these questions in their activities and to give expression to them through their personal creativity.¹²³

The unConventional day began at 9:00 a.m., with registration and orientation. A registrar met the participants in the Cathedral foyer and answered questions, received registration fees, handed out worship booklets, and ensured that personal belongings were in a secure location. A table offered resource sheets and surveys. The arriving participants quietly introduced themselves to one another and looked around the scriptorium and library in the foyer. The participants were then invited to come to the Cathedral nave for an introduction to the day.

At the introductory orientation session, the leaders of the day introduced themselves, speaking at a lectern with the microphone so that all were able hear the

¹²³ The Schedule for the unConventional day is from the Order of Service for the unConventional, entitled “A Book of unConventional Hours” (see Appendix 2).

background on the hours, the instruction on how to move through the day, the introduction of the four priests who were on hand for spiritual direction, and the musical rehearsal of the songs which would shape the hours. One participant stated in the post-survey that she found the explanation of the order of things the most helpful part of the day.¹²⁴

Seven “hours” were kept through the day, beginning at 10:00 a.m.: *Matins, Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers* and *Compline*. The Latin names were used to help evoke a sense of history and mystery. I developed a theme to accompany each hour – awakening praising, dancing, illuminating, transforming, magnifying and returning – to evoke their meaning and to help engage and move the participants into and through each hour as well as the arc of the day.

Each hour began with the ringing of a hand bell by a member of the Cathedral men’s’ choir. The bell ringing led into and accompanied the gathering song, *Confitemini Domino*¹²⁵ The order for each hour included a call to prayer, a request for presence, a hymn and a Psalm related to the hour’s theme, a reading from one of the women mystics, a repeated refrain that reflected the day’s theme, questions for reflection, the Lord’s Prayer, a concluding prayer and dismissal, “Let us depart in peace, In the name of the Lord, Amen.” It is important to note that the gathering song and dismissal remained the same for each hour to establish a consistency through the day.

The options for creative activities included making Anglican rosaries, cross-stitching independent and communal projects, perusing a display of sacred needlework

¹²⁴ The text of the introduction to the day can be found in Appendix 3.

¹²⁵ Psalm 118:1; *Confitemini Domino* (Latin trans. “Have faith in the Lord”), in *Common Praise: Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON; Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 402.

from around the world, gardening, spending time in the scriptorium, illuminating letters, walking a labyrinth, bread- and soup-making, washing dishes, setting the table and journaling. There were also two stations with art supplies and printed suggestions for projects. Instruction was available for the labyrinth, needlework, beading and the scriptorium. A librarian was on hand for the day and helped to choose and display a variety of books for different interests, age levels and moods. Adult and children's picture books were offered, with writings from the featured mystics and collections of prayers and readings related to the day's theme. Icons were placed in the scriptorium with the book *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*.¹²⁶

The labyrinth in the Cathedral Hall was painted on the floor of the hall in a rich brown color as a replica of the Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth in France.¹²⁷ Near the kitchen, in Cathedral Hall, a long table was set up for lunch along the edge of the labyrinth along with a snack table with muffins, fresh fruit, water, tea and coffee. A small wooden chime was placed on a stand at the entrance/exit of the labyrinth and was played as each pilgrim entered and exited. Cushions in the centre of the labyrinth to provided comfortable seating for those who felt called to stay awhile.

On the stage in Cathedral Hall, there was a table and art supplies, including pastels, colored pencils, crayons, markers, black paper, white paper and mandala outlines. The books *Praying in Color*¹²⁸ (the adult and children's versions) and *Drawing*

¹²⁶ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987).

¹²⁷ The labyrinth, along with the Cathedral Hall and kitchen, was demolished in 2012 as part of a joint Cathedral-Diocese of Ottawa development project. A new inlaid labyrinth will be an important part of a new Hall ready for use by 2014.

¹²⁸ Sybil MacBeth, *Praying in Color*, (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Books, 2007) and *Praying in Color: Kids Edition* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Books, 2009).

to God¹²⁹ were provided for direction and guidance, and as a bookmark-making activity featured the quote found on a bookmark in Teresa of Avila's prayer book after her death: "Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."¹³⁰ Standing bulletin boards lined the labyrinth, and people were invited to display their artwork and writing there.

The kitchen was bustling with activity and was identified as a place where talking would take place – as the bread-maker said he could not have assistants if he could not tell them what to do. Traditionally, monastic kitchens also observe this rule of practicality. The children knew that the kitchen was a place where talking was acceptable and spent much time there, emerging sprinkled with flour as they went to other places.

The soup-maker was also in the kitchen. Both the bread-maker and the soup-maker were adults comfortable and good at working with children, so their enthusiasm and energy were lovingly and creatively directed. Smells of yeast, baking bread and soup on the stove wafted from the kitchen into the Hall and out into the foyer. As I observed the day, I found my senses all taking in the wonder of it all – the smell of the bread, the sound of the chimes, the embracing quiet, the textures of people praying.

In the foyer, there were three different stations – the library, the scriptorium and the beading/rosary-making table. The foyer connected the Hall and the Cathedral and opened to the "link", a hallway between the Cathedral and Lauder Hall (where there were

¹²⁹ Jeri Gerding, *Drawing to God* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2001).

¹³⁰ <http://www.wf-f.org/StTeresaAvila.html> (accessed October 5, 2012).

meeting rooms and offices). The foyer and link's glass walls looked out onto the Garth, which was in the midst of autumn splendor on a mild and sunny mid-October day.

The beading table had space for ten and was usually full. Several lapsed Roman Catholics tactilely reconnected with their faith, joining colorful beads and crosses into an ancient form of prayer. Little fingers dropped, chased and recovered beads with glee and found gentle instruction as they worked to make their own rosaries. Hand-outs about how to make and pray with rosaries were available. At one point, I worried that the children's "glee" would be annoying to those who had come for silence, but the evaluations noted that the involvement (and related noise) of children was welcome. One participant wrote: "Having the children in attendance was a big addition. They were respectful and children all at the same time." Another wrote: "For me having the children around was an addition because they are 'natural' and because they contributed." Some participants carried their rosaries into the Cathedral for the keeping of the hours.

In the link overlooking the Garth, a Cathedral pew was used to display sacred needlework from around the world. A wide variety of colors, textures, styles of stitches and projects were included. Needlepoint kneelers snuggled beside vestments from South America and Japan. Across from the pew was a freestanding cross-stitch frame, with a Celtic Angel outlined and a threaded needle waiting for willing hands to add their stitches to the whole. A table provided individual packets with a simple bookmark pattern of a Celtic cross, a needle, thread and instructions. Participants were able to begin work at the table, or take a packet home to work on at another time. There were books featuring

patterns, instructions and photographs of sacred needlework. The needlework table was busy, and there were lovely moments when those with experience assisted small hands with stitching, and where old eyes were helped with needle threading by younger ones. The completed Celtic angel is now framed and hangs in the Cathedral.

The library was created in the foyer, with comfortable chairs and portable bookshelves overlooking the Garth. A wide variety of books, including collections of women mystics, was provided along with magazines and picture books. The library was full – there were only six seats (a lingering question is whether more seats would have been helpful, although without them people were motivated to go to other areas and try other activities). Icons were scattered around this area, and I heard from some who sat and rested that the presence of the icons helped them focus and pray.

Initially, I had planned to have a separate room for the icons, but, when doing set-up, found that putting them in open, bright spaces worked better. That also allowed extra rooms to be set aside as quiet areas, which had the effect of leaving Lauder Hall very quiet and unpopulated for those seeking spiritual direction and counsel.

The scriptorium was in the centre of the foyer and had water-colors, pencils, pens and water-color paper. A free-lance artist was there painting and had written a description of how one might enter into this exercise. She encouraged people to begin and see where they went. People approached cautiously and left with quiet pride (one participant went home and signed up for a water-color course to continue exploring this side of herself and her faith).

A template for illuminating letters was available, but the teacher for this station

was called out of town and, without an instructor demonstrating this medium, it was mostly unattempted – underscoring the importance of visible practitioners and leaders for each event, at least for beginners or those new to the practices.

In planning for the day, I explored asking other voices to participate in the readings, but decided that keeping the tone quiet and reflective was important and could most easily be achieved by using the same voices from hour to hour. This philosophy echoed the format in which the ancient hours were kept and prayed. Using the model of one choral leader and one prayer leader, I led the prayers and the music director led the singing, and the consistency helped the participants find a collective voice and rhythm.

When the orientation finished, we entered into silence and then, after several minutes, the bell began to ring summoning us to the choir stalls for *Matins*. As the bell tolled, the music director went to the piano and began playing and singing *Confitemini Domino*.¹³¹ People moved into the choir stalls cautiously and with care for one another (“Is it okay to sit here? Is this someone else’s spot? Was anyone planning to sit here?”) and quietly joined in the song. The theme for *Matins* was “Awakening” and the Psalm was 139. The opening reflection was from Teresa of Avila:

Be Silent

When through God’s secret paths it seems
that we understood that God hears us,
then it is good to be silent.
Since God allowed us to remain near God,
it will not be wrong to avoid working with the intellect.
But if we don’t know yet whether the King has heard or seen us,
we mustn’t become fools.
The soul does become quite a fool when it tries to induce this prayer.

¹³¹ Music: Jacques Berthier, Text: Latin: Ps. 118.1, in *Common Praise; Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 402.

It is left much drier and the imagination becomes more restless.
The Lord desires that we beseech God and
call to mind that we are in God's presence.
God knows what is suitable for us.
What God did not reserve are many
other efforts we can make with God's help;
such as prayer and penance,
good deeds and suffering.

Be Still in Gentle Peace

The second reason is that these interior works are all gentle and peaceful;
doing something arduous would cause more harm than good.
Leave the soul in God's hands.
Let God do whatever God wants with it,
with the greatest disinterest as possible
about your own benefits
and
the greatest resignation to the will of God."¹³²

The hymn was *Today I Awake*,¹³³ from the Iona Community in Scotland, which conveyed a sense of hopefulness and anticipation. The spirit of worship was joyful. The mixture of chant with a call and response modern version of the Lord's Prayer, mingling ancient texts and modern prayers, seemed to flow well. One respondent stated that she found herself tense during the chanting of the Psalm and relaxed during the singing of the Lord's Prayer, and she came to look forward to the shifting tensions and appreciated the opportunity to notice the difference in herself, and in the way she sang and prayed each of them. The questions for reflection for *Matins* were:

Where are you awake to God's presence in your life?
Where are the sluggish, sleepy places where you need awakening?
Think of a time when you were awakened gently, and another time when you were startled awake – which do you need now?

¹³² Camille Anne Campbell, *Meditations with Teresa of Avila*, (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1985), 46-47.

¹³³ John Bell, "Today I Awake" (Slivers of Gold), in *Common Praise, Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 9.

After the first hour, the music director, who had pointed the Psalms for worship, said that they were set too high and re-pointed them for the remaining hours, using the time during first creative session to do this. When the bell rang for *Lauds*, he moved to the piano and began to play and sing, and I moved to my prayer desk, listening and watching people arrive.

The bell could be heard ringing in different parts of the buildings, and people arrived from different stations individually and in clusters. They took their seats more quickly this time, mostly staying in the spot where they had settled for *Matins*, and sang with more energy and confidence. The re-pointed Psalm worked much better, but was still harder work than the hymns and the Lord's Prayer. Somehow, this seemed appropriate and a reminder that our prayer is also work. No one gave up on it, but kept at the chanting diligently and with good humor. The playful praise theme for *Lauds* was captured well in the hymn, *Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet*¹³⁴ and the group eased into a sense of togetherness as we listened to the words of Mechtild of Magdeburg:

I, God, am your playmate!
I will lead the child in you
in wonderful ways
for I have chosen you.
Beloved child, come swiftly to Me
For I am truly in you.
Remember this:
The smallest soul of all
is still the daughter of the Father,
the sister of the Son,
the friend of the Holy Spirit
and the true bride of the Holy Trinity.
God leads the child he has called in wonderful ways.
God takes the soul

¹³⁴ Natalie Sleeth, "Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet" in *Common Praise, Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 309.

to a secret place,
for God alone will play with it
in a game of which the body knows nothing.
God says: "I am your playmate!
Your childhood was a companion
of my Holy Spirit."¹³⁵

As the hour ended, I felt at loose ends for a few moments. I did not need to do anything: the Psalms were re-pointed, and people were entering into the day without need for me to guide or direct. I moved from station to station, watching with quiet delight as people engaged in the day. I finally settled into working a few stitches on the communal angel project and concentrated on the movement of the thread, its capacity to change the fabric canvas and the mingling of my stitches with the others already there. The sunlight streaming in through the windows added to the bright feeling I had as the bell rang for the next hour from what felt like far away. I listened and heard it moving closer, secured the needle mid-stitch, and made my way to the Cathedral and my prayer desk.

As the bell continued ringing for the third hour of *Terce* with its emphasis on dancing, I watched people spill into the choir stalls from different directions and reflected on how that movement also reflected their arrival to the day from different emotional, spiritual and physical places, and the power of becoming one in our shared worship. It was amazing to intentionally observe the capacity liturgy has to connect and draw people into a larger whole. For *Terce*, we had chosen the hymn *Seek Ye First*¹³⁶ and sang it in a round so that we could hear the voices dancing with each other and with God.

¹³⁵ Sue Woodruff, *Meditations with Mechtild of Magdeburg* (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1985), 47 and 54.

¹³⁶ Karen Lafferty, "Seek Ye First," in *Common Praise, Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 458.

The reading was again from Mechtild of Magdeburg:

The Singing Trinity

Have you heard the singing of the Trinity?
The full-throated, robust music
that fills the universal air
with rhythmic trembling,
and ripples along spring-flowering branches
with the delicacy of cherry blossom.

One voice sings:
I am white water,
a restless surging stream
sparkling, casting light everywhere at once,
gurgling with pleasure
of life and movement
and plunging forward into mystery.

The second voice sings:
I am the running tide
flowing and ebbing,
always in motion, never at rest,
coming and going
divine and human, human and divine,
a tide that runs eternally
with the song of unending love.

The third voices sings:
I am the pulsing energy
rising as sap,
bursting as leaf and flower
reddening as autumn glow,
fading as seasons change,
but always living, feeding and sheltering
and always showering with the truth of beauty,
the beauty of truth,
the hidden depths of earth.

And so in chorus
the triune voices mingle their songs
in one great chorus
unbroken, unbreakable, unending chorus.
Listen,

and you will hear
the singing Trinity.¹³⁷

The readings captured the playful, dancing tone of the hymns and the Psalm, and the questions for reflection were:

Do you like to dance?
Can you envision the Holy Trinity dancing together?
Can you envision yourself joining them?
If so, what kind of dance would it be?
If not, what keeps you from dancing?

Following *Terce*, we made our way to lunch. The places were set, and when everyone stood behind a chair, I offered the blessing from a lectern at the front of the table and to the side. Participants then took their empty bowls and lined up to receive the soup. Baskets of the bread that had been baking all morning were placed along the length of the table. Watching participants pass them to one another in silence remains an image of blessing for me. As they ate lunch, I read selections from Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*.¹³⁸

Acoustically, Cathedral Hall was a challenging space, and the use of a sound system only partly addressed the problem. I had thought that, because people were eating in silence, it would not be as much of an issue, forgetting the natural and obvious sounds of eating. Those with hearing challenges found themselves frustrated at not hearing what was being read, and even those without challenges strained to hear with the sound system. What I had envisioned as a peaceful time of sustenance and sharing was less enjoyable than it might have been. When everyone seemed to have finished the meal, I concluded with a reading and a blessing, after which there was a short period of free time

¹³⁷ Malone, 30-31.

¹³⁸ Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday Image, 1961).

before the bell rang for the next hour. I noted that some people stayed to help clean up after lunch, some moved to the washrooms, some to an activity station, but many seemed to be anxiously waiting for the bell to ring.

The gathering happened more quickly this time, all the voices filling out the *Taizé* chant much sooner than had been the case with the previous three hours. I was not sure if it was only because we were coming from lunch, or if it was part of a larger group dynamic. Singing the chant together seemed to move us into a deep place of worship even before the opening prayer for the hour of *Sext*, whose accompanying theme was “Illuminating.” Psalm 90 was chosen and the hymn was *Healer of our Every Ill*.¹³⁹ The reading was from Perpetua of Carthage:

Who Am I?

God of light, I have never known such darkness:
darkness all around me in this cell of death,
and deeper darkness in this cell of my own making.
Aching darkness now, when all that is loved and familiar is lost.
All that I knew of myself is gone;
I do not know what name to call myself.
The name of Mother – my child is gone.
The name of Daughter – my father and mother disowned me,
and even worse, I them;
The name of Citizen – the old familiar rules of life have lost their power.

But here alone in my unbeing,
alone but for my water jar,
I cry out to you and you rename me.
And then I know.
I feel your power welling up within.
Your hand strokes my face, again
I feel it, and there is my water jar telling me the mystery:
a jar is a jar is a jar.

¹³⁹ Marty Haugen, “Healer of our Every Ill,” in *Common Praise: Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 612.

And I?
I can only call myself that which now truly I am.
I have discovered my true name, my only name, my Self.
I am Christian:
and the prison becomes a palace.”¹⁴⁰

Sext was the middle hour of the unConventional, and a turning point as we moved from the welcome, praise and celebratory mood of the first three hours to a more intentional examination of the darker places in our lives. It was my hope that by the fourth hour we would have established a sense of trust in each other, in our singing and praying, to allow this theme to feel comfortable and appropriate. As we moved through this hour, the mood of the group seemed to echo the words of the concluding prayer, as we probed deeply, but gently, into the more complicated places in our lives:

God of hope,
in times of trouble save us from blind despair
and help us to wait in confidence
for the bloom of new life which,
in the darkness, we cannot imagine.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.¹⁴¹

As worship ended, I sensed a thoughtfulness in the way people left the stalls to return to creative activity. I wondered if they were pondering the questions raised for contemplation during the hour, or if they were considering the choice of creative activity or, hopefully, both.

Following *Sext*, I made my way to the kitchen to eat my lunch and to see how clean-up was proceeding, and found that it was almost finished. Bread-making

¹⁴⁰ Inspired by Perpetua of Carthage, in Mary T. Malone, *Praying with the Women Mystics* (Toronto: Novalis Books, 2006), 19.

¹⁴¹ *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), 773.

continued, and those who wished could take some home with them (this decision on the part of the baker was popular and well-received).

I then moved to the rosary-making station, sat down and began gathering beads. As I was counting out the beads I needed for the third time, having been silently interrupted and shown the work that was being made by the participants, I suddenly realized that my presence, while joyfully affirming, was also a distraction for them, and I quietly moved away from that table.

Through each of the hours, I was aware that a few people were connecting with the spiritual directors on hand for the day. This was done so quietly and unobtrusively that it was easy not to know it was happening (the previously agreed to signal for meeting the spiritual director was a light touch on the elbow, with the two then moving to a private area). This had been my hope, so that those who were seeking spiritual direction and counsel would not feel self-conscious.

At one point, I moved to my prayer desk to sit and reflect before the next hour, and noticed spiritual direction was taking place in the opposite choir stalls, so I quietly moved away from the chancel and wandered the hallways. I noticed a few people soaking up sunshine in the Garth, while reading and journaling. I observed people walking the labyrinth as I passed through Cathedral Hall and realized that, at different points during the day, I had subconsciously heard the chimes rung as people entered or exited the labyrinth. One participant commented that hearing the chimes as she was engaged in other activities gave her a profound sense of sharing someone's journey.

At some point in my wandering, I became aware that it felt like the bell should ring and that I was anxious for it to ring, even checking my watch to see if it was late (which it was not). I thought that my anxiousness might have had something to do with not having been engaged in a particular creative activity, but at a deeper level I realized that I was longing to pray, eager to reconnect with the unConventional congregation and to hear their voices mingling with mine and with the cloud of witnesses whose presence seemed so palpable each time we gathered. Then, I heard the bell begin to ring for *None*.

The accompanying theme for *None* was “Transforming.” Psalm 126 was appointed for the hour, and a reading from Hildegard of Bingen was used:

Rivers of Fire

Again I am in turmoil.
Should I speak or must I be silent?
I feel like a gnarled old tree, withered and crooked and flaky.
All the stories of the years are written on my branches.
The sap is gone, the voice is dead.
But I long to make again a sacred sound.
I want to sound out to God.
I want to be a young juicy, sap-running tree
so that I can sing God as God knows how.
O God, you gentle viridity,
O Mary, honeycomb of life,
O Jesus, hidden in sweetness as flowing honey,
release my voice again.
I have sweetness to share.
I have stories to tell.
I have God to announce.
I have green life to celebrate.
I have rivers of fire to ignite.¹⁴²

The sung refrain from Psalm 126 for this hour was, “Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.” As we sang the refrain and moved through the hour, there

¹⁴² Malone, 90.

was a sense that we were all in the deep end together, and it was terrifying and wonderful. The boxes of tissues placed in the choir stalls were used.

Three people who participated were unable to be there for the whole event, two came late and one left early. I had fretted about whether this would be destructive to the cohesive group dynamic we hoped to achieve, and wrestled with making full-day attendance mandatory. In the end, that seemed out of keeping with the spirit of creativity and sanctuary the unConventional was aimed at offering, and I chose to be flexible with attendance. The silence seemed to create a space where people could enter and exit without complication, at least in the small numbers we experienced. The two who came late had been briefed and knew when they would enter into the day, and slipped into a pew as if they had been there all along. The one who had to leave early slipped out after the fifth hour of *None*, noting on her post-evaluation how much she had wanted to stay and how much the first five hours had meant to her.

In the planning for the day, I had wondered if seven hours were too many for those unaccustomed to keeping the hours and if by mid-afternoon people would be restless and ready to leave or unable to engage in any more activities. I was surprised to sense a renewed energy among participants to try new activities or to return to one they wanted to pursue further. The children were in need of letting off steam and took themselves to the nursery, closed the door and let loose. When I discovered them I was equally frustrated, proud and amused. Frustrated with them for being so loud, and with myself for not having realized that they would need to do this, proud that they knew what they needed and took care of it, and amused because they looked so cute and guilty at the

same time. It would have been easy to take them outside to one of the nearby parks and let them experience another kind of sanctuary had I planned in advance. I agreed to let them remain in the nursery for some free time, and they agreed to come to *Vespers* when the bell rang.

As I went back upstairs, I was relieved to realize that the noise from the nursery had not carried to other parts of the building and observed hands and hearts engaged in creative work. I watched as one woman, a long-time member of the Diocese who had never before been in the Cathedral, explored the space as a pilgrim, pausing at the windows, touching the wooden carvings, and standing in the changing light as the colors of the clerestory windows were reflected on pews and floor.

As the bell rang for *Vespers* with its theme, “Magnifying,” I felt a quickening of excitement that it was time for the next hour and then a sinking sadness as I realized “there are only two more hours.” People again gathered quickly (including the children), and we sang the gathering song with loving familiarity. The reading for the hour was from Julian of Norwich:

And God showed me something small,
no bigger than a hazelnut,
lying in the palm of my hand,
and I perceived that it was round as any ball.
I looked at it and thought: what can this be?
And I was given the general answer:
It is everything which is made.
I was amazed that it could last,
for I thought that it was so little,
that it could suddenly fall
into nothing.
And I was answered in my understanding:
It lasts and always will
because God loves it;

and thus everything has being
through the love of God.¹⁴³

Putting the hours together, I had sought to shape them as one might dive: getting ready, checking the conditions, breaking the surface, exploring the depth and moving to resurfacing. Vespers was a transitional hour as we moved toward the end of the day and from deeper examination to resurfacing. In that space just beneath the surface of the water, we see things both above and beneath us differently as we do under a magnifying glass. The hazelnut reflection from Julian of Norwich conveyed this stance of being in two worlds at once. The words of the hymn *Dear God, Compassionate and Kind*¹⁴⁴ gave voice to the subtle shift from one space to another, “Reclothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives thy service find, in deeper reverence, praise.”¹⁴⁵

There was a sense of poignancy as we exited to engage in the final creative activity before the closing hour. The group (with the exception of the children who rushed to the beading table to make one more rosary) left the chancel slowly and thoughtfully and settled in to each space quietly. I had expected to feel a sense of relief at this point in the day, and was surprised that I felt sad that it was almost over, but noted that I was also excited for the next hour. No one started cleaning up early, but engaged fully in the time allotted for creative activity.

The bell rang for *Compline*, with the theme, “Returning,” and we moved to the choir stalls quietly but quickly. The music director’s playing and singing of the gathering

¹⁴³ Malone, 23.

¹⁴⁴ John Greenleaf Whittier, “Dear God, Compassionate and Kind” in *Common Praise: Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON; Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 455.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

song with intensity and power was matched by those adding their voices. We ended the day, as we had started it, by remembering Teresa of Avila's Feast Day with her words:

Castle

We consider our very souls to be like a
castle made out of a diamond
or
of very clear-cut crystal
in which there are many dwelling places.
We realize that the soul of the just
person is nothing else but a
paradise when the Lord finds
delight.
The castle has many dwelling places:
some up above,
others down below,
others to the side;
and in the center and middle are the
dwelling places where the very
sweet exchanges of love
between God and the soul
take place.
The door of entry to this castle is
prayer and reflection.

No Castles in the Air

What I conclude with is
that we shouldn't build
castles in the air.
The Lord doesn't look so much
at the greatness of our works
as at the love with which they are done.
If you find something good in the way
I have explained this to you,
believe that God indeed said it
so as to make you happy.
The bad you might find is said by me.
May God our Lord be forever praised and blessed. Amen.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Campbell, 14 and 142.

In addition to chanting Psalm 27 and singing the hymn *Precious Lord*,¹⁴⁷ the final hour of the unConventional included singing the *Nunc Dimitis* in two parts, with the congregation continually singing “go now in peace,” while the music director sang the verses of Simeon’s prayer. Our concluding spoken prayer was:

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
For you alone, Lord, make us to dwell in safety.
Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
For the night is at hand and the day is now past.
As the night-watch looks for the morning,
So do we look for you, O Christ.
Come with the dawning of the day
And make yourself known in the breaking of the bread.
The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face to shine upon us
and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us,
and give us peace, now and forever. Amen.¹⁴⁸

We then shared the response: “Let us depart in peace, in the name of the Lord, Amen.”¹⁴⁹

Some people stayed quietly in the choir stalls and completed their post-surveys; others quietly moved to clean up, put things away and get the Cathedral ready for Sunday. There was a gentle, joyful camaraderie among those cleaning up, and even those who had come from outside the Cathedral community and did not really know anyone participated and interacted as if they knew one other well. People entered easily into conversations, but without noisy banter. The clean-up was done quickly with so many helpers. I received the majority of the post-surveys on the day of the

¹⁴⁷ Thomas A. Dorsey, “Precious Lord,” in *Common Praise: Anglican Church of Canada* (Toronto, ON: Anglican Book Centre, 1998), Hymn Number 509.

¹⁴⁸ An Order for Night Prayer.

¹⁴⁹ Episcopal Church, *Offices for Seven Canonical Hours, Litanies and Other Devotions, Revised Edition* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), 188.

unConventional, and a few were brought to me later in the week.

I had worried that people would not feel enough of a sense of ending or closure to the day and had contemplated ending with the Eucharist, but determined that as we were keeping the hours in a context where the Eucharist would be celebrated the next day, it was good to keep the format for each hour similar in shape and length and to let each hour stand in its own simplicity. People found closure both in sharing *Compline* and in working together to clean up the space. Watching people leave the Cathedral, a loaf of bread in hand, was a visual blessing. They had tasted and seen the goodness of God and were taking it with them back to their homes and their parishes.

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE REFLECTION

Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows have gone over me.
By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.
– Psalm 42.7-8, NRSV

The unConventional invited people to enter the physical sacred space of a church and to create community within the context of a one-day retreat and, in so doing, to explore their internal sacred space. Faith communities around the world and across time extend similar invitations to pilgrims, seekers, disciples, prodigals and skeptics, and sometimes in this coming together there is a subtle shift or a changing of light that offers hints of transfiguration, a mystical encounter. Experiences of transfiguration, whether they happen to be named that way or another, are often so significant that people may spend their lives trying to find language to express the deep truth that was known in a moment in a way that honors the sacred they have encountered and allows it to infuse the other parts of life. And once we have entered, even for a moment, that time beyond time, part of us longs to know it again, even if only in memory.

When the mystical body of Christ¹⁵⁰ glimpses God's grace taking shape among us,¹⁵¹ how do we describe or define it in language that helps us remember, reclaim and hold onto it in all the moments that are less grace-filled? As heirs through hope,¹⁵² how do we maintain a faith life in which we are so steeped in the holy mysteries that, on the days when transcendence and hope are elusive, we still remember?

The phenomenon theologians might call epiphany, theophany or transcendence is studied by other disciplines as well. Some alternative understandings include psychology's use of flow, congruence, core self and depth (images also found in theological studies), physics and anthropology use the term synchronicity, and anthropology and theology look at the concept of *kairos* ("time"). Exploring these shared insights across disciplines adds breadth and length, height and depth to an encounter with God's love in Christ that is beyond our intellectual knowledge.¹⁵³

Looking at the life, writings, influences and mystical encounters of Teresa of Avila, on whose feast day the unConventional took place, help to add contour and texture to the ways God encounters have informed and shaped lives of faith. Teresa's honest articulation of the ecstasy and agony she encountered can enable us to see the mystical experience as one that is both grounded and soaring. This strange and sometimes strained reality of mysticism and God encounters also unfolds in the Biblical story of

¹⁵⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer Canada* (BCP Canada) (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 85.

¹⁵¹ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices" in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life.*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 15.

¹⁵² BCP Canada, 85.

¹⁵³ Ephesians 3:18b-19a, NRSV.

Mary and Martha of Bethany, whose home was one where Jesus encountered physical and spiritual hospitality.

The unConventional format for the day sought to incorporate practices of prayer that would both explore and be open to the transcendent. The balance and blending of silence, music, chant, creativity and community were important factors, and the spirit with which the participants entered into the day was essential.

In this chapter, I would like to explore different understandings of encounters with something that is beyond time and space and human understanding. I do this with care, recognizing that while we may know when we have transcended time and space, our capacity to describe it in ways others can grasp is precarious. Naming and describing God encounters is risky because each one is different and sacred and any attempt to find their shape or define their truth only offers hints. But our God regularly takes risks in the creation, redemption and sustenance of a beloved people, gifting them with glimpses of God's own self, so it seems we should at least try to find words and images to share these encounters with one another.

Evelyn Underhill cautions that mystics, in their urgency to convey the reality of their understanding and vision of holy, may muddy that which for them is so clear.¹⁵⁴ Jerome Gellman in his article "Mysticism" writes that one option for mystics is to keep quiet about their experience, but, he notes, "Mystics, however, have not been very good at this." Gellman explores the use of paradox as used to describe mystic visions and experiences and notes that "Reports of mystical experiences may be paradoxical also in a

¹⁵⁴ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. New York: New American Library/Meridian, 1974, 80.

sense because at times mystical language does assume logically offensive forms, when actual absurdity may not be intended.”¹⁵⁵

Blogger Gordon Atkinson describes his encounter with holy this way:

Suddenly I will be filled with a crazy joy that drives out any other thought or feeling. I shiver and tears come to my eyes, though I often don't know why I am crying. Something tickles my reptilian brain and it becomes absolutely convinced that there is more going on in the Cosmos than we can see or know with our meager five senses. And in that moment, every small thing I perceive seems aflame with God.”¹⁵⁶

Richard Wagamese's novel, *Indian Horse*, tells the story of Saul, a young boy who has been taken from his northern Ojibwe family and way of life and sent to a residential school where he suffered many horrors, but where he was also introduced to the game of hockey, a game which ultimately helped save him. His connection with the ice and the game was, for him, a mystical experience:

When I released myself to the mystery of the ice I became a different creature. I could slow down time, choose the tempo I needed whenever I launched myself into learning a new skill. I could hurtle down the ice at full speed and then bend time in upon itself to slow the turn, every muscle, every tendon, every sinew in my body remembering the movement, learning it, making it part of me.¹⁵⁷

For Saul, hockey was a place where he encountered something sacred both beyond himself and within himself. Eugene Peterson uses the term “congruence” to describe the place and space that opens for Michael Jordan when he plays basketball, for Itzhak Perlman when he plays Mozart on a Stradivarius, for a child unselfconsciously at

¹⁵⁵ Jerome Gellman, “Mysticism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/mysticism/>>. (accessed January 25, 2013)

¹⁵⁶ <http://tertiumsquid.com/lent-2013/im-all-in/#more-627> (accessed March 3, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Richard Wagamese, *Indian Horse* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2012), 65-66.

play, or in a meal, where conversation, food and wine bring “a Eucharistic dimension to the evening.”¹⁵⁸ Jeanne Murray Walker describes such an evening in her poem, *Dinner*

Party:

We lounge amid the wreckage of this lovely evening,
next to the little pelts of scooped-out cantaloupe
on blue Spanish plates, while Billie Holiday
drifts through us like fog through trees.
We have almost made it together inside loneliness,
almost reached that perfect shadowy place
where it doesn't matter what we say, the others
grasp it. We are chords in a new progression
into stillness, a new rendition of “All of Me,”
though none of us, if asked, could tell
what taught us such love was possible.

And then suddenly we're back in history,
as if a gust of gravity had swept in. Or
the rubber band snapped. And we're pulling on
our coats, reaching for polite goodbye phrases
like rain hats, remembering there's happiness
at home, too, and a Posturpedic mattress
and a dog to walk. We look plain again,
standing around like extras in a movie.
What happened among us may be true and secret.
It may be everything. But the night won't talk,
and none of us can find the word to loosen
its tongue. It was fun, we say later. It was fun.¹⁵⁹

Palmer also uses the term “congruence” when he describes people living integrated lives of meaning and wholeness which reflect the goodness of God.¹⁶⁰

Palmer's many books reflect his growing understanding of the importance congruence plays as people find ways to integrate who they are with how they live.

¹⁵⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 333.

¹⁵⁹ Jeanne Murray Walker, *A Deed to the Light* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 14.

¹⁶⁰ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) and *A Hidden Wholeness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

Ann Ulanov approaches this concept with the use of “core self” or “core.”¹⁶¹ She writes that depth psychology opens a way for our psyches to encounter mystery and, through that encounter, to perceive God coming to us. Ulanov references W.R. Bion and his use of “O” to “indicate a wholeness that includes and simultaneously surpasses everything in this moment to confer on us a sense of complete truth as momentous as it is brief.”¹⁶² Healthiness, Ulanov says, “is living this core with others who live their core, all together describing a circle of radiating being that takes up residence in each of us among us all.”¹⁶³

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi uses the term “flow” to describe what his discipline terms optimal experience.¹⁶⁴ “‘Flow’ is the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake.”¹⁶⁵ Csikszentmihalyi studied people who devoted themselves to something for the sheer enjoyment of it, and found that optimal experiences consistently involved the person being stretched by risk and discovery: “Athletes, artists, religious mystics, scientists, and ordinary working people described their most rewarding experiences with very similar words.”¹⁶⁶ This similarity in description was consistent across racial, class, age, and cultural differences.¹⁶⁷

Flow is more likely to be achieved when there is a balance between the capacity

¹⁶¹ Ann Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God and Psychic Reality*, 126.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 127.

¹⁶⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), 4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 6.

¹⁶⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention” in *Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 9.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

to do something and the challenge of doing it well.¹⁶⁸ Another factor in finding flow has to do with repetition, entering into the same experience, but recognizing it as different each time. Wayne Muller, in his exploration of the practice of keeping Sabbath says, “The perfection is in the repetition, the sheer ordinariness, the intimate familiarity of a place known because we have visited it again and again, in so many different moments.”¹⁶⁹

Musically, this concept can be understood through a *chaconne*, which has an underlying harmonic pattern and allows for complicated variation in texture and melody. *Taizé* chants have this form, with a familiarity and repetition which add depth and meaning. Csikszentmihalyi writes, “a piece of music that is too simple relative to one’s listening skills will be boring, while music that is too complex will be frustrating. Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person’s capacity to act.”¹⁷⁰

Having journeyed to *Taizé*, Belden Lane reflects on what it was like sitting on a concrete floor at the Church of Reconciliation, singing with hundreds of others who had also made the pilgrimage from all over the world, combining to represent over a dozen languages.¹⁷¹ Lane writes, “... something happens in the continual repetition of simple phrases put to song. The words and music, in French, Spanish, Polish, German and Latin, are echoed over and over like a mantra,” the repetition mystically bridging the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 74.

¹⁶⁹ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 89.

¹⁷⁰ Csikszentmihalyi, 52.

¹⁷¹ Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51.

many distances between the gathered people.¹⁷² He adds, “Sound and meaning are gradually internalized until repeating the words no longer requires conscious effort. People of many cultures find themselves praying in one language, with one heart.”¹⁷³ The *Taizé* chants incorporate “phrases that tell of the adoration and human longing, of God’s tenderness and Teresa of Avila’s consolation, that ultimately, nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.”¹⁷⁴

Research physicist and metallurgist Ursula Franklin approaches this idea by using the term “synchronicity,” which she defines by incorporating Carl Jung’s and Lewis Mumford’s understandings.¹⁷⁵ Mumford saw communities, and individual ways of working and living, structured differently with the introduction of the clock, “the bell’s call to work or prayer keeps a community in ‘sync,’ often imposing more and more detailed patterns of dominance on individuals and groups.”¹⁷⁶ Jung used the term to highlight “common patterns and acausal coincidences in establishing a sense of meaning and connectedness within and between individuals.”¹⁷⁷

In her Massey Lectures, Franklin uses the opposing term “asynchronicity” to add fullness to her concern and focus on the ways technology has led us from a synchronistic to an asynchronistic way of being in the world, which, she argues, has resulted in “unraveling social and political patterns.”¹⁷⁸ Her concern encompasses the asynchronous forms of labor that she sees reducing solidarity among workers and decreasing

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Lane, 51.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 51-52.

¹⁷⁵ Franklin, 150.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 150.

¹⁷⁷ Franklin, 150.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 151.

understanding of self.¹⁷⁹ Franklin states "... while synchronicity evokes the presence of sequences and patterns, fixed intervals or periodicities, coordination and synchronization, asynchronicity indicates the decoupling of activities from their functional time or space patterns."¹⁸⁰

Franklin notes that all things synchronous are not necessarily "good," nor are all things asynchronous necessarily "bad", citing the fact that, for women, working asynchronously includes "getting a bit of writing done when the kids are asleep, sneaking in a slice of private life into their tightly structured existences."¹⁸¹ "But," she says, "I see a real difference between *supplementing* a rigidly patterned structure with asynchronous activities and *substituting* synchronous functions by asynchronous schemes."¹⁸² (Italics hers.)

Franklin wonders where the balance is between the biosphere and the "bitsphere" – a term which William Mitchell uses to describe a world architecture where our email address is the place where we abide¹⁸³ and which Franklin expands to describe the internet and the way it reconfigures our understanding of time. Franklin sees the bitsphere as "a nonorganic environment designed to be accessed and utilized asynchronously"¹⁸⁴ and strongly contrasts it with the biosphere. In reference to the theme of "a commons," which she developed in a 1993 lecture,¹⁸⁵ she recognizes that the

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 151-152.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 150.

¹⁸¹ A good deal of this thesis has been written asynchronously, early in the morning before my children are awake.

¹⁸² Franklin, 152.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 155.

¹⁸⁵ Ursula M. Franklin, "Silence and the Notion of the Commons" in Ursula Franklin, *The Ursula Franklin Reader: Pacifism as a Map* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006).

bitsphere has contributed to the creation of a sort of “commons” and references the work of the group “Citizens for Local Democracy,” which came together to work for municipal change in Toronto, Ontario, largely based on a capacity to connect through the bitsphere.¹⁸⁶

The United States’ presidential elections of 2008 and 2012 were said to have been significantly influenced by the Obama campaign’s use of the bitsphere, connecting people who might otherwise have been disconnected.¹⁸⁷ The bitsphere also played a role in the 2011 Canadian general election, when, in a huge upset, the New Democratic Party became the official opposition for the first time in its fifty year history.

In the U.S. and Canadian elections, the bitsphere was used to get the word and the people into the biosphere and to bring like-minded people together to create a larger and more systemic change. These groups were approaching an ideal Palmer calls “communities of congruence.”¹⁸⁸ In these examples, politically-motivated interest groups were able to use the bitsphere to address the asynchronicity they sought in supporting a particular political agenda.

The bitsphere is also connecting people seeking to engage in spiritual communities. Joan Chittister, who is a member of the Order of Saint Benedict, and her community the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania have effectively used the bitsphere as a way of sharing the life giving, life saving and life sustaining practices they

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Scott Wilson and Phillip Rucker, “The Strategy that Paved a Winning Path,” *Washington Post*, November 7, 2012.

¹⁸⁸ Parker Palmer has developed his concept of congruence and living undivided lives in his books, including *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981, 1991), *A Hidden Wholeness* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2004) and *Healing the Heart of Democracy* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2011).

have come to know and cherish. The Sisters wrestled with the pain and cultural challenges faced by people who increasingly seemed to be turning away from the church.

Chittister writes:

What is the average person in search of a spiritual base, a platform for personal action in such a muddled world, supposed to do then? Where does someone in search of a spiritual life go when the anchors upon which, until this time, they have based their security and no small amount of their faith rust out and disappear in a reservoir of irrelevancies?¹⁸⁹

Their wrestling led them to establish *Monasteries of the Heart*,¹⁹⁰ an on-line community which seeks to honor and follow the Rule of Benedict. Support for members is provided in the bitsphere and in the biosphere, as the community connects on-line and in real time through retreats and making connections among members who live in the same area.

Another virtual community is *Abbey of the Arts*,¹⁹¹ which is similar in format to the Monasteries of the Heart, but with an added emphasis on art, creativity and “transformative living through contemplative and expressive arts.”¹⁹² Both websites are accessible, thoughtful and express an authentic and sincere desire to live their faith life in a community of “congruence,” expanded and contracted by the bitsphere.

Palmer’s personal encounters with depression and healing were integral in helping him to recognize and name the complex extremes which he feels hinder personal and communal integration. Palmer’s Quaker faith tradition has helped shape his understanding of silence and the importance of community. In *Let Your Life Speak*, he

¹⁸⁹ <http://sojo.net/magazine/2011/12/monasteries-heart>.

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.monasteriesoftheheart.org/>.

¹⁹¹ <http://abbeyofthearts.com/>.

¹⁹² Ibid.

writes, “I now know myself to be a person of weakness and strength, liability and giftedness, darkness and light. I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it but to embrace all of it.”¹⁹³

Palmer contends that integration is more likely when individuals have a support community of congruence which:

1. understands and affirms that living a divided life is not safe or sane;
2. helps live out and discuss identity and integrity privately until strength to go public is gained; and
3. develops skills and disciplines of social change which help people implement the heart’s imperatives in the external world.¹⁹⁴

The Greek word *perichoresis* describes and hints at the congruence in the Holy Trinity – the “threefold cadence”¹⁹⁵ inherent when we say “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”¹⁹⁶

Perichoresis indicates an interweaving of divine love, a cyclical movement, a dance.¹⁹⁷

Jürgen Moltmann echoes this sentiment, “The doctrine of the Trinity...is the wellspring of everything that lives, the keynote of all resonances, and the source of the rhythmically dancing and vibrating worlds.”¹⁹⁸ In reflecting and translating Karl Barth’s understanding of the Trinity, Hans Urs von Balthasar writes that the Trinity is the secret of God’s beauty, its radiant joy drawing people into the eternal dance.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 70.

¹⁹⁴ This summary of Palmer’s concept of communities of congruence is found in his essay written for the *Huffington Post*, January 3, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/parker-j-palmer/the-inner-revolution_b_1170426.html (accessed January 25, 2013).

¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, (New York: Continuum Books, 2007), 204.

¹⁹⁶ The Apostolic Greeting used to open Eucharistic liturgies in many Christian faith traditions including the Anglican Church, from II Corinthians 13:13, NRSV.

¹⁹⁷ Johnson, 213-214.

¹⁹⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1993), 16.

¹⁹⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, II/1:651*, in *The Glory of the Lord*, Hans Urs von Balthasar (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), I:55.

Ann Ulanov writes, “The mysterious core of self that we find and create in the space between us and others in some tiny way speaks, participates in, and mirrors the huge spaces among the three persons in one God.”²⁰⁰ When we are able to live into flow, when we are in sync with ourselves and God, there is both intimacy and a gracious spaciousness, which we encounter and see reflected in the beauty of the world around us. Belden Lane links the survival of the biosphere to our capacity to imitate “the exchange of love and reciprocity that characterizes God’s own innermost being. This is what the Holy Trinity can teach us best.”²⁰¹

In one of his earliest books, *Company of Strangers*, Palmer discusses the balance of solitude and community that is needed in our lives. They are not, he says, polar opposites, but two halves of a whole.²⁰² Palmer argues that congruent lives are to be found only when one finds a balance between solitude and solidarity. The church, Palmer says, has an opportunity – indeed, a mandate – to help shape and model this wholeness to its members and to the world, and it does this most effectively when it finds ways to live into the balance.

One of the problems named in Chapter 1 which leads to a sense of being “northless” is the way we struggle to stave off the aging process, while at the same time exposing our children to conversations and expectations beyond their years.

In discussing the challenges of aging, Stanley Hauerwas and Laura Yordy describe the alienation and loss elderly people feel from themselves and from others when their body does not even seem to be theirs anymore, their energy is depleted, and

²⁰⁰ Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 130.

²⁰¹ Belden C. Lane, *Ravished by Beauty*, 169.

²⁰² Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1981, 1991), 157.

the aches and pains and realities of aging leave them feeling like strangers not only to their new roommates (in the instance of living in a residence), but also to themselves.²⁰³

Young people learning to negotiate the world around them also find themselves feeling like strangers in a strange land. One of the profound gifts the body of Christ can live into is uniting the members of the body, at different ages and stages of development in a “friendship across generations,”²⁰⁴ not as a social service agency, but as part of the “Christian story embodied in the practices of the church.”²⁰⁵

“Cross-generational friendships” help to build up the Christian community in significant ways.²⁰⁶ Hauerwas notes, “The older person can teach, by example, how to age and die well; the young learn to honor the elderly as those with such an obligation.”²⁰⁷ Their interaction helps bring about recognition that living a life of wholeness when we are younger helps us to continue living into that wholeness as we grow old.²⁰⁸

The struggle of living into the brokenness and wholeness that is the Eucharistic mystery is described here by Walter Brueggemann:

We join the angels in praise/and we keep our feet in time and place ... awed to heaven/rooted in earth. We are daily stretched between communion/with you and our bodied lives, spent but alive, summoned and/cherished but stretched between.²⁰⁹

The contradictions Brueggemann names are consistent themes of the concepts of

²⁰³ Stanley Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 170-174.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 178.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 85-86.

optimal experience, flow, congruence and synchronicity. These ideas are also captured in Guthrie's understanding of prayer practices, when she states that "to subvert time we must enter time"²¹⁰ and when we are able to do this, we have learned to "walk in two worlds at the same time."²¹¹

In the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches, before the liturgy begins, the deacon exclaims, "It is time (*kairos*) for the Lord to act." This juncture where *chronos* and *kairos* meet, where quantitative time overlaps with qualitative, is one of transformation. In Madeleine L'Engle's book *Walking on Water*, she defines *chronos* as alarm clock time and *kairos* as God's time.²¹² "Jesus took John and James and Peter up the mountain in ordinary, daily *chronos*; during the glory of the Transfiguration they were dwelling in *kairos*."²¹³

We may struggle to describe or define *kairos*, but we know when we have been there: it is that space and place where we have dwelt with God, and we want, like Peter on the mountain, to stay in *kairos*. The best we can do is dwell faithfully in *chronos* and be open to *kairos* when it comes. L'Engle tells the story of a clockmaker who visited a village and all the people brought their broken time pieces to be repaired. The clockmaker examined them all, and pronounced that he could only fix those which had been regularly wound, as their owners would be the ones who could remember how to keep time. "So," writes L'Engle, "we must daily keep things wound: that is, we must pray when prayer seems dry as dust; we must write when we are physically tired, when

²¹⁰ Guthrie, 53 – for the complete quote, see Introduction to the unConventional Day (Appendix 3), 4.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Madeleine L'Engle, *Walking on Water* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980), 93.

²¹³ Ibid.

our hearts are heavy, when our bodies are in pain.”²¹⁴

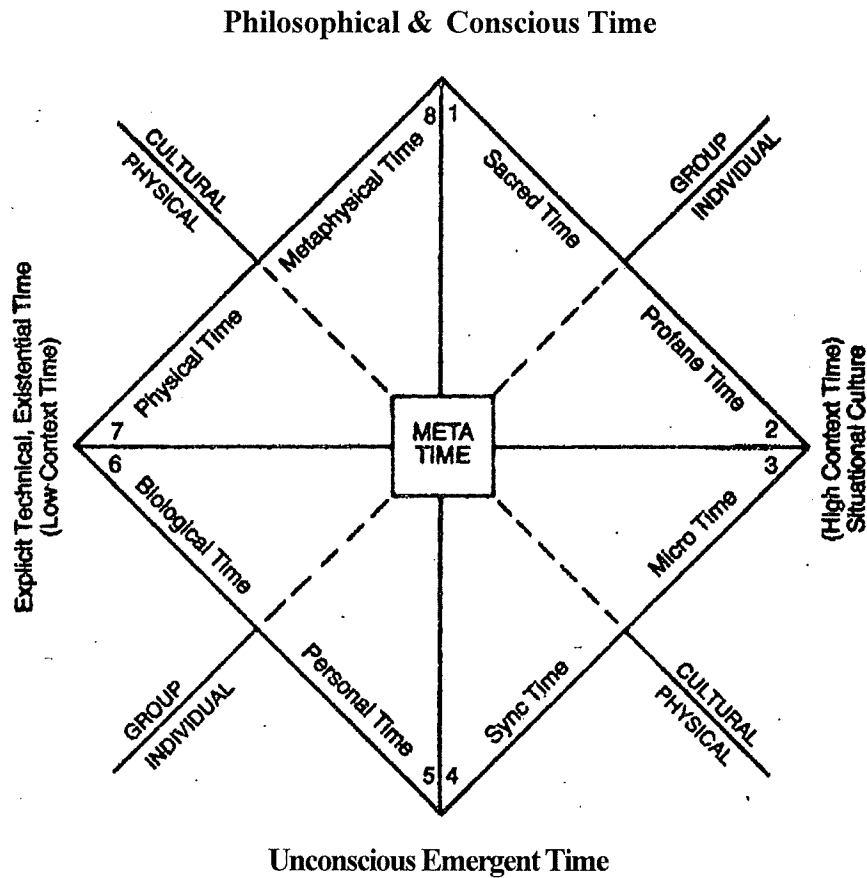
Anthropologist Edward T. Hall’s *The Dance of Life* explores the ways that our lives are shaped by rhythm and defined by different concepts and understandings of time. Sacred, profane, metaphysical, physical, micro, sync, biological and clock times all play a role in the way we make our way through life, consciously and unconsciously.²¹⁵ The rhythms inherent in each way of keeping time are a kind of time themselves. In seeking to classify the many kinds of time, Hall created a mandala, which he calls “A Map of Time.” Mandalas, Hall says, are able to show paradoxical relationships “in a comprehensive, non-linear fashion”²¹⁶ which allow for intuited relationships to be shown.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 96.

²¹⁵ Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984, 1989), 24-25.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 15.

Figure 4. Edward T. Hall's "A Map of Time."



Note: To discuss complementary systems, it is necessary to invoke Meta Time, which is where the integrative concepts are located.

Source: Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Time* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984, 1989), 15.

Sync time and sacred time, are two understandings of time that illumine the significant role Christian practices have in people's memories and experiences. The rhythms of language and prayer, and of being in community, are parts of the Christian tradition that have experienced subtle and not so subtle shifts and changes in function and form. Certainly, the change the Anglican Church of Canada made from primarily using the Tudor English of the *Book of Common Prayer* in worship to the more contemporary

language of the *Book of Alternative Services*²¹⁷ put complicated ripple effects in motion, disrupting and changing familiar rhythms. Changes in music styles, wording of hymns, instruments or tunes also impact the sense of rhythm in a congregation. Such things as leadership changes and the transience of families within a faith community can also affect the rhythm, as do renovations and construction projects.

Sync time began to be explored more fully when film soundtracks needed to be in “sync” with visual film footage. The work done in this area led researchers to recognize how people synchronize movements with voice.²¹⁸ When people are out of sync, dissonance occurs in sometimes destructive ways that result in a negative synchronization (think of riots). Being in sync, Hall says, “...is what one sees on a basketball court during championship games or when a good American jazz combo really begins to ‘groove,’ with the players constituting a single, living, breathing body.”²¹⁹ A single, living, breathing body is an image found in scripture to describe the body of Christ, and it is something we allude to over and over again in our imaging of the one bread and the wholeness we experience as our divided broken selves are bound up with God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Being in sync helps us find our way into sacred time.

When he was living and working among the Hopi tribe in the 1930s, Hall found that their religion was at the core of their lives, so that being in sync automatically

²¹⁷ The Book of Alternative Services (BAS) was introduced in the Anglican Church of Canada in 1985 and, in an article recognizing its twenty-fifth anniversary, Leigh Anne Williams says it still “elicits passionate responses” both for and against. Leigh Anne Williams, “Looking Back on the BAS: After 25 Years it Still has Power to Irk Some,” *Anglican Journal*, October 1, 2010. <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/nc/other/news-items/archive/2010/10/article/looking-back-on-the-bas-9379/abp/167.html> (accessed January 25, 2013).

²¹⁸ Hall, 25.

²¹⁹ Hall, 163.

propelled them into sacred time. The discipline, spiritual formation and initiation of children, the observation of and participation in the natural world and its seasons, and the relationships among tribal members were all part of their faith lives: “In fact, religion is at the center not only of social organization but also of government, which is part and parcel of Hopi ceremonial life.”²²⁰ The rhythm that shaped the village and the people found a fullness of expression in their dances. The Hopi marked time by referencing the dances with phrases such as “It was just before Wowochim.”²²¹

One of the challenges for what Hall calls the American-European mindset is trying to force sacred time into a model for clock time. “The mistake,” he writes, “is in trying equate the two or to act as if it were necessary to create a fixed relationship between the sacred and the profane.” When the American Indians participate in ceremony, he writes, they are “in the ceremony’s time. They cease to exist in ordinary time. For some, sacred time makes the rest bearable.”²²²

How many times, do those of us involved in the leadership of worship services, deal with the frustrating comments and questions about the length of the worship service and the need to be somewhere else at a particular time. It is hard for many in our North American culture to enter into sacred time, and perhaps part of the reason is that there are fewer opportunities for them to be in sync with themselves and with one another. The ancient practices of our faith have an inherent capacity to set our hearts, minds and spirits to the rhythms and mystery of God, when we can find clock time to fit them in.

Anthony Bloom, in *Beginning to Pray*, reflects on the importance of learning to

²²⁰ Hall, 37-38.

²²¹ Ibid, 38.

²²² Ibid, 28.

live into the present moment as we pray, incorporating a holiday spirit of relaxation and joy, letting schedules and time slots fade away.²²³ In *Primary Speech*, Ann and Barry Ulanov describe the sense of “flow” when prayer becomes our primary employment and the concern of finding time to pray washes away because we have recovered a sense of *kairos*, and because prayer has become so much a part of everything we do.²²⁴

In *Practicing Our Faith*, Dykstra and Bass explore the capacity of our Christian faith practices to help us keep time and find a way of life that honors God, neighbor and self. Because the practices are interrelated, they necessarily flow into one another, creating a confluence where God’s presence “ripples out into other parts of our lives.”²²⁵ All Christian practices are informed, shaped and marked both by prayer and Bible study and, when woven together, “form a way of life.”²²⁶ This way of life “becomes visible as ordinary people search together for specific ways of taking part in the practice of God, as they faithfully perceive it in the complicated places where they really live.” Living out of faith practices is “like a tree whose branches reach out toward the future, even when the earth is shaking, because it is nourished by living water.”²²⁷

The church, with its liturgical cycles and seasons, is an adept time-keeper. The daily and seasonal rhythms and cycles that shape our lives and world are reflected in our liturgical rituals and year. We circle around again and again, but enter them from different vantage points, based on where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. This threefold understanding is echoed in our Christian worship, “Christ has died,

²²³ Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 83.

²²⁴ Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech*. 125.

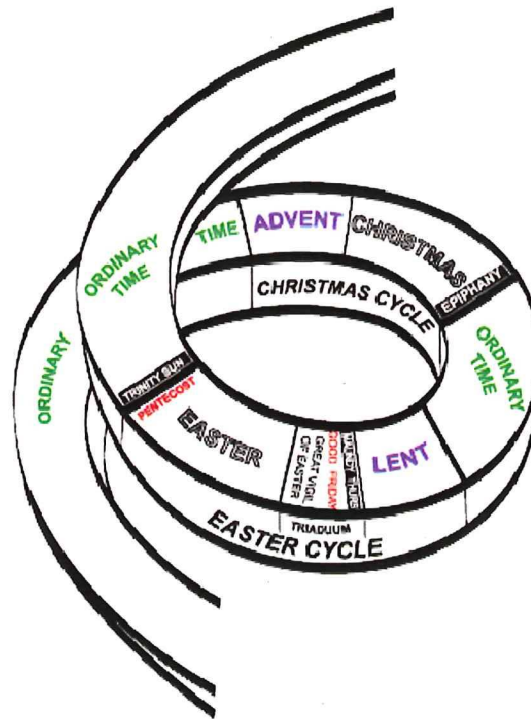
²²⁵ Bass, 10.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 203.

²²⁷ *Ibid*.

Christ has risen, Christ will come again.”

Figure 5. The Liturgical Year.



Source: Ministry Unit on Theology and Worship for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, *Liturgical Year: the Worship of God* (Supplemental Liturgical Resource 7) (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 25.

Within the cycles of our liturgical year, the Christian faith tradition has a variety of disciplines and practices which allow people of differing temperaments and gifts to live out their prayer lives in ways which allow for freedom of movement and flexibility. The liturgical calendar is a “link between story and time,”²²⁸ which helps us to anchor the stories and seasons of our lives in God’s story. In the opening chapter of their book

²²⁸ Ibid, 19.

Practicing Our Faith, Dykstra and Bass outline how practicing our faith is essential in helping us to see how “our daily lives are all tangled up with the things God is doing in the world” and how our faith practices done day in and day out, through the turning of the seasons help shape our lives in ways that transform them.²²⁹

When we share in the practices of our faith, we are practicing in the same way that someone is learning a new skill, like piano or baseball or another language. We learn the basics through rote rehearsing until our body’s understanding of it takes it deeper inside and it becomes a part of us. It is often uncomfortable following a common pace when it seems off kilter with where we are. Chittister notes, “Lent comes but you are not always feeling somber; or Easter and you cannot rejoice. But the rhythms of worship must be endured in spite of your moods ... Later when a Lenten time comes ... you remember the songs of lament you learned and are grateful.”²³⁰ Dykstra and Bass emphasize how important it is to understand that the practices are all a part of the one faith, as “many people try to cobble together a religious and moral life out of lots of disparate pieces.”

Learning to pray and living a life shaped by prayer requires discipline and commitment. Henri Nouwen spent seven months in a Trappist Monastery in Genesee, New York in 1974. The opportunity to live as a Trappist had been a long-time goal and dream for Nouwen. His journal from that time recounts the surprise in his struggle to enjoy and pray the manual labor assigned to him each day, particularly the task of washing and sorting raisins.

²²⁹ Ibid, 8.

²³⁰ Ibid, 10.

He worried that this was a spiritual shortcoming on his part and after several conversations with his spiritual director, discovered this insight: “Manual labor un.masks my illusions. It shows how I am constantly looking for interesting, exciting, distracting ideas to keep my mind busy and away from the confrontation with my nakedness, powerlessness, mortality and weakness.”²³¹ The gift he found in this unexpected challenge was that the repetitive, necessary, but boring work of washing raisins “at least opens up my basic defenselessness and makes me more vulnerable. I hope and pray this vulnerability will not make me fearful or angry, but instead open to the gifts of God’s grace.”²³²

The practices of our Christian faith, says Nouwen “flow into one another, each one making a space for God’s active presence that then ripples out into other parts of life.”²³³ These practices are frequently, like Nouwen experienced, less than exciting, but perseverance in living them moves us to a place where God’s presence breaks into our lives in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

Chittister, whose life and ministry has been shaped by the Rule of Benedict, writes, “Benedictine spirituality deals with the issues facing us now – stewardship, relationships, authority, community, balance, work, simplicity, prayer and spiritual and psychological development.”²³⁴ She sees the strength of the rule in its capacity to be “fresh and ancient, current and tried”²³⁵ as it offers a “way of life” more than 1,500 years old. The main tenets of the Rule of St. Benedict are *pax* (“peace”) and *ora et labora*

²³¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 130.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1992, 2010), xiv.

²³⁵ Ibid.

(“work and pray”) and the mingling of these concepts in all of life. Keeping fixed hours for prayer anchors the day for those following the rule. There are traditionally seven “hours” which reflect the turning of the earth: midnight, dawn, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, evening and night. Each hour is marked by Psalms, hymns and readings that are shaped by the emphases of the liturgical year including Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost. Fixed-hour prayers also follow a rhythm of praying the Lord’s Prayer, the *Nunc Dimitis* and the *Magnificat* at specific times during the day.

Monica Furlong’s introduction to her book *Visions and Longings: Medieval Women Mystics* notes that it takes a generosity of spirit for us to “open ourselves to the mystics’ way of looking at the world.” The mystics themselves embody a generosity of spirit in sharing their faith journeys, the questions, fears, visions and longings that gripped and changed them, their world and ours. This was certainly true of Teresa and her faith story. The integration of the disparate parts of herself so generously, courageously and honestly documented in her writings helps us to explore our own, those in our church and those in our world. Her authenticity allowed people to enter into her story and to have their stories changed by the encounter, just as she allowed herself to enter into God’s story and have her story changed.

In an essay about Teresa, Francine Prose writes that part of Teresa’s enduring appeal is her ability to embrace extremes, describing herself as “weak willed, vain, shallow, fond of pleasures and comforts, easily seduced and distracted,” while also possessing “the courage and steely determination to accomplish (more or less single-

handedly) the strenuous and controversial reform of the Carmelite Order.”²³⁶

Utilizing the resources available to her, Teresa was able to create some of the change she sought in her world. The asynchronicity that she named in the sixteenth century, when the counter-reformation was taking place alongside the Spanish Inquisition, was similar to the asynchronicity that she had seen in herself. In Mary Malone’s series on *Women and Christianity (Volume III)* she writes, “All the signs of a divided heart are present in her (Teresa’s) account of the first two decades of religious life, but eventually, her life fell into shape with her remarkable conversion experiences around her fortieth year.”²³⁷

As a young woman coming to terms with herself and her vocation, Teresa was helped by the writing of Francisco de Osuna. Integration of body, mind and spirit is a recurring theme in Osuna’s *Third Spiritual Alphabet*,²³⁸ which was influential in Teresa’s growing spiritual life and conversion.²³⁹ Connections to Teresa’s understanding of the embodiment of her faith can be seen in Osuna’s words, “wherever you go carry your mind along, for no one should go divided unto himself. Do not allow your body to travel one path, your mind another.”²⁴⁰ Teresa of Avila scholar Peter Taylor says, “Teresa’s strategy of spiritual embodiment and delight has as its end or goal personal transformation leading to re-engagement with the world.”²⁴¹

This understanding is seen in the path Teresa followed after her conversion.

²³⁶ Francine Prose, “The Ironic Doctor,” in *A Tremor of Bliss*, ed. Paul Elie (New York: Riverside Books, 1994), 155-156.

²³⁷ Mary Malone, *Women and Christianity: Volume III* (Ottawa, ON: Novalis Books, 2003), 76.

²³⁸ Francisco de Osuna, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet*, trans. Mary E. Giles (New York: Mahwah, 1981).

²³⁹ Edward Howells and Peter Tyler, eds., *Revitalizing Christian Spirituality* (London: Continuum, 2010), 139.

²⁴⁰ Osuna, 50.

²⁴¹ Howells, 142.

Despite constant battles with ill health, she helped to establish seventeen convents throughout Spain, and promoted a renewed dedication to poverty, purity, obedience and contemplation, “but her natural common sense and deep humanity kept her from the harshness that this reform might imply.”²⁴²

Teresa was, to borrow Palmer’s images explored in *A Hidden Wholeness*, able to move from a divided life to wholeness. But, while Palmer is concerned that obsession with codes of conduct prohibit wholeness,²⁴³ Teresa found that complete ignorance of codes of conduct promoted divided lives in individuals, in Religious Orders, in the Church and in the world. For Teresa, “... freedom was the enemy of reform and the contemplative life, and she set her heart on restoring the primitive rule in all its strictness, and a very strong emphasis on obedience.”²⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that freedom to travel and speak and write all played a large role in helping establish the reforms so important to her.

At the same time that Teresa was reforming her Order, dealing with and addressing the huge internal corruption and external challenges that were a part of her world, she was also prone to mystical transports “that removed her from quotidian reality, and from ordinary consciousness.”²⁴⁵ In one of Teresa’s most famous visions, an angel pierced her heart with a fiery lance and left her burning with a great love of God. Prose writes that Teresa’s description of the vision and “its undeniably and almost comically sexual overtones” led to Bernini and Robert Cranshaw’s preservation of Teresa

²⁴² Malone, 77.

²⁴³ Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 8.

²⁴⁴ Malone, 77.

²⁴⁵ Elie, 158.

in sculpture and verse being an “over the top” portrayal of a “swooning, hysterical female visionary, brought to the spiritual equivalent of orgasm by the overwhelming force of her religious fervor.”²⁴⁶

The reality, Prose argues, was much different. Teresa’s visions both frightened and embarrassed her, and she found balance in outlining ways to help others find their way into a life of prayer through her writing and witness of presence. She was a prolific author and her complete works translated into English span three volumes. Favorite themes and phrases in Teresa’s writing include, “‘drawing near,’ ‘recollecting or centering’ oneself, and the continual necessity of vocal prayer, to tame the ‘wild horses’ of the mind.”²⁴⁷

Psychiatrist Gerald May names Teresa’s *The Interior Castle* as an exploration of the “spiritual dimensions of consciousness” which he says, “reflects a profound in-touchness with the divine.”²⁴⁸ Friendship with God, says Malone, was key to Teresa’s understanding of her relationship and calling.²⁴⁹ It was a friendship that deepened over the years, and a concept she explores in *The Interior Castle*.

Her confessor ordered her to write this book which Teresa completed over a period of two very difficult months, when she battled debilitating illness. In *The Interior Castle*, Teresa “describes seven dwelling places in the interior castle and the process of transition from one to the next.”²⁵⁰ The first three castles are for beginners and the last

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 159.

²⁴⁷ Malone, 81.

²⁴⁸ Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1982, 1992).

²⁴⁹ Malone, 81.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

four are for those experiencing the “indwelling of the Trinity.”²⁵¹ Teresa was sixty-two years old when she wrote *The Interior Castle*, she had “for five years been aware of the depth of spiritual life she describes as the ultimate stage of the spiritual journey.”²⁵²

Exploring Teresa’s image of the interior castle leads us to recognition of how our deepest levels of consciousness reflect God while at the same time God’s presence there illuminates each layer of dwelling with compelling clarity. “Depth psychology” Ann Ulanov says, “furthers this two-way seeing. It helps us make connection to the liveliness of truth held in religious symbols.”²⁵³ Our shared existence with others is mingled with holy, in our dreams, and in our conversations, our very way of being we come to know God and ourselves more fully.²⁵⁴

Rowan Williams, in reflecting on Teresa’s interiority, says that for Teresa an authentic self-knowledge means we come to terms with our blocks, histories, neuroses²⁵⁵ and adjust our behavior accordingly, almost without thought because we have come to know ourselves that well.²⁵⁶ Williams writes that, for Teresa, all of who we are is “held within the basic, un-dramatic awareness of being a creature on the road to full life with God by the help of his grace.”²⁵⁷ This understanding and embracing of the different parts of self, combined with a knowing that those parts are also lovingly held by God modeled by Teresa, helps us to see how we might integrate our own lives more fully.

Teresa’s shift from an ecstatic experience that resulted in physical collapse to a

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Volume II*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980), 264.

²⁵³ Ulanov, 2.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (London: Continuum Press, 1991, 2003), 149.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

daily, deep knowing of the ecstatic in the mundane that she traces in *Interior Castle*, is significant, writes Sarah Coakley, Divinity Professor at Harvard University.²⁵⁸ Teresa's capacity to know union with God in the work of the kitchen transforms a fleeting intimacy into a "permanent, incarnate reality."²⁵⁹

Teresa concludes the *Interior Castle* with a discussion about how "necessary it is for Mary and Martha to walk in each other's company."²⁶⁰ "Believe me," she writes, "Martha and Mary must work together when they offer the Lord lodging, and must have Him ever with them, and they must not entertain Him badly and give Him nothing to eat. And how can Mary give Him anything, seated as she is at His feet, unless her sister helps her? His food consists in our bringing Him souls, in every possible way, so that they may be saved and may praise Him forever."

Mary and Martha were part of Jesus' community and both found light and life in relationship with him. Their struggles along the way to integrate their responsibilities, to build a steady rhythm using their particular gifts and their challenges, were, like ours, often fraught with humor, annoyance, reality, grief and hope. In one encounter, Martha saw Jesus sitting and sharing with her sister Mary and others in her home, while she felt stuck in the kitchen. We can imagine that part of her longed to be there with them and part of her was angry at Mary for not being in the kitchen, and at both Mary and Jesus for failing to recognize Martha's need. When she voiced her anger and frustration, Jesus responded by calling her name and asking her to recognize her worry and anxiety. He

²⁵⁸ Sarah Coakley, "Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 89.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, trans. E. Allison Peers (New York: Image Books, 1961), 225.

affirmed Mary's right to listen and reflect and said, "One thing is necessary, Mary has chosen the better part."²⁶¹

What is the better part that Mary has chosen? Perhaps it is her capacity to be in the moment and know God there with her, and to trust that the mundane chores could wait. Martha had the same opportunity but lost it amid her anxiety and frustration. Not that there wasn't work to be done in the kitchen but that in her need for Mary to make the same choice she did, Martha was unable to find blessing and prayer in her work. We all struggle with dissonance and with a yearning to find congruence – a knowledge of God's presence with us in our labors and in our rest, reflection, studies and exertions. If she had not been experiencing the pressure of needing to feed Jesus and the disciples as well as her household, would Martha be able to experience her role in the kitchen as "the better part"? In her serving and caring for others, was there ever an opportunity to know a sense of flow?

Different life stages bring different challenges and conversations, but a deep understanding of the ways peace, prayer and work can mingle and be lived out in community can enlighten and inspire us at every age. Our Christian practices help us live faithfully into the complexities of the ages and stages of our lives. When Martha and Mary's brother Lazarus died, Martha was able to articulate to Jesus that she believed he was "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."²⁶² Somewhere between the kitchen and Lazarus' tomb Martha's faith had grown and stretched her in new ways. Ever pragmatic, she reminded Jesus that the stench from the tomb would be

²⁶¹ Luke 10:38-42 NRSV.

²⁶² John 11:27 NRSV.

great when he asked that the stone be removed.²⁶³ In the continuing dialogue with her Jesus says, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”²⁶⁴ With no further recorded comment from Martha, the stone is removed and Lazarus is called forth, stench, bandages, bewilderment and all.

What are the stones that keep us from moving in a rhythm of God’s grace? The pragmatic fears, the heavy hindrances that keep barriers between work, prayer and peace? What are some ways that other faithful people have found helpful in living into the mystery of transformation? And when the stones are removed, or we find our way around them, can we live with the stench, while a new creative order takes shape, and breathes new life into us and all the different parts of our lives? As the body of Christ, we must strive to embody the mystery of our faith so that we facilitate and encourage our children to prophesy and our old people to dream dreams. Opportunities within the faith community for intergenerational interaction which affirms the mingling of gifts and experiences as well as the unique attributes that accompany age and stage is one way of living into this mystery.

Another way the church can help remove the stones between work, peace and prayer is by offering creative options and additions to our worship services, so we might help people from a variety of histories and backgrounds move from the frenzied space they currently inhabit to the peaceful place they yearn to be, and perhaps, by the grace of God, to a place that allows the peace of God which passes all understanding to keep their hearts and minds and spirits dancing with the Holy Trinity in the eternal dance of life.

²⁶³ John 11:39 NRSV

²⁶⁴ John 11:40 NRSV

When we encounter the living God through worship, prayer, music, beauty, creativity, silence and mentors who model these, our restless spirits are able to rest, we experience flow, and we find communities of congruence and a balance between the synchronous and asynchronous parts of our lives. Worship in its deepest sense helps us to connect our deep shadowed selves to the God who knows the deep intimately and fully.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home,
and a swallow a nest for herself ...
– Psalm 84:2-3, NRSV

“Every creative journey begins with a problem. It starts with a feeling of frustration, the dull ache of not being able to find an answer. We have worked hard, but we’ve hit the wall. We have no idea what to do next.”²⁶⁵ Immersing ourselves in challenge, in disappointment, in confusion and sitting with those feelings, allowing them to wash over us, Jonah Lehrer writes, is one of the essential steps of creativity. “The first stage is impasse: Before there can be a breakthrough, there has to be a block.”²⁶⁶

My creative journey in developing the template for the unConventional retreat began with exploring the sense of “northlessness” prevalent in North American society and the accompanying deep need for sanctuary a “northless” people crave. Identifying “northlessness” was, for me, an impasse. It is a reality of our culture that seems to be not

²⁶⁵ Jonah Lehrer, *Imagine* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2012), 6.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

only entrenched, but growing deeper. I was surprised to realize that, while one part of my brain identified that deep need and was gingerly holding onto the truth of it, another part of my brain was rapidly racing along with ideas of how the church might offer direction, orientation and rest. After that breakthrough, it seemed at times that the unConventional retreat almost wrote and organized itself. The rich opportunity I had to both create the format and then to share in the reality of keeping the hours and engaging in creative activities with the unConventional community was blessing. After the event, I was able to reflect on the various scientific and theological aspects that came to the surface through designing and experiencing the day. This final chapter which analyzes the learning that came out of the whole process mirrors this learning cycle. All along the way, there have been blocks and then breakthroughs – moments when I have felt absolutely stuck and then suddenly knew how to proceed.

Teresa of Avila often experienced the block that leads to creativity. In chapter one of *The Interior Castle*, she wrote, “Today while beseeching our Lord to speak for me because I wasn’t able to think of anything to say nor did I know how to begin to carry out this obedience,²⁶⁷ there came to my mind what I shall now speak about, that which will provide us for a basis to begin with. It is that we consider our soul to be like a castle made entirely out of diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ “This obedience” being the order her confessor gave for her to write, as her book *Life* had been confiscated by the authorities during the Inquisition.

²⁶⁸ Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980), 283.

Teresa's description paints a picture not only of the castle she sees, but also of the moment when she moves from being stuck to knowing how to proceed. We can almost feel the amazing propulsion that allowed her to write *The Interior Castle* in two months time. The real weight of being blocked suddenly seems feather light when insight occurs.

In the 1990s, Mark Beeman, Associate Professor of Brain, Behavior and Cognition at Northwestern University, and Ezra Wegbreit, who at that time was a graduate student in Beeman's lab, studied moments of insight. Stroke victims were frequently told that if the right hemisphere of their brain had been damaged it was less significant than left hemisphere damage. Beeman began studying what was different for those with right hemisphere damage as a way of better understanding the way the different parts of the brain work together. Their studies found that "The suddenness of the insight is preceded by an equally sudden burst of brain activity. Thirty seconds before the answer erupts into consciousness, there's a spike in gamma-wave rhythm, which is the highest electrical frequency generated by the brain."²⁶⁹ But, they wondered, where did the burst of gamma waves originate? This question led Beeman and Wegbreit to discover a "small fold of tissue, located on the surface of the right hemisphere just above the ear"²⁷⁰ which "became unusually active in the moments before an epiphany."²⁷¹ The right hemisphere of the brain makes connections. It is the place where metaphors, jokes and riddles are linked and the linking process then whispers the insight to our consciousness, just when we are about to give up.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Lehrer, 17.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid, 18.

“Godly Play” evolved out of Jerome Berryman’s work with and study of children and his understanding that meaningful learning happens best when curiosity and play are encouraged and engaged.²⁷³ Playfulness helps bring about meaning, insight and understanding as we explore the vast mystery of God. “Sensing the existential limit of our being and knowing causes us to draw in our breath. There is inspiration. When breath is released, exclamations shade into one another with overlapping meanings.”²⁷⁴ Berryman sees the progression of insight as moving from silence, to recognition of presence to identifying the experience of presence to delighting in the presence and the recognition of it with laughter. Like Joplin’s five-stage model of experiential learning, which will be explored later in this chapter, Berryman recognizes the capacity and necessity of the circle of meaning-making being a spiral that moves to increasingly deeper levels of engagement and understanding.

In creating the template for the unConventional, I wrestled with the dull ache and frustration that I know in my ministry: that longing to help people connect more fully to the mystery, wonder and rhythm of God. A longing to create space where spiritual insights were possible, even probable. I wrestled with my own inability to continually live into that beautiful, holy space where God dwells in and with us. I wrestled with the things that keep me from dwelling there, and began to name them. They seemed vague at first – distractions, busyness, to-do lists, weariness, lack of space. As I came closer to naming my blocks, I realized that they are probably, even likely, some of the same blocks which keep others from being able to live into the mystery and rhythm of God.

²⁷³ Jerome Berryman, *Godly Play* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 149-150.

In creating the unConventional template, I also remembered and embraced those moments and encounters when the Spirit of God swooped through those aches and frustrations with laughter and transformation. Belden Lane explores the playfulness of God and says, “My problem is one of limited imagination. Like most of us, I simply can’t believe that God’s love is actually as exuberant and playful as it is.”²⁷⁵ While we may think we prefer “soft and harmless play,”²⁷⁶ we often find it lacks ambiguity: “the highest form of play,” writes Lane, “is one that dares to toy with our deepest fears.”²⁷⁷ He continues, “Only a bold and rowdy playfulness can draw the whole of what I am to the God who toys with death for the sake of stubborn love.”²⁷⁸ This is part of the appeal and ongoing witness of the saints, many of whom shared in “hardy and playful banter with God.”²⁷⁹ Teresa of Avila was known for her saucy retorts to God and others in authority, as well as to herself, and Mechtild of Magdeburg pre-echoes Belden Lane in her exploration of God at play, “I, God, am your playmate! ... your childhood was a companion of my Holy Spirit.”²⁸⁰

As a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, my life and routines are shaped by the liturgical year, daily prayer and weekly celebrations of the Eucharist. My family’s life is shaped by these patterns as well, but among my daughters’ friends and my husband’s colleagues, we are an exception. In my conversations with those whose life rhythms are not shaped by the liturgical calendar, I heard a longing for something more

²⁷⁵ Belden Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182.

²⁷⁶ Lane, 182.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 183.

²⁸⁰ Woodruff, 47 and 54.

and I began to pair that longing with those things I see the church offering: beauty, space, silence, words of hope and healing, mystery, creativity. Could a one-day seasonal retreat infiltrate the barrage of noise, responsibilities and care that weigh so many down? Could a one-day encounter where participants were invited to create with the Creator bring an added measure of peace to lives so much in need of it? And could the experience of keeping hours, engaging in creative activity and entering into the beauty of holiness spill over into the quotidian?

The format for the unConventional intentionally created space for silence, the work of creative activities, and worship. The worship was designed to incorporate “the beauty of holiness” in silence, singing, sacred readings (including scripture and the Christian mystics), prayer, questions and space for reflection. Each hour was shaped to be repetitive and familiar. The design for the day incorporated Eugene Peterson’s understanding that Christian spirituality should be Christ-centered, Biblically-based, and rooted in Christian tradition, but should also reflect and respond to the realities of life.²⁸¹ “Christian Spirituality,” writes Michael Platting, “is characterized by concepts such as development, growth, maturation, progression, advance, pilgrimage, ascent, dynamics and transformation.”²⁸²

From the outset, the unConventional was envisioned and designed to be an inter-generational, holistic learning environment that would be deliberately experiential, based on Laura Joplin’s five stage learning model.²⁸³ Joplin’s “five-stage model is organized

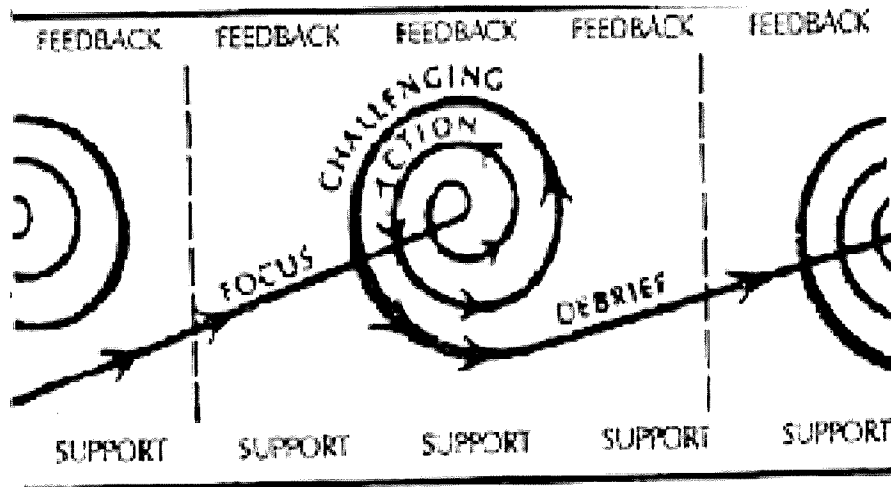
²⁸¹ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 5.

²⁸² Howells, 125.

²⁸³ Laura Joplin, “On Defining Experiential Education,” in Karen Warren, Mitchell Sakofs and Jasper S. Hunt, eds., *The Theory of Experiential Education* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1995), 15-22.

around a central, hurricane-like cycle²⁸⁴ of focus, challenging action and debrief, which are encompassed by support and feedback. This model is based on an involved paradigm, where everything is connected to everything else and those relationships are explored.²⁸⁵

Figure 6. Laura Joplin, System of Experiential Education.



The format of keeping the hours and engaging in activity were an “action-reflection” cycle. While the activities remained the same, each hour introduced more probing themes and questions, and reflected Teresa’s idea of prayer taking us deeper into the interior castle of our spiritual lives.

In setting up the day, time was set aside for introducing the day clearly and intentionally (see “Introduction to the unConventional Day” in Appendix 3). The careful introduction of how the day would work helped to provide the support that Joplin shows

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 16.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 19.

as foundational to experiential education. Some participants mentioned that the introduction to the day was “most helpful.” Two people mentioned having “start anxiety” when first entering the church, and found the introduction helped them move into the day.

“Support demonstrates that the learner is not working alone but has human responsiveness that accepts personal risk taking. Support is implemented in many subtle and obvious ways.”²⁸⁶ Facilitators were present in each of the creative activities, demonstrating and assisting, as needed, the rehearsal of the songs that would be used throughout the day. A map and schedule helped to support participants by showing the goals for the day (the map was not in the program with the schedule, and some people forgot there were activities in the kitchen tucked behind Cathedral Hall – including a map, or signage calling attention to the kitchen, might have helped).

Each hour was focused by the theme, music, reading and questions. Creative intervals had potential for challenging action. Debrief came informally, as we re-gathered for the next hour, and, more formally, at the end of the day with the evaluation. Non-verbal feedback was provided in the gathering for worship. Each hour showed a tangible sense of increasing comfort – in the way people took their places in the choir stalls, the increased audibility of the singing and the warm and affirming eye contact people shared. The display boards where artwork was shared provided another form of feedback. Chimes sounding as people entered and exited the labyrinth served to connect the participants to one another’s activities, as did the slow, steady progression of stitches, as the Celtic angel took form in thread. Heron (1998) described this type of learning as

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 18.

presentational. “In presentational construal we do not require words to make meaning, as when we experience presence, motion, color, texture, directionality, aesthetic or kinesthetic experience, empathy, feelings, appreciation inspiration or transcendence.”²⁸⁷

The action stage was present following each hour, as participants chose and moved to an activity. Joplin cites Leslie Hart’s observation that the brain is “on” when it is actively choosing, ordering, and making decisions. So, Joplin says, in designing an experiential program, it is mandatory that the students have responsibility in the learning process. Palmer says that some things must be acted out in order for us to discover who we are in relation to them.²⁸⁸ These descriptions of active learning echo Howard Gardner’s extensive work on multiple intelligences, particularly bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.²⁸⁹

Lehrer’s study of creativity and insight demonstrated that for there to be an “aha” moment, there first had to be a block, a problem, even if that problem was “what do I do next?” Scientists describe the essential features of “insight experience” as impasse, revelation and certainty: “I’m not sure what to do, look at all these options. I’ll try this. Yes, this is what I am going to do.”²⁹⁰

At the unConventional, intentional observation of people’s faces as they processed these stages of thinking was fascinating. As they exited the choir stalls, some moved with uncertainty as they considered options, then it became clear when they had made a decision and began moving with determination, taking up their chosen activity

²⁸⁷ Jack Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 5.

²⁸⁸ Palmer, *The Active Life*, 103.

²⁸⁹ Gardner, Howard, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983; 1993).

²⁹⁰ Lehrer, 7.

and then, in several instances, the light in their eyes and faces changed as they began to figure out the task and revel in it.

The highest stress levels mentioned in the evaluations clustered consistently around two areas: choosing an activity and chanting the Psalms during the keeping of the hours. Comments included: “I felt least peaceful when deciding what to do next.” “I felt least peaceful when I was trying to learn needle work, and when I could not find the pens I am used to using for calligraphy.” “I felt least peaceful in choosing activities.” “I felt least peaceful when doing the activities,” I felt least peaceful when singing the Psalms and trying to be creative in the scriptorium.”

An important goal of the unConventional was to create space where participants could encounter the peace of God in expansive ways, so it was counter-intuitive to realize that for a deeper sense of peace to emerge beyond the opportunity to be in the quiet space and rhythm of the day, there needed to be contained encounters with stress. Palmer observes, “Some traps and snares may actually be opportunities for experiential learning, that profound source of knowledge that many of us need in order to grow.”²⁹¹

In Ursula LeGuin’s novel *Always Coming Home*, the character Stone Telling describes her apprenticeship as a potter:

It was a good thing for me to learn a craft from a true maker. It may have been the best thing I have ever done. When mind uses itself without the hands it runs the circle and may go too fast ... The hand that shapes the mind into clay or written word slows thought to the gait of things and lets it be subject to accident and time. Purity is on the edge of evil, they say.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Parker, *The Active Life*, 104.

²⁹² Ursula LeGuin, *Always Coming Home* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 175.

Purity on the edge of evil, order on the edge of chaos, peace on the edge of stress are all sharp-edged places that put us on alert and thrust us in eye of the storm of growth. The opportunity to live into our faith necessarily brings us into contact with contrasts. One of the strengths of Joplin's five-stage model is that it recognizes and names this pattern and establishes parameters that allow the encounter with challenge to happen within the appropriate boundaries of support and feedback.

The chanting of the Psalms was one of the intentionally ancient practices included in the format for the day. The challenge of chanting seven different Psalms would, it was hoped, be an opportunity to stretch muscles not normally used, vocally and spiritually. Brueggemann discusses the power of the Psalms in their capacity to help us hear the voices of those who have called out to God their agony, despair, grief, hope and longing.²⁹³ Orientation, disorientation and reorientation shape the rhythm of the Psalms,²⁹⁴ themes echoed in the rhythm of worship and the liturgical year.

The balance between familiar and unfamiliar is important in our capacity to stretch and grow. In his blog *Tertium Squid*, Gordon Atkinson, who is new to the Episcopal tradition and was confirmed as an adult in early 2013, writes about the grumbling he has heard from people who enter a worship service and don't know what's going on. He responds:

... here's the deal: do you really want to go to a church for the first time and understand everything that's going on? Do you really want to walk into the most sacred hour of the week for an ancient spiritual tradition and find no surprises and nothing to learn or strive for? Do you really want a spiritual community to be so perfectly enmeshed with your cultural expectations that you can drop right into the mix with no effort at all, as if you walked into a convenience store in another

²⁹³ Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 1.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

city and were comforted to find that they sell Clark Bars, just like the 7-11 back home?²⁹⁵

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat agrees with Atkinson, "... when one walks into sacred space and sacred community, partaking in the worship of an ancient, covenantal community, it's okay not to understand everything from the get-go."²⁹⁶ While both Barenblat and Atkinson recognize the importance of welcome and enough familiarity to enter into worship and community, for them, much of the beauty is found in encountering the unfamiliar. Barenblat writes, "... there's also a lot of spiritual richness in giving oneself over to an experience one doesn't entirely intellectually understand, and trusting that faith and connection and understanding will grow over time."²⁹⁷

Worship, then, is also experiential learning, and, when done well, naturally models Joplin's five-stage model. The gathering song created comforting and familiar space each hour, as did the Lord's Prayer, call and response that were the same for each hour. The shift in readings, hymns, Psalms and questions provided challenge and newness. That this pattern worked, at least for one person, is heard in this combination of responses: "I felt most peaceful when we sang the Lord's Prayer and during the prayers for the hour. I felt least peaceful when singing the Psalms and trying to be creative in the Scriptorium." In a follow-up conversation with this participant, she reported that she was surprised how much she disliked chanting the Psalms, how hard it was, and how much she wanted to keep doing it. For her, the combination worked well –

²⁹⁵ <http://tertiumsquid.com/category/beginners-guide-to-becoming-episcopalian/>, posted January 22, 2013 (accessed January 30, 2013).

²⁹⁶ <http://velveteenrabbi.blogs.com/blog/>, posted January 23, 2013 (accessed January 30, 2013).

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

she knew that if she made it through the chanting of the Psalm, the comfort of singing the Lord's Prayer was on the other side.

Contemplative practices lead us into encounters with our deeper selves. Cynthia Bourgeault explores the practice of chanting the Psalms and writes that it, like other spiritual disciplines, will bring us into contact with our shadow side.²⁹⁸ The Psalms, Bourgeault writes, "In their various moods and amazingly shrewd insights into the human condition, they really do seem to contain the entire gamut of human emotional experience, from the heights of exaltation to the depths of desolation." Part of the power Bourgeault sees in incorporating the Psalms into our conscious and unconscious prayer lives is how they will "create a safe spiritual container for recognizing and processing those dark shadows within ourselves, those places we'd prefer not to think about."²⁹⁹

In praying, chanting and living the orientation, disorientation and reorientation found in the Psalms there is potential for reconciliation, integration and movement toward Palmer's idea of a congruent life. The presence of spiritual directors at the unconventional helped provide the support and feedback seen in Joplin's model. Bourgeault points out that intensive Centering Prayer retreats provide directors so that, when "buried memories, pain and undigested emotional and physical trauma ... surface," there are resources in place to help those memories to "be processed, held as precious, embraced and released."³⁰⁰ One respondent reported that he was least peaceful when "given a difficult insight from God," and relieved to work through that insight with one of the spiritual directors on hand.

²⁹⁸ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Chanting the Psalms* (Boston: New Seeds, 2006), 42.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 43.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 42.

When I met with the unConventional leaders to debrief the event, I was surprised to hear us name a sense of what William Condon terms “entrainment”³⁰¹ (although we did not yet know that term). Hall explores Condon’s use of the word to describe “the process when two or more people become engaged in each other’s rhythms, when they synchronize.”³⁰² What I named as a “quickenings” inside myself when I was ready for the next hour to begin, the others called “excitement,” “readiness” and “yearning.”³⁰³ We noted that our bodies began to recognize when it was time for the bell to ring, finishing the work in which we were engaged just moments before the bell rang, and some even noticed increased heart rates.³⁰⁴ We observed that the group came together more quickly each time, both in their physical return to the choir stalls and in their innate patterns of connecting in song and prayer.³⁰⁵

In pre- and post-surveys, unConventional participants (24 respondents out of 42 participants) were asked to rank their peacefulness level upon arriving and leaving and to compare it, on a scale of one to five, with “one” being distracted/not peaceful and “five” being very peaceful. Most reported an increase in peacefulness; a majority reported at least a two-point increase. Of the three respondents who reported no change, their peacefulness levels upon arriving were already high (five, four and four) and remained high at the end of the day.

³⁰¹ Hall, 177.

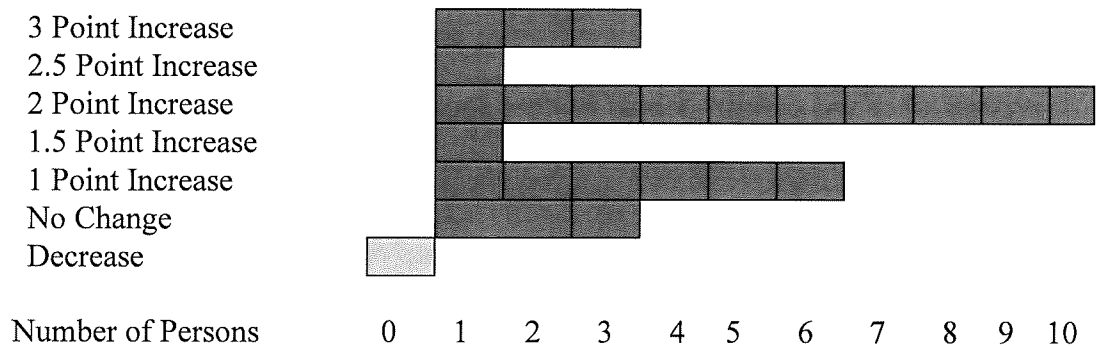
³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ An unConventional debrief conversation at Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa, November 3, 2011.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

Figure 7. Change in “peacefulness” before and after the unConventional, for 24 post-unConventional survey respondents out of 42 participants.



Because the youngest participants did not fill out the survey, it is harder to do an age comparison. Respondents in the adolescent/young adult range reported a two-point increase in peacefulness. None of the respondents indicated a decrease in peacefulness.

Living into and finding creative tension in ourselves, our work, our worship, and our play are key to our integration. Richard Cabot’s insight that humans need “original, personal creation” in work, play, love and worship in order to “feel at home in the world”³⁰⁶ was helpful in structuring and reflecting on the unConventional format.

It is clear that people are looking for connection, integration, congruence and flow in their lives. The church has the capacity to be a holistic space in which these things naturally occur. Connection to the holy happens when there is silence, creativity (which includes playfulness), attentiveness to beauty, and levity. When these are in place, the church is living into its call to be sanctuary.

³⁰⁶ Richard C. Cabot, *What Men Live By*. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 336.

The work leading to the creation of this project included a congregational study³⁰⁷ of Christ Church Cathedral, a part of which was an exploration of what people value about the Cathedral, what brought them there, and what keeps them there. Out of that study, and subsequent surveys by the Parish Council Executive Committee, it became clear that people see and value the Cathedral's capacity to offer sanctuary in a rich and full way. The unConventional was one of the Cathedral's first forays into identifying the Cathedral as sanctuary and, since then, the clergy, staff and members of the Cathedral have sought other ways to highlight the Cathedral as sanctuary. "Music as Sanctuary" provides a mid-week musical offering at lunchtime. "Labyrinth as Sanctuary" is a monthly opportunity for praying the labyrinth with musical accompaniment which changes with the seasons.³⁰⁸ New signage outside the Cathedral evokes this image as do logos created for the Cathedral's website.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ The Congregational Study was presented in 2010 at the Virginia Theological Seminary as a requirement of the Doctor of Ministry program.

³⁰⁸ Labyrinth as Sanctuary is currently on hiatus, until the construction of the new Cathedral Hall, with a new labyrinth, is completed.

³⁰⁹ <http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/cathedral/#Music%20as%20Sanctuary>.

Figure 8. New signage at Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa.



The spiritual formation programming at Christ Church Cathedral now includes seasonal inter-generational retreats, based loosely on the unConventional template, with a shortened day to accommodate those who need naps after lunch. The working name for these events is “Inter-generational Sanctuary.”

A larger question, and one with significant implications for the ways the church lives out its call as sanctuary, is how, if at all, the peacefulness encountered in a one-day retreat (or a lunchtime sacred music oasis, or a Friday night labyrinth walk) spills over into other parts of life. Does an experience of sanctuary have any impact beyond the day? Two individual illustrations and one group illustration help give some sense of how this kind of learning is transformational based on Mezirow’s understanding of how “we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings and meanings”³¹⁰ and “to

³¹⁰ Mezirow, 8.

gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers.”³¹¹

One participant, in the 60 to 75 age group, had always liked the idea of engaging in artistic activities, but had been intimidated to join a formal group. During the unConventional, she challenged herself to go to the water-color station, where she produced several small prayerful pieces of work over the course of the day. She contacted me a few weeks later to say she had signed up for a weekly water-color course at a community center. “I found it was easy to incorporate it (painting) into my prayer life” she said, “but I needed the push of a group to get me doing it regularly.” She found the weekly impetus to engage in creative work with a group helped her prayer life. Over a year later, she is now taking a weekly drawing course and finds that art has become a regular part of her prayer life and discipline.

Another example is from the 13 to 18 age group. A young woman who keeps the unConventional prayer booklet beside her bed, and uses it regularly when praying, mostly when waking up and going to sleep. A rosary she made is kept there, too, and she sometimes takes it with her to school, a tangible reminder of God’s presence with her throughout the day. Always faithful in church attendance, after the unConventional, she found herself drawn to participation in the life of the church beyond singing in the choir, and is now an intercessor and reader whose lovely, prayerful presence blesses the congregation.

Prayer Practice is a nascent small group (five to seven regular participants) at Christ Church Cathedral, all of whom attended the unConventional, who meet every

³¹¹ Ibid.

other week to provide ongoing spiritual support and care for one another. I recently asked them if they would consider Palmer's concept of a "community of congruence" and whether or not they felt their group met this criteria.³¹² Their responses were varied and informative. The participants all clearly value the sharing and support they experience in this group. One respondent writes, "I learn from the others, I am somewhat more disciplined because of them, my spiritual experiences are made clear to me because the necessity of sharing them keeps coming up, I am encouraged and supported, and I feel I have another family on whom I can rely."³¹³

Another member of the group responded this way:

Prayer Practice has brought together a few people who are mindful/concerned about their personal relationship with God and His creation. Our meetings are a sacred space to open our minds and hearts to our personal discoveries, joys and concerns. As the small group represents very different formation, experience and stages of life, the response is very supportive. I value the opportunity to gather in prayerful support of ourselves, the parish and world in which we are blessed to live.³¹⁴

Despite the deep and faithful connection of the group, this respondent felt that it was not a "community of congruence" because the group was not, in her view, concerned with social outreach or action. Another member of the group, who is very involved in social outreach, described what she saw as the group's slow and steady movement toward social action from their "regular, sustaining and enriching conversations."³¹⁵ After meeting together for over a year now, she wrote, "We can speak from the heart without

³¹² Palmer's criteria, as outlined in chapter three, are: (1) understands and affirms that living a divided life is not safe or sane; (2) helps them live out and discuss identity and integrity privately until they gain strength to go public; and (3) develops skills and disciplines of social change that help people implement the heart's imperatives in the external world.

³¹³ An unConventional participant and Prayer Practice member e-mail, January 23, 2103.

³¹⁴ An unConventional participant and Prayer Practice member e-mail, January 23, 2103.

³¹⁵ An unConventional participant and Prayer Practice member e-mail, January 22, 2103

fear. We can raise issues that bother us about our society and our church.” She did not know whether or not the group would be able to move from their orderly conversations to the messier business of social action, but was encouraged at the growth she experienced in herself and in the group.³¹⁶

The *Prayer Practice* group met the Sunday after I had invited them to share their thoughts about how the group helps shape their faith lives. They initiated an exercise that they thought might “offer an inkling” of what their group is like. The group of five that met that day, each wrote a single word or phrase and then passed it to the person on their right, who in turn added a word or phrase in response. When the original phrase or word reached the person who had written it, they then summarized or added a final response: Here are the compelling phrases that emerged from the exercise:

Confused

lost at sea

Yes. My own anchor has been cut loose and I am wondering what I am being called to do about it.

The waves at sea lap against my boat.

I feel vulnerable without a sure course.

Do I look for the closest harbor?

Everything to God in prayer ...

Seeking

Why do I try so hard?

I am seeking too.

Is our seeking what brings us together?

Yes- let's all gather and build on the experience/wisdom of others.

It is a gift of God!

I am grateful for this response. I think community life is important. Now I feel that receiving this response from you is better than having worked it out alone or to have failed to go to that lonely place.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Light

Embrace the light.
Hands extended, a quickening heartbeat, I run toward the light
– it can be blinding initially.
See/search for the light in all people and situations
– it is there!

The light is beautiful.
It lifts the heart.
That light is also within me.

Sunrise

My bedroom window looks east. The sun is rising earlier each day. It has to be high enough to catch the walls and roofs of my neighbors' houses.
The sun is a reminder that each day is a gift from God. Everything starts again – all is new and all is possible!
I watched it come today. I think it was apricot---not pink and I felt warm and happy.
With each rising sun I remind myself to care gently for my spirit, as gently as I would a friend.
God's promise, his presence, his light,
the dawn of something fresh in the cycle of the familiar.
A call forth from the world of sleep.

Openness

Know this as a gift from God and share widely to /with those you encounter.
A Gift of the Spirit.
Does openness seek to be filled?
Is it readiness?
Do you like it?
or a wish for something more?
Opening, allowing and accepting are my ways.
Showing up is all God asks.
Looking out – Welcoming in”³¹⁷

³¹⁷ *Prayer Practice* exercise, January 27, 2013, at Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa. E-mail to Dawna Wall, January 27, 2013.

The member who compiled the poetry/prayers wrote that the exercise “captures the essence of our exchanges, but somehow on a more heart-centered level than our regular dialogue.”³¹⁸

The deep faith commitment and yearning that brought the participants to the unConventional shows that each of them was already seeking to live into the mystery, rhythm and creativity of God. In this instance, the unConventional helped to provide impetus for more regular gatherings, which in turn have enriched personal and public prayer life. This is encouraging for those who regularly plan events like this, because it demonstrates how their work can provide opportunities to live into the experience of God, and the experience can then continue to work in individuals and, as in the instance of the Prayer Practice group, in the community, whose written words show forth the *perichoresis* present in their companioning of one another.

Deep and lasting peace comes when we are able to find ways to integrate work, productiveness, silence, prayer, contemplation and community. Retreats are natural ways for the church to invite people into sacred space where they might “pass ... time in rest and quietness”.³¹⁹

Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner discovered that rites of passage almost always involve some encounter with anti-structure.³²⁰ Anti-structure can involve formal or informal ways to allow people to step out of routines and to enter into a complete change in rhythm and routine. In North American culture, this often happens in camp

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ The Order for Evening Prayer, *Common Prayer Canada* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962), 24.

³²⁰ Mathieu Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30(1):1-25, (1991), <http://www.ingenta.com/journals/browse/bpl/jssr/>, (accessed January 25, 2013).

and retreat settings, or more radically in programs like Outward Bound (an outdoor adventure experience). The unConventional structure of keeping hours interspersed with work for the body, soul, heart and mind was an anti-structure, a transformative ritual that provided an opportunity to examine and live into the rhythm, mystery and playfulness of God.

Lane writes, “God’s invitation to the spiritual life is a call to the high-risk venture of being loved more fiercely than we ever might have dreamed. It’s an invitation to embrace the ambiguity of play.”³²¹ The unConventional affirms that the church’s invitation to the spiritual life should be no less of a high-risk venture, as the God who frolicked with Leviathan seeks to live and laugh and frolic with us through each stage and phase of our lives.

³²¹ Ibid, 184.

CONCLUSION

The unConventional was a day-long retreat which gave participants an opportunity to experience silence and a flexible keeping of the seven ancient hours in a church setting; unplugging from daily responsibilities and technology, and sinking into the rhythm and mystery of God through prayer, singing, movement, creative work activities and interaction with the unConventional community.

The retreat was designed, in part, as a way of addressing the deep need many people have to re-orient their lives in ways that help anchor them to God. An exploration of being “northless”³²² indicates that many people, inside and outside the church, are searching for ways to faithfully incorporate silence, creativity and prayer into the rhythms of their work and play.

Jesus’ Great Commandment was instrumental in thinking through and articulating the goals for the unConventional:

- Loving God with your heart;
- Loving God with your mind;
- Loving God with your body;
- Loving God with your spirit;
- Loving your neighbor; and
- Loving yourself.

³²² The title of an art exhibit by Susana Anagua held in Lisbon, Portugal in 2008.

42 participants, ranging in age from seven to over 80 spent Saturday, October 15, 2011 gathered at Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa to mingle creative work and prayer, in a “commons” of quiet, reflection and sacred space. The participants were self-selected registrants; the majority came from the local Ottawa area, but two were from New York State, and six were from the wider Anglican Diocese of Ottawa. Seven were from outside the Anglican tradition.

Levels of peacefulness were self assessed by participants before and after their experience of the unConventional. There was an increase in peacefulness for the majority of respondents. Those who did not report an increase indicated that the high level of peacefulness reported upon arrival was sustained.

The unConventional template was envisioned, designed and shaped to be an inter-generational, holistic learning environment, deliberately experiential in nature. Joplin’s five-stage model of experiential learning was reflected in the intentional support and feedback offered and in the selection of a wide variety of activities, which would ensure that participants might not only encounter something new and challenging, but also take responsibility for choosing it.

Following the observation of each hour, participants engaged in 45 minutes of creative work (with the exception of *Terce*, which was followed by lunch). A bell sounded at the end of each session to call people back to the choir stalls for the keeping of the next hour.

Increased comfort levels among participants throughout the day were observed, as they mastered different creative tasks, sang each hour more audibly and eagerly, and in the non-verbal ways they supported and encouraged one another.

The seven hours that were kept reflected the themes suggested by their Latin titles: *Matins* – Awakening; *Lauds* – Praising; *Terce* – Dancing; *Sext* – Illuminating; *None* – Transforming; *Vespers* – Magnifying; and *Compline* – Returning. Each hour's format was the same, incorporating Joplin's hurricane model of focus, challenging action and debrief, encompassed by feedback and support.

During each hour, a different Psalm was chanted, incorporating in context and in experience the orientation, disorientation and reorientation Brueggemann names as central themes of the Psalms.³²³ Readings from Christian women mystics were incorporated into each hour, beginning and ending with Teresa of Avila, on whose Feast Day the event took place.

The activities in which participants could participate included: labyrinth walking, illuminated letters, water-color, cross stitching, rosary making, journaling, gardening, praying with icons, reading and engaging in self-directed art projects.

The unConventional sought to create a space where the people of God could experience what in different disciplines is called optimal experience, flow, congruence, and synchronicity. A Biblical exploration of Mary and Martha and their encounters with Jesus offers insight into the different parts of us that struggle to find balance and cohesion.

³²³ Brueggemann, 2.

The enduring impact of the unConventional within the Cathedral has included seasonal inter-generational retreats, enriched small group prayer practice, a deeper and more creative prayer life for several participants and an increased focus for the Cathedral in offering ministries of “sanctuary.”

POSTLUDE

Rededication

Some days I can enter
the holy of holies
by snapping my fingers:
the door swings open.
Other days I ransack
every pocket to find the key
and when I get inside
the room is darkened.
There's mud on the floor,
the intricate altar
is grimy, askew,
its heartbeat silenced.
I sweep the ashes away
open my thermos of tea
re-hang the tapestries,
great branches arching.
At last I light the lamp:
the glint, the glow
regenerating, the homefire
eternally burning.
Learn to trust again
that this oil is enough
to open my eyes
to God, already here.
– Rachel Barenblat, “Rededication”

I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,
And I would no longer be denied; all things
Proceed to a joyful consummation.
– Archbishop Thomas Beckett, in T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*

A church knows where its centre lies and what direction it faces; having direction is always part of its meaning.
– Margaret Visser, *The Geometry of Love*

A Compass Rose is set in the floor of the nave of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Canterbury, England. The sixteen points of the compass correspond to a three hundred and sixty degree circle. On a warm August evening in 2012, I had an opportunity to slip out of my sandals and to stand barefoot on the Compass Rose. In that sacred, ancient, soaring space there was, for me, a profound sense of seeing many worlds come together; where with just a turn of the head, the past, present and future all seemed visible with astounding clarity. As I looked in each direction, I pictured the members of the Anglican Communion around the world, in all their amazing and complicated diversity. I imagined the songs, languages, colors and prayer books that help define them in each place. I envisioned their faith stories intersecting, connecting and overlapping as each laments their Good Friday moments; sings and dances their resurrection days; hopes their way into Advent; lights a path with their Epiphanies.

I remembered the story of Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, whose quarrel with King Henry II had brought knights to the Cathedral who sought to silence him in 1170. And I recalled how, upon making his way to Vespers, Thomas Becket insisted that the door to the Cathedral be left open behind him, saying, “It is not right to make a fortress of this house of prayer, the church of Christ.”³²⁴ The knights followed

³²⁴ Edward Grim’s eyewitness account, written between five and seven years after Becket’s death in 1170.

and then killed him, but his faith and ours tell us that death is not the victor, that the door to eternal life and that hope remains always open.

Earlier in the day, I had encountered pilgrims who had made their way to Canterbury from all over the world, including a large Japanese contingent that settled in for Evensong and prayed beside pilgrims from Germany and Canada. People of all ages prayed and toured the space, some with canes, some in strollers, some in groups, and some alone.

While the church, like the people who form it, has often lost direction in significant ways, voices of reform, accountability and hope have by the grace of God helped to ensure that the church is still a space and place where pilgrims can come to reset their inner compasses and reclaim the wholeness of a self united in body, mind and spirit.

As searching people seek ways of connecting to that which is sacred, churches have a rich opportunity to offer sanctuary to these modern day pilgrims, seekers, poets and saints.

Churches by design speak of space, mystery, history and wonder. These beautiful buildings created and built by the people of and to the glory of God, offer their own testimony to enduring faith. Finding conventional and unConventional ways to help people through the doors and into that wondrous space is a challenge and a blessing. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

UNCONVENTIONAL POSTER

unConventional
*Unplug with the Mystics --
a day of silence, prayer, music and art.*

Offering of Faith by Monika Seidenbusch

Feast of St. Teresa of Avila
October 15, 2011 • 9 - 5

Christ Church Cathedral | 420 Sparks Street | Ottawa
Suggested Donation: \$25 includes a light lunch
To register call: (613) 236-9149 x 17 or e-mail unconventional@bell.net

APPENDIX 2

UNCONVENTIONAL WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*A Book of
unConventional Hours*



Feast of St. Teresa of Avila
15 October 2011
Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa

The Schedule for the Day

9:00 Registration and Introduction to the Day

10:00 1st Hour *Matins* Awakening

10:15 Activity

11:00 2nd Hour *Lauds* Praising

11:15 Activity

12:00 3rd Hour *Terce* Dancing

12:15 lunch

1:00 4th Hour *Sext* Illuminating

1:15 Activity

2:00 5th Hour *None* Transforming

2:15 Activity

3:00 6th Hour *Vespers* Magnifying

3:15 Activity

4:00 7th Hour *Compline* Returning

**Each hour will include questions for reflection.
You are invited to explore these questions in
your activities – and give expression to them
through your personal creativity.**

*Seven times a day do I praise you, because of your
righteous judgements.
Psalm 119:164*

The Hours

Matins Awakening

The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino

The Request for Presence
*Give ear, O Lord to my prayer, and attend to the
voice of my supplications. Psalm 86:6*

The Greeting
*God you have searched the ends of the earth
to find us and you who know each of us
thoroughly –
all that we are, have been and will be;
meet us here in this place and awaken in us the
knowledge of your presence.*

The Refrain (sung)
*For you alone, O God, our soul in silence waits,
for truly our hope is found in you. Psalm 62:1*

A Reading from Teresa of Avila

Questions for reflection:
Where are you awake to God's presence in your
life?
Where are the sluggish, sleepy places where you
need awakening?
Think of a time when you were awakened gently,
and another time when you were startled awake.
Which do you need now?

The Refrain (sung)
*For you alone, O God, our soul in silence waits,
for truly our hope is found in you.*

Hymn 9 (*Slivers of Gold*)

Psalm 139

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayer Appointed for the Hour
*God of mystery and power,
even our minds and hearts
are the veils and signs of your presence.
We come in silent wonder
to learn the way of simplicity,
the eternal road that leads to love for you and for
your whole creation. We come as your Son Jesus
Christ taught us and in his name.*

The Concluding Prayer
*Word of God,
who created and fashioned us,
who knows us and searches us out,
who abides with us in light and dark:
help us to know your presence in this life
and, in the life to come, still be with you;
where you are alive and reign,
God forever and ever. Amen.*

*Let us depart in peace,
In the name of the Lord. Amen.*

Lauds Praising

The Call to Prayer - *Confitemini Domino*

The Request for Presence

Let your peoples praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you!

Psalm 67:3

The Greeting

You have made me glad by your acts, O Lord; and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.

The Refrain (sung)

You laid the foundations of the world and all that is in it. Psalm 89:11

A Reading from Mechtild of Magdeburg

Questions for Reflection:

What is your natural style of praise?

Quiet acknowledgement, exuberance?

Think of a time when you were praised.

Were you able to accept the praise, and enjoy it?

The Refrain (sung)

You laid the foundations of the world and all that is in it.

Hymn 309 (*Praise the Lord*)

Psalm 148

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayer Appointed for the Hour

O Glorious God,

the whole of creation proclaims your marvellous work:

increase in us a capacity to wonder and delight in it,

that heaven's praise may echo in our hearts and our lives be spent as good stewards of the earth;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Concluding Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator of heaven and earth;

you open our eyes to see the wonders around us, and our hearts and mouths to praise you.

Now give us strength for loving service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us depart in peace,

In the name of the Lord. Amen.

Terce Dancing

The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino

The Request for Presence

You are the Lord; do not withhold your presence from me; let your love and faithfulness keep me safe forever.

The Greeting

My heart sings to you without ceasing; O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever. Psalm 30:13

The Refrain (sung)

You have rescued my soul that I may walk before God in the light of the living. Psalm 56:12

A Reading from Mechtild of Magdeburg

Questions for Reflection:

Do you like to dance?

Can you envision the Holy Trinity dancing together?

Can you envision yourself joining them?

If so, what kind of dance would it be?

If not, what keeps you from dancing?

The Refrain (sung)

You have rescued my soul that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

Hymn 458 (*Seek Ye First*)

Psalm 121

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayer Appointed for the Hour

Lord, ever watchful and faithful, we look to you to be our defence and we lift up our hearts to know your help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Concluding Prayer

Be present, merciful God, and protect us in times of danger, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life may rest in your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Let us depart in peace,

In the name of the Lord. Amen.

<p>Sext Illuminating</p> <p>The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino</p> <p>The Request for Presence <i>O God, you are my God, eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren land where there is no water. Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory. Psalm 63:1-2</i></p> <p>The Greeting <i>Your loving kindness is better than life itself, my lips shall give you praise. So will I bless you as long as I live. Psalm 63:3-4</i></p> <p>The Refrain (sung) <i>I trust in the mercy of God, for ever and ever. Psalm 52:8b</i></p> <p>A Reading from Perpetua of Carthage</p> <p>Questions for Reflection: Illuminated letters are beautiful extensions of the words they decorate. How does God illuminate your name – what symbols, pictures or words would surround your name?</p> <p>The Refrain (sung) <i>I trust in the mercy of God, for ever and ever.</i></p> <p>Hymn 612 (<i>Healer of our every ill</i>)</p>	<p>Psalm 90</p> <p>The Lord's Prayer</p> <p>The Prayer Appointed for the Hour <i>Almighty and everlasting God, increase in me the gifts of faith, hope and charity; and that I may obtain what you promise, make me love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, one God for ever and ever. Amen.</i></p> <p>The Concluding Prayer <i>God of hope, in times of trouble save us from blind despair and help us to wait in confidence for the bloom of new life which, in the darkness, we cannot imagine. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.</i></p> <p><i>Let us depart in peace, In the name of the Lord. Amen.</i></p>
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None Transforming

The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino

The Request for Presence

Test me, O Lord, and try me, examine my heart and mind.

Psalm 26:2

The Greeting

All your works praise you, O Lord, and your faithful servants bless you. Psalm 145:10

The Refrain (sung)

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Psalm 126:6-7

A Reading from Hildegard of Bingen

Questions for Reflection:

How have you experienced transformation in your life?

How have you seen transformation at work in the lives of others? Butterflies gain strength enough to fly through their struggle to get out of their cocoon – is there a time when you have felt this kind of transformation?

The Refrain (sung)

Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.

Hymn 646 (*Grafenberg*)

Psalm 126

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayer Appointed for the Hour

Gracious God, in times of sorrow and depression, when hope itself seems lost, help us to remember the transforming power of your steadfast love and to give thanks for the new life that we cannot now imagine. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

The Concluding Prayer

O God, the fountain and source of everlasting life, in your light we see light: increase in us the brightness of knowledge that we may be lightened with the radiance of your wisdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us depart in peace.

In the name of the Lord. Amen.

Vespers Magnifying

The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino

The Request for Presence

Show us the light of your countenance, O God, and come to us.

Psalm 67:1

The Greeting

Your statutes have been like songs to me where I have lived as a stranger. I remember your name in the night, O Lord and dwell upon your law. This is how it has been with me, because I have kept your commandments. Psalm 119:54-56

The Refrain (sung)

Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet. Psalm 85:13

A Reading from Julian of Norwich

Questions for Reflection:

Magnifying glasses help us to see something larger than it would normally appear – this particularly seems true when we've made a mistake or sinned.

If God magnified something beautiful about you, would you be able to see it?

How would it look?

The Refrain (sung)

Righteousness shall go before him, and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.

Hymn 455 (Repton)

Psalm 130

The Lord's Prayer

The Prayer Appointed for the Hour

God of earthquake, wind and fire, may we know you also in the voice of silence. Teach us the way of quiet, that we may find our peace in your presence, in the pattern of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Concluding Prayer

Cast your eyes upon us, O Lord and hide us under the shadow of your wings, that trusting not to our own works but in the refining fire of your compassion, we may come to see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us depart in peace,

In the name of the Lord. Amen.

Compline Returning

The Call to Prayer - Confitemini Domino

The Request for Presence
*Lighten our darkness,
Lord, we pray;
and in your mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The Greeting
***Our help is in the Name of the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.***

Hymn 17 (*Iste Confessor*)

The Refrain (sung)
***For you alone, O God, our soul in silence waits,
for truly our hope is found in you. Psalm 62:1***

A Reading from Teresa of Avila

Questions for Reflection:
When has the light of Christ been most vivid for you?
Most hidden?
What kinds of light do you especially enjoy?
Diffused, bright, night lights, candles?
How do these different forms of light express God's light?
What person or experiences have brought the light of Christ into dark places for you?
How are you a light for others?

The Refrain (sung)
***For you alone, O God, our soul in silence waits,
for truly our hope is found in you.***

Psalm 27

Hymn 509 (*Precious Lord*)

The Cry of the Church
***Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit;
for you have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.
Keep me, O Lord, as the apple of your eye;
hide me under the shadow of your wings.***

The Lord's Prayer

The Petition
*Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or
watch, or weep this night, and give your angels
charge over those who sleep.
Tend your sick ones, O Christ.
Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones.
Soothe your suffering ones.
Shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's
sake. Amen.*

Nunc Dimittis (sung)
Refrain: Go now in peace.

The Concluding Prayer

***In peace we will lie down and sleep;
For you alone, Lord, make us to dwell in safety.
Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
For the night is at hand and the day is now past.
As the night-watch looks for the morning,
So do we look for you, O Christ.
Come with the dawning of the day
And make yourself known in the breaking of the
bread.
The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face to shine upon us
and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us,
and give us peace, now and forever. Amen.***

*Let us depart in peace,
In the name of the Lord. Amen.*

APPENDIX 3

INTRODUCTION TO UNCONVENTIONAL DAY

Welcome and thank you so much for being here and for helping to make this day happen. As many of you know, it is a dream that developed out of the Mystic Centre Cantata performed by the Cathedral Girls Choir and the connection many girls in the choir made with the mystics. Their interest in what life in a convent would be like got me thinking about what it might look like to offer a retreat in that spirit.

Around the same time I began working on a Doctor of Ministry degree, and part of that program is developing a project that connects with the needs you see in your particular setting. The surveys you will hopefully fill out will help me identify how the need and urge for silence and the mystery of God lived out in a life of prayer are experienced today. If you are willing to talk with me at more length in a few weeks time, please indicate that on your survey.

The Flow of Things

We'll be keeping the ancient hours, the pattern of giving thanks to God seven times through the course of our day.

And in between we'll be engaging in different creative activities.

St. Benedict wrote about how work is prayer and prayer is work and that they are meant to be woven together.

Today is an opportunity for you to experience a taste of that rhythm and movement as we keep the 7 hours in a loose context. Traditionally, the seven hours would be spaced through the day and night.

The creative activities that are set up are meant to help you explore your creativity and to introduce you to some of the activities that still help shape the days of those who live in monasteries and convents.

There aren't any rules about how you approach the various activities – nor will there be a test afterwards – they are for you, and some will be a better fit for who you are and where you are right now.

Some of you will find an activity you like and will return to engage in that at a deep level and some of you will try out several activities.

Introduction of Station Leaders

Housekeeping – As you arrived this morning, you met _____ at the welcome desk (have her stand) and she has secured your belongings. If you need anything from the cupboard, please see her.

Bread and soup making – (introduce kitchen staff). Talking will be allowed in the kitchen, so if you need a break from the silence, you can make your way there and you can be confident

Library – (introduce librarian). A wide variety of books about the mystics, silence, prayer and other subjects is in the library. If you make a particular connection with a book and would like to borrow, let me know. There is also space in the library to sit and journal.

Praying with icons – A guide to praying with icons is located on the window sill in the library, where several icons are also placed. Feel free to touch and move them, just replacing them when you're finished. There is also a larger icon of Mary here in the nave, which has a kneeler in front of it.

Stitching – Invite leader to talk about how this station will work.

Scriptorium – Introduce leader, located in foyer

Rosary making – Introduce leader, located in foyer

Self-directed art projects – Located on the stage in the hall

Labyrinth – Introduce leader who will share basics on praying with the labyrinth, located in the hall.

Display boards – Are located in the Hall, near the labyrinth. If you have work you would like to share through the course of the day, please feel free to place it there and then pick it up again at the end of the day.

The Garth – You are welcome to slip outside into the garth and spend time with living things in seasonal transition, there are some tools there if you would like to garden and a bench if you would like to sit.

Quietness in the Cathedral – Sit and pray and watch the changing light, feel free to explore the sanctuary, including the side chapels and the reredos, there are also 4 wooden church mice tucked in and around the chancel. If you have trouble finding them, the children are excellent guides.

Spiritual Direction – Introduce the four Spiritual Directors (have them stand so people can see them). You can get their attention by gently touching their elbow if you'd like to talk and they'll take you to a private spot.

How lunch will work – When we finish keeping the hour of Terce, we will move to the hall in silence and find a place at the table. When everyone has found a place, we will pray, and then line up in silence to get our food. While you are eating, I will read to you, the custom in many cloistered places is for everyone to stay at the table until everyone is finished, then take your dishes to the kitchen, gather back around the table for the closing grace and then you will have a few minutes before the bell rings for the next hour. Those who would like to help with the clean up are welcome to join the kitchen crew after lunch.

The Bell – (introduce bell ringer). Each time the bell rings we will move from wherever we are in the building, to the chancel. When you hear the bell, stop whatever you're doing and move to the chancel – there's no need to finish what you're working on because you'll be able to return to it – this is a much different rhythm than we're used to, so be aware that it may feel uncomfortable to leave something unfinished, acknowledge that inside yourself and come for the next hour.

The Silence – Be aware of how you experience the silence – when it feels peaceful, when it feels awkward, when it starts to feel natural and when it produces anxiety inside you. Acknowledge this, and if it is really driving you crazy, go hang out in the kitchen, where our baker assures me, conversation is necessary to the baking of the bread

Questions – If you find you need to ask a question, or to give guidance during the day, don't worry, the silence is meant to be a gift, not a hindrance. The great silence is kept as a way of reflecting on and making sure that the words we do use are good and necessary.

We are a community of those who seek God's promise of peace and rest in the quiet of this space.

Tim Piper (our music director) is going to introduce us to the music that will help shape our day. After he finishes, spend a few moments here in quietness, and then when the bell rings, please move to the chancel for the keeping of the first hour.

APPENDIX 4

UNCONVENTIONAL RESOURCE SHEET HAND-OUT

Web Resources

Picturing God

<http://picturinggod.ignatianspirituality.com/>

A daily photograph shares how other Christians around the world see God in the everyday. Includes links to spiritual exercises and using the examen in your prayer life. This website is produced by the Loyola Press, a Jesuit Ministry.

3 Minute Retreat

<http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer.htm> Another resource from the Jesuits, this 3 minute retreat is updated daily and really does help create a peaceful space in the midst of a crazy day.

Simple Living

<http://www.simpleliving.org/>

Pray as You Go

<http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>

MP3 and podcasts offer instruction on meditation, prayer and relaxation. A Jesuit Media Initiative.

Monasteries of the Heart

<http://monasteriesoftheheart.org/> The Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Erie, Pennsylvania have started monasteries of the heart, enabling people to honour the Benedictine rule with others in the area where they live, without actually joining a monastery.

Abbey of the Arts

<http://abbeyofthearts.com/> “Transformative living through contemplative and expressive arts.” Christine Valters offers a “moving monastery” which includes a commitment to the “monk manifesto.”

Painted Prayer Book

<http://paintedprayerbook.com/> Artist and minister in the United Methodist Church, Jan Richardson shares paper and word collages which explore the weekly lectionary readings. She has other blogs as well including the Advent Door and Sanctuary of Women.

Being with Krista Tippett

<http://being.publicradio.org/> Each week Tippett explores different aspects of faith through a variety of disciplines and traditions. An NPR program – you can subscribe to the newsletter or listen to the podcasts which are free on itunes.

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.1355371/k.9501/Spiritual_Gifts.htm

The United Methodist Church has a survey to help you in discerning your spiritual gifts.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

St. Lukes Anglican Church – Contemplative Eucharist Sundays at 3:30 760 Somerset W, Ottawa, ON (613) 235-3416 <http://stlukesottawa.ca>

Psalm Writing Workshop October 29, 2011 Blending Creative Writing with Spirituality All Saints' Westboro and St. Michael and All Angels are welcoming Ray McGinnis, the designer and instructor of Write to the Heart Workshops, for a Creative writing and spirituality workshop on Thursday October 27th and Saturday October 29th. Cost: \$15, to be paid in advance or at the door.

Sundays at Twilight 4:30 p.m. Christ Church Cathedral. Upcoming events include Tea and Evensong with the Girls' Choir, Advent Lessons and Carols, O Antiphons, 9 Lessons and Carols. Daily morning and evening prayer and noon Eucharists plus Sunday morning Eucharist, 8:30 said with the Book of Common Prayer and 10:30 sung Eucharist with choir.

<http://www.christchurchcathedralottawa.ca>

Prayer and meditation in the Diocese of Ottawa including a list of groups that meet locally.

<http://www.ottawa.anglican.ca/Prayer.html#cm>

APPENDIX 5

UNCONVENTIONAL PRE-SURVEY

I am _____ male _____ female _____

Cultural/ethnic background _____

Age 8-12 _____ 13-18 _____ 19-23 _____ 24-30 _____

30-40 _____ 40-60 _____ 60-75 _____ 75+ _____

My technology includes: (check all that apply)

cellphone _____ Ipad _____ computer _____ Itouch _____

Blackberry/Smartphone _____ Other _____

My faith background is:

I have experienced intentional silence before _____ yes _____ no

This is my first time keeping hours of prayer _____ yes _____ no

I would benefit from designated quiet time daily _____ weekly _____ monthly

_____ quarterly _____ yearly other _____

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being distracted and not peaceful and 5 being extremely peaceful please rank yourself:

When I arrived at the unConventional I would rate my peace of mind/spirit _____

I would be willing to talk further about my experience with the unConventional in person or over the phone:

Contact information:

APPENDIX 6

UNCONVENTIONAL POST-SURVEY

I am _____ male _____ female _____

Cultural/ethnic background _____

Age 8-12 _____ 13-18 _____ 19-23 _____ 24-30 _____

30-40 _____ 40-60 _____ 60-75 _____ 75+ _____

My technology includes: (check all that apply)

Cellphone _____ Ipad _____ computer _____ Itouch _____

Blackberry/Smartphone _____ Other _____

My faith background is: _____

I have experienced intentional silence before: yes _____ no _____

I found the silence today (check all that apply): unsettling _____

peaceful _____ long _____ other _____

This is my first time keeping hours of prayer _____ yes _____ no _____

The activities I participated in were:

Labyrinth _____ Scriptorium _____ Library _____

Praying with the icons _____ Breadmaking _____ Beading _____

Flower arranging _____ Visual art centre _____ Needlework _____

Other _____

I would _____ would not _____ seek out other opportunities for days of silence and prayers.

I would benefit from designated quiet time: Daily _____ Weekly _____

Monthly _____ Quarterly _____ Yearly _____ Other _____

What I found most helpful about the unConventional:

What I found least helpful:

Other _____

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being distracted and not peaceful and 5 being extremely peaceful please rank yourself:

When I arrived at the unConventional I would rate my peace of mind/spirit _____

At the end of the unConventional I would rate my peace of mind/spirit _____

During the day I felt most peaceful when

I felt least peaceful when

How likely are you to attend an event like this again?

Very likely _____ Perhaps _____ Not likely _____

I would be willing to talk further about my experience with the unConventional in person or over the phone:

Contact information:

APPENDIX 7

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR AN INTER-GENERATIONAL CHRISTIAN RETREAT IN AN ANGLICAN CHURCH

The “unConventional” is a day-long retreat which allows participants to experience silence and keeping of hours in a Cathedral setting, unplugging from daily responsibilities and technology, and sinking into the rhythm and mystery of God through prayer, singing, movement, art and interaction within the unConventional community.

The unConventional will take place at Christ Church Cathedral which is located in the downtown core of Ottawa, Ontario, the capital city of Canada. The participants will be self-selected and it is anticipated and hoped that they will come from a variety of backgrounds and church experience. The unConventional will be part of the “Mission Shaped Cathedrals” initiative and we will be intentionally recruiting beyond our usual base (including posters at the local universities and other places where people who are interested in spirituality but not necessarily church goers might hang out). Part of my understanding is that many people who do not come to church do have a Christian spirituality (albeit nominal in some cases), but have moved away from the church or associate negative stereotypes with it or have only minimally encountered the Christian community (Anglican in particular.) In choosing and articulating my principles for this assignment, I have based them on the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) including Jesus’ addition from Leviticus 19:18 (you shall love your neighbor as yourself). The Great Commandment, as it is also known, is itself both ancient and modern and echoes the intent and hope of the unConventional to help integrate ancient truths of faith with modern realities.

Robert Weber maintained in his work on integrating the ancient church with our current realities that “roots, connection and authenticity...will help us to maintain continuity with historic Christianity as the church moves forward.”¹

***Principles of Good Practice for an Inter-generational Christian Retreat
in an Anglican Church***

The unConventional is a day of keeping hours and silence in an inter-generational, context, which offers an opportunity for people to enter into the mystery and wonder of God in a tradition that is both ancient and modern. The activities, pace and worship of the unConventional allows people to live into this mystery by honoring Jesus’ Great Commandment, “Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (NRSV, Luke 12:29-31).

Loving God with your Heart – Create psychic and physical space where participants have a variety of opportunities to listen, reflect and respond to their heart’s deep desires, particularly the yearning for God. Part of this creation of space will include the worship space and style which will help create common ground for those singing and praying with vast experience and for those without.

Loving God with your Mind – Provide reading, reflecting and learning options which reflect the variety of ages and backgrounds participants will have. Provide take home resources for ongoing learning, engagement and interaction with concepts experienced.

Loving God with your Body – The rhythms and routines of the day will honor the body’s need for movement and rest, including creative activity which challenges but doesn’t threaten participants. Healthy food and drinks, space and time to move, to rest, to attend to one’s physical needs are incorporated into the schedule.

Loving God with your Spirit – Have spiritual directors and tissues on hand for those who find deep things stirred up and who need care and counsel. Take home resources that will help participants to continue exploring their spirituality individually and in community. Incorporate a sense of playfulness into the day which will honor God who creates and nurtures us with a Spirit of playfulness.

Loving your Neighbor – Help participants acknowledge and be together in silence. Recognizing and respecting the others with whom they share the day while maintaining personal space. Model and demonstrate silent ways of honoring the other. When praying

¹ Webber, Robert E., *Ancient-Future Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 20.

communally, encourage participants to let their voices blend, speaking in a way that allows a mingling of voices to be heard and helps a natural pace and rhythm to emerge.

Loving your Self – A healthy and abiding love of self will be encouraged and strengthened through participation in activities which affirm the variety of places and spaces. Each person will be allowed to explore and participate in the different centers at their own pace and according to their own comfort level.

Loving God with your Heart – Create psychic and physical space where participants have a variety of opportunities to listen, reflect and respond to their heart's deep desires, particularly the yearning for God. Part of this creation of space will include the worship space and style which will help create common ground for those singing and praying with vast experience and for those without.

Prayer, as argued by Ann and Barry Ulanov², is our first language and finding a way to connect and reconnect people with their vernacular is an important task of the church. One of the goals of the unConventional is to help demonstrate through worship and silence the natural ease and flow of prayer – whether it is lament, praise or intercession, spoken, sung or silent, formal or informal. Participants will be encouraged to note how they are at prayer even when they are participating in activities other than formal prayer; just as our hearts are beating whether we are focused on the activity or not. It is hoped that the intersections and interactions between prayer and work, prayer and play, prayer and eating will be glimpsed through the experience of living them in an intentional community for a day.

² Ulanov, Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1982).

Opportunities to participate in praying with icons, walking a labyrinth, and utilizing art as prayer with resources including *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God* by Sylvia MacBeth³ and *Drawing to God: Art as Prayer, Prayer as Art* by Jeri Gerding⁴ will help expand an understanding of prayer, and hopefully remove some of the barriers which keep people from knowing how many different ways there are to pray. In the introduction to her book, MacBeth lists a variety of humorous and real prayer dilemmas that might keep a person from feeling like they are a person of prayer:

You make a list of the people for whom you want to pray and then don't know what to pray for.

You dump the contents of your heart and mind on God and then wish you hadn't.

You want to like the act of praying but it is more often obligation and drudgery than joy.

You're sure everyone you know is a better and more effective pray-er than you are.⁵

Loving God with your Mind – Provide reading, reflecting and learning options which engage and reflect the variety of ages and backgrounds participants will have. Provide take home resources for ongoing learning, engagement and interaction with concepts experienced.

Theology is a “vital skill by which people can make religious sense of concrete life situations and fulfill their intellectual vocations as Christians.”⁶ In their book *How to Think Theologically*, theology professors Howard Stone and James Duke suggest that listening and questioning are essential concepts and techniques for theologians⁷ and the

³ MacBeth, Sylvia, *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2007).

⁴ Gerding, Jeri, *Drawing to God: Art as Prayer, Prayer as Art* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2001).

⁵ MacBeth, 3-4.

⁶ Stone, Howard W. and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), back of book description.

⁷ *Ibid*, vi. Stone and Duke maintain that our baptismal vows call all of us to be theologians.

flow of movement between them is essential to a deepening understanding of who and what God is and who and what we are called to be in light of that understanding.

Phyllis Tickle uses the amusing and apt image of what is found when the church cleans out its attic⁸ as a way of tracing the history of the church and its re-formations.

One of the treasures emerging from the church's attic is a renewed interest in and appreciation of the women mystics and their capacity to love God with their minds and to invite us to share that journey through their writings.

Many of the Medieval mystics, including Teresa of Avila, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Hildegard of Bingen, among others were skilled theologians and open in articulating their listening and questioning as part of their life with God.

Teresa of Avila, on whose feast day the unConventional will take place, was a fine theologian, "her humor, her vigor, her common sense, her practicality all emerge in a prose as colloquial, as earthy as any writer."⁹ Teresa's writing explores her faith life – the ecstatic and mundane moments and everything in-between and helps connect the presence of God in all circumstances. Utilizing the works of Teresa of Avila in the unConventional, as well as other medieval mystics, will help to ground the day in the lives, experience and words of those whose lives were stretched, blessed and enriched by their intense listening and questioning and encounters with God.

One goal of the unConventional is to help participants live into, examine and be at peace with their own listening and questions, and to know God delights in this process with them in developing a real, earthy and authentic relationship with one another.

⁸ Tickle, Phyllis, *The Great Emergence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).

⁹ *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday Image books, 1991), 53.

Loving God with your Body – The rhythms and routines of the day will honor the body’s need for movement and rest, including creative activity which challenges but doesn’t threaten participants. Healthy food and drinks, space and time to move, to rest, to attend to one’s physical needs are incorporated into the schedule.

Everyday we are assaulted with bizarrely intimate images of the bodies of people we don’t know, on the sides of buses and on billboards, in television commercials, and on Internet news pages. This over-exposure to that which we still consider private, has the strange effect of inuring us to the innate power our bodies have to teach, heal and tell us what they need. Psychoanalyst Marion Woodman, who has dealt with the psychology of eating disorders and weight disturbances, writes:

We have forgotten how to listen to our bodies; we pop pills for everything that goes wrong with us; we can have an intestinal bypass or we can have our stomach stapled. We can turn ourselves over to medicine without ever questioning what the body is trying to tell us. To our peril, we assume it has no wisdom of its own and we attempt to right our physical ills without making the necessary psychic connections. We may temporarily succeed but the body has its way and soon another symptom appears, attempting to draw our attention to some basic problem. If we ignore the small symptoms, the body eventually takes its revenge.¹⁰

Barbara Brown Taylor writes about our love/hate relationship with our bodies, and says that those who believe in the incarnation, and in God’s willingness to be born in human form, need to get more comfortable in their own skin. She suggests praying naked in front of the mirror. “Whether you are sick or well, lovely or irregular, there comes a time when it is vitally important to your spiritual health to drop your clothes, look in the mirror and say, ‘Here I am. This is the body-like-no-other that my life has shaped. I live here. This is my soul’s address.’”¹¹

¹⁰ Woodman, Marion, *Addiction to Perfection: The Still Unravished Bride* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1982), 26.

¹¹ Taylor, Barbara Brown, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 38.

Living into the rhythm and practice of Christian meditation and prayer can help to increase our capacity to hear our bodies more effectively and honor them by including them in prayer through dance, stretching, bending and listening.¹²

Loving God with your Spirit – There will be spiritual directors and tissues on hand for those who find deep things stirred up and who need immediate care and counsel. Take home resources that help participants to continue exploring their spirituality individually and in community will be provided. A sense of playfulness will infuse the unConventional, honoring God who creates and nurtures us with a Spirit of playfulness.

The Psalmist eloquently and passionately cries out the heart’s truth for many of us, “I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.”¹³ Our souls thirst for the living God – for contact, connection, interaction. Encounters with God evoke our heart’s deepest emotions and the stirring up of these can bring tears, laughter, fear and hope. Having people on hand who are trained in Spiritual Direction will enrich the day; both by their presence and their capacity to meet with others individually, when and if needed. Contact information for Spiritual Directors will also be available, so that those for whom things come to the surface later will have resources at hand.

Jerome Berryman details the importance of welcome in his landmark book, *Godly Play*¹⁴ and of making sure that those gathered are ready to enter into sacred space. Registration and “housekeeping” for the unConventional will take place in the Cathedral hall and not in the worship space and leaders will be ready to provide welcome, reassurance and a safe and gentle entry into the sacred space of the day.

¹² Helpful books include: Roy DeLeon, *Praying with the Body: Bringing the Psalms to Life* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009), Jane Vennard, *Praying with Body and Soul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1998) and Flora Slosson Wellner, *Prayer and Our Bodies* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998).

¹³ Psalm 143:6, NRSV.

¹⁴ Berryman, Jerome W., *Godly Play* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

Loving your Neighbor – Help participants acknowledge and be together in silence. Recognizing and respecting the others with whom they share the day, while maintaining personal space. Model and demonstrate silent ways of honoring the other. When praying communally, encourage participants to let their voices blend, speaking in a way that allows the mingling of voices to be heard and helps a natural pace and rhythm emerge.

“To speak of the other is to be open to otherness within myself, to the possibility of a foreigner within my own unconscious self.”¹⁵ Being aware of and open to the gift of otherness in the people around us and in ourselves is one of the real gifts and challenges of being in community, whether it is at a family gathering, in a work setting or at a retreat. Being intentionally silent with people will allow for different encounters than are often experienced. We might be in silence with someone on the bus, or with whom we wait in line, but can break it if we want to comment on the weather or the wait. Being silent with others in creativity and prayer, will offer an opportunity to see and connect and experience the other without the cushion of conversation with which we usually communicate. Silence can emphasize the power of eye contact, the hum of movement and the wondrous diversity of God’s creation. In his book *In Pursuit of Silence* George Prochnik quotes Henry David Thoreau’s thoughts about rowing through the night on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, and how, “the valleys echoed the sound to the stars.”¹⁶ Silence can help connect the seemingly unconnected and provide space where the otherness of self and neighbor might mingle in ways that heal and enlighten and inspire:

And oh, how pleasing it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own particular service, and knowing, owning and loving one another in their several places.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ackerman, Denise M., “Who is the Other?” in *Loving God with Our Minds: The Pastor as Theologian*, ed. Michael Welker and Cynthia A. Jarvis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 7.

¹⁶ Prochnik, George, *In Pursuit of Silence* (New York: Anchor Books, 2010), 10.

¹⁷ Isaac Pennington, quoted in *Approaches to Prayer: A Resource Guide for Groups and Individuals*, ed. Henry Morgan (Ridgefield, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1991).

Loving your Self – A healthy and abiding love of self will be encouraged and strengthened through participation in the day and in the activities organized to foster an internal and external rhythm which honors the self which is the Imago Dei. Each person will be allowed to explore and participate in the different centers at their own pace and according to their own comfort level.

Creating a space where those who gather feel welcomed and welcome to be with themselves in an intense and meaningful way could help foster a deeper sense of loving one's self. Attentiveness to different spiritual stages, types and temperaments¹⁸ will help to create activities and stations which will offer a rich spiritual experience for a variety of people which in turn will affirm the individuality of each person. In an introduction to the book *Approaches to Prayer: A Resource Guide for Groups and Individuals*, Alan Jones, former Dean at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, writes that it is essential to make room for all kinds of prayer: "There are many roads and we don't all have to be doing the same thing at the same time."¹⁹

In her book of meditations *Loving Yourself More*, Virginia Ann Froehle reflects on the conflicted messages faithful people wrestle with – how can we love ourselves without being selfish? How can we accept that God's love and forgiveness is truly for us? Alan Jones echoes her thoughts: "The most difficult thing in mature believers is accepting that I am an object of God's delight."²⁰ Delighting in God through worship, creativity and community will help to affirm God's delight in each of us and, hopefully, multiply that delight and a healthy sense of loving self as part of the spiritual journey.

¹⁸ Books that will help with this include: Chester P. Michael and Marie C. Norrissey, *Prayer and Temperament: Different Prayer Forms for Different Personality Types* (Charlottesville, VA: The Open Door, 1984) and Corinne Ware, *Discover Your Spiritual Type* (Herndon, VT: An Alban Institute Publication, 1995, 1997, 2000).

¹⁹ Morgan, Henry, ed., *Approaches to Prayer: A Resource Guide for Groups and Individuals* (Ridgefield, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1991), forward, 2.

²⁰ Jones, Alan, *Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 1985).

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