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It Takes a Missional Order to Raise a Leader: "Order-ing" Leadership Communities for Life Transformation and Missional Impact

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IT TAKES A MISSIONAL ORDER TO RAISE A LEADER:

"ORDER-ING" LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES FOR LIFE

TRANSFORMATION AND MISSIONAL IMPACT

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WE THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ THIS PROJECT AND APPROVE IT AS ADEQUATE IN SCOPE AND QUALITY TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN LEADERSHIP IN THE EMERGING CULTURE DEGREE

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IT TAKES A MISSIONAL ORDER TO RAISE A LEADER:
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TRANSFORMATION AND MISSIONAL IMPACT

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The times in which we live in the West grow more complex from year to year. This presents a problem, as church and para-church leaders find themselves increasingly less prepared to meet the demands of "missional leadership," that is, leadership that exemplifies and passes on the passion, practices and perspectives conducive to fostering growth in God and fruitful missionary engagement with his world.

In chapter one I identify this problem both from the vantage point of my own leadership journey and also from that of Christian leaders in general. I then propose my thesis: *Amid the complexities, distractions and pressures of these times, missional Orders offer church and para-church leaders unique formational environments that can impart the leadership perspectives, capacities and practices they need to sustain their growth in God, their fruitfulness in ministry, and their faithful participation in God's mission to the world.*

In chapter two I examine the monastic roots of missional Orders, looking in particular at various historic and contemporary Orders that had or now have a strong accent on mission. I also explore how missional Orders relate to local churches and the broader Body of Christ, including how they contribute to enhancing discipleship.

In chapter three I explore the biblical and theological underpinnings for the "Order-ed" life oriented around mission, highlighting four biblically grounded dynamics that when operative in unison provide the ethos conducive to forming missional Orders among leaders.

In chapter four I show how missional Orders specifically address the needs of church and para-church leaders, interweaving practical examples of how such Orders operate (and ending with a brief case study). I also explore some dynamics that help enhance and preserve the transformational edge of Orders.

In chapter five I seek to address the limitations and challenges of missional Orders, suggesting ways some of those real and perceived obstacles might be alleviated.

In my concluding chapter I provide a brief synopsis of the previous chapters, followed by a short account of how I am attempting to apply the missional Order concept among various leaders in my Portland context. I then close with some concluding reflections and thoughts on the place of missional Orders among leaders in the future.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Narrative

If you think the conflicting expectations are insane, and the juxtaposition of
trivialities and profundities maddening, and the relevance of training to reality
pathetic, and the clumsiness of church structures infuriating – you're right. You're
not crazy to demand better. But remember that you're in the transition zone.
You're being asked to build skyscrapers in a time of high tectonic activity. You're
being asked to run the hundred-yard dash in a tornado. You're being asked to
build a Fortune 500 company out of juvenile delinquents…It is an insane task,
especially so during these peculiar times. But what if just surviving these times is
actually a sign of huge success?[1]

Leadership after the manner of Jesus is hard enough in the best of times. But

Christian leaders today must traverse an increasingly complex, ever-shifting landscape of

ideological, cultural and theological diversity. The rate of change is dizzying. And the

pressures seem to be ever rising. Like so many others, I have often wondered if I will be

able to keep my footing on this terrain, even at times doubting my capacity to survive.

Back in the nineties when I first encountered Brian McLaren's words above, I was

actually on the verge of becoming another casualty of "the ministry." As his words

percolated through my tired soul, an irrepressible surge of emotion sprang from within,

and I found myself unable to stave off a fountain of tears. McLaren had given voice to a

multitude of anxious thoughts lurking deep inside of me.

At the time I was a missionary pastor leading a successful, growing, international

church. But behind the scenes a deluge of disturbing and wearying complexities was

confronting me. I was scrambling to address the changes happening within my urban

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[1] Brian McLaren, *Reinventing Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 122-123. McLaren
uses the phrase "transition zone" to describe this post-Modern in-between period in the aftermath of
Modernity's long reign—a strange and ever-changing time where we have yet to see what will emerge.

postmodern context, wondering how I, let alone my church, could possibly respond and adjust to those. At the same time I was experiencing a major conflict with a number of my key leaders over theology and philosophy of ministry issues. And, as if these were not enough, I was treading upon an increasingly arid patch of ground in my personal journey with God. Few people realized that I was beginning to experience the early symptoms of burn out. Though I put on a good public face, my wife alone knew that I was quietly entertaining thoughts of quitting ministry and finding a "normal job." McLaren's words enveloped me, like someone embracing my soul. They helped me accept the blessing of mere survival in such times, and by God's grace I managed to right myself and keep going. But I wondered how many other ill-prepared leaders there were like me, leaders out there near the edge of despair, as I had been.

A key voice that had been more consistently resounding and encouraging in my leadership journey around the same time was Dr. J. Robert Clinton. In those days, Clinton had developed an iconic stature among Evangelical leaders for his practical concepts related to developing Christian leaders for sustainable, fruitful ministry over a lifetime. Clinton's practical teaching on leadership had already immensely helped me, and I attributed a good deal of my savvy and perseverance to the perspective I gleaned from him. Years earlier, I recall a friend slipping me a pirated version of a cassette tape by Clinton, with a barely legible title scrawled across the label: "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Leaders."[2] At the time I was a Christian Associates (CA) missionary frantically pursuing leadership keys to help me effectively lead my newly formed church planting team. As I listened to Clinton's tape, I am sure I scribbled down every habit he

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[2] The "Seven Habits" audiocassette was a reproduction of a teaching Clinton gave as part of a monthly series, called the Pastor's Update, which was put out at the time by the Charles E. Fuller Institute.

mentioned. But one salient point wrote itself into my soul. In his talk Clinton asserted that few leaders actually end their leadership journey well. His research involving both leaders in the Bible and also historic and contemporary Christian leaders suggested that only about one in four leaders actually "finished well" for God at the end of their lives.[3]

"Yikes!" I thought to myself as I mused over this statistic. "Why do so many leaders finish poorly? Will I end up being one of those? How can I avoid being on the wrong list?" On the heels of such inner questioning, I made an unspoken resolution to myself: I am going to find out and do whatever it takes to endure for the long haul and close on a high note for God. And maybe I will be able to help some other leaders along the way too, so I thought.

That initial exposure to Clinton's ideas and analyses propelled me into a new realm of study and experimentation with leadership formation. I voraciously devoured Clinton's books and essays, and as many other leadership resources as I could lay my hands upon. I was keen to put the formative concepts to work in my life and in the lives of the leaders around me. CA, the church planting organization in which I served, provided a ripe laboratory to test Clinton's ideas. Thanks to the influence of CA's Europe Director at the time (a Clinton disciple himself) the organization had already adopted Clinton's approach to leadership development. This involved helping a leader give attention to three interwoven cords of development: spiritual formation (developing the leader's character and inner life); ministerial formation (developing leadership knowledge and giftedness within a ministry sphere); and, strategic formation (forming the

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[3] To "finish well" in Clinton's parlance basically means to run the full course of one's leadership journey with God, ever learning and humbly responding so that a unique legacy of faithfulness and fruitfulness remains at the end of one's life. I later discovered more hard data presented by Clinton, in which he noted that one out of three Old Testament leaders finished well. See: J. Robert Clinton, *Strategic Concepts That Clarify a Focused Life* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1995), 1.

leader's overall ministry or leadership philosophy).[4] It also included helping leaders adopt the behaviors characteristic of leaders who finish well: 1) acquiring a broad perspective on a lifetime of ministry from which to interpret ongoing ministry; 2) cultivating an expectancy for renewal, welcoming renewal experiences from time to time; 3) practicing disciplines, especially spiritual disciplines; 4) keeping a learning posture; and 5) pursuing a constellation of mentors.[5]

As I learned the ropes of this approach to leadership development under the mentorship of CA's Europe Director, I began to teach courses and coach in this area. By that time, all the energies my team had directed toward church planting had yielded a healthy church, and I was the founding pastor. It seemed our church was making progress in developing and releasing leaders, and yet I was bothered by certain startling realities surfacing within my parent organization, CA. Despite our commendable efforts at developing leaders, some of our "best" leaders were still ending up in the quagmire of dysfunction, stagnated development and burnout. Several of these were forced out of the organization altogether for their unwillingness to substantially address personal growth issues. Others simply adopted a meandering, lackadaisical approach to their development. Over time it dawned on me that, despite our strengths, we were approaching leadership development far too individualistically. One-on-one mentoring relationships were helping leaders progress to some degree in their development. And our event based training approach, using Clinton's three-tiered formational model, was proving helpful to some leaders. But it was becoming evident that we lacked the major community-based stimuli

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[4] These formational lines are described in depth in Clinton's book, *Leadership Emergence Theory* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Press, 1989), 387-402.

[5] See: J. Robert Clinton, *Focused Lives: Inspirational Life Changing Lessons from Eight Effective Christian Leaders Who Finished Well* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1995), 501-504.

needed to keep leaders growing and maturing. Only the exceptionally self-motivated leaders in our midst were staying on track with their "developmental plans." But on an organization-wide level, we were neither functioning as a leadership community nor as a learning community.

In retrospect, I clearly see that these community dimensions were deficient in my own life at that time, even though I was attempting to provide them for my church leadership team. I lacked regular interaction with peers who could assist me in discerning God's activity in and around me, and who could help me address the complexities of urban ministry as well as my shortcomings as a leader. CA's leadership community was simply too dispersed, and our interaction too sparse, for most of us to find the relational support, processing and cross training we needed. As this played itself out, it was not long before I found myself perilously close to the edge of discouragement and burnout. Thank God for the heartening words of Brian McLaren, and for the perspective and leadership practices I had assimilated via Clinton and various distance mentors. I managed to weather that season of gloom. But beyond noting a vague longing inside for peer community, I remained puzzled about what was missing in my own process of leadership formation. And I was also unsure about what CA needed to bolster its approach.

As the nineties rolled into the new millennium, CA's weak ties among its leadership community began to be strengthened by an influx of (mostly younger) postmodern leaders. This also included the addition of a young and "hip" Europe Director. These new leaders insisted upon significant peer-based leadership community. Within a short period our organizational culture became noticeably more relational. A

number of our leaders began to pursue retreats or long SKYPE calls together (i.e. internet conferencing events) to support each other's development. At the same time groups of leaders began to gather for weekend getaways to "do theology in community." Along with these changes, as an organization we began to recognize the importance of relational "EQ" factors in the process of leadership formation.[6] These movements in our ranks toward more meaningful leadership community dovetailed well with most of Clinton's developmental paradigm, so it appeared we were stepping forward. Still, I noticed that we had trouble convincing our leaders to devote more time, effort and finances to intentional processes for their own leadership formation. As I mused over this, it grew apparent to me that our follow-through on leadership development was being undermined by at least two issues. One was the classic tyranny of the urgent. We were being waylaid by our organization's immediate need to process and respond to the major shifts going on around us in culture. But at the same time we were creating multiple urgencies by our reticence to say "no" to the many exciting opportunities those shifts were generating. The other deterrent to follow-through on leadership development was related to a myth we were buying into. We seemed to be operating under the false perception that substantial leadership development had to be happening in our ranks because we were spending so much time talking about it. The reality began to settle upon me that we lacked the basic raw materials to make this a sustainable endeavor: 1) intentional and flexible, agreed-upon processes to aid follow-through on development; 2) structures for fostering a learning community ethos amid change; and 3) specific, simple, shared rhythms and

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[6] "EQ" stands for emotional intelligence, which involves natural and learned aptitudes to read and respond to both one's inner emotional world and to various social/relational cues of groups. Daniel Goleman popularized the concept in several books, but applied his findings specifically to leaders in his book, *Primal Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

practices, with accountability, to foster the spiritual formation of our leaders.[7] I wondered if leadership development could ever flourish as an actual value (rather than only as an aspired value) within the entrepreneurial environment of a fast moving, church planting network like CA.

Somewhere in the early 2000s CA and its leaders seemed to grow more accustomed to coping with the disorientation and complexities of postmodern ministry in the "transition zone," as McLaren labeled it. We were resorting to business or market approaches to help us address the changes coming at us, and to help us set healthier boundaries for our leadership decision-making. We were also beginning to robustly shift our attention to the "missional conversation," that provocative exchange among writers and bloggers and pioneering leaders about the Western Church's need to re-adopt a missionary stance in its own backyard.[8] As part of this broader conversation, a number of CA's key leaders converged upon England to explore "the Newbigin trail" together.[9] Shortly thereafter, popular missiological author, Alan Hirsch, joined CA's leadership team. With Hirsch's input our organizational eyes were opened to see another glaring gap in our leadership development approach. We were not adequately preparing our leaders in the theology, language, perspectives, practices and attunement to context necessary to

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[7] Around this time I began to note that Clinton's approach to spiritual formation seemed to place its strongest emphasis on character development. I noticed that it provided little in the way of perspectives and disciplines that might enable growth in our leaders' capacities to relate to God and benefit from his presence. In CA we, unsurprisingly, also tended to focus more on character development than helping leaders adopt such disciplines.

[8] Missiological writers, such as David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin, provoked this conversation in the mid to late 20th century. It has culminated on the North American side with the formation of the Gospel and Our Culture Network and the prophetic tome edited by Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[9] This was an exploratory week put together by Martin Robinson and Jason Clark in May of 2005, when various missionary practitioners converged on England to explore Lesslie Newbigin's ministry upon returning to England, after decades of missionary service in India. After his return Newbigin traveled, taught, and wrote prolifically on the West itself being the last great mission field.

enable them and their churches to have a consistent missionary engagement with culture. Authors like Newbigin and Hirsch came into the picture and helped shed light on our need to integrate this "missional formation" component into our leadership development approach. When I use the adjective "missional," and I will be using it prolifically in my writing here, I mean the following: of or relating to "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[10] Over the past few years we have made strides in factoring this critical formational piece into our leadership training, but we are very much on the front end of making this deliverable and transferable.

And now, this carries us to the present. As much as CA has progressed over the years in the area of leadership development, in my view what we continue to lack is an integrative approach that holistically draws together the three important streams touched upon in this narrative thus far: personalized leadership formation, transformational community driven by a passion to know God and be fueled by his grace, and missional perspective/praxis. The Leadership in the Emerging Culture doctoral program at George Fox has helped me to reflect further on the leadership development dilemma CA faces. What has emerged through my research and reflection, and through many conversations within my organization and beyond, is a fresh leadership development approach yet untried in CA's ranks. It is an approach to orchestrating leadership community that addresses our need to integrate within a flexible framework the three streams mentioned above. It is an approach that might also provide a practical pattern for other missional leadership communities struggling to improve the health, development and effectiveness

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[10] Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 23.

of their own leaders in today's complex ministry landscape. With this latter hope in view, I now turn my attention to the greater sphere of church and para-church leadership, to show that CA is not alone in its need for a better framework for leadership formation as it responds to the *missio Dei* (the mission of the Triune God in the world, which must, as missiologist Stan Nussbaum rightly insists, "have at its core a witness to the Son in the power of the Spirit").[11]

The Problem

Today, church and para-church leaders committed to God's mission to the world face numerous complexities and demands, many of them unique to the times. As a result these missional leaders are increasingly challenged to find and stay engaged with the relationships, rhythms and resources they need for their growth and development. Existing Christian leadership development approaches are providing key training and formation components that are helping many leaders stay engaged and growing. But many of these are becoming antiquated, or are lacking key elements. New, peer-based, community-oriented approaches are needed that enable leaders to stay on track with holistic processes for their formation, while also providing them with safe learning environments among diverse leader types committed to the *missio Dei*. Without such intentional leadership communities, many missional leaders will plateau in their development, face increasing impotence in their calling, burn out, or even leave ministry altogether. What are the major complexities and challenges that call for such intentional, peer community approaches to missional leadership development? What are the unique

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[11] Stan Nussbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission: A Concise, Accessible, Companion to David Bosch's Classic Book* (New York: Maryknoll, 2005), 96.

needs leaders have today that render past approaches either inadequate or obsolete? I endeavor to answer such questions below, while also elaborating on the magnitude and nature of the challenges misssional leaders face today.

Perhaps the greatest complexity church and para-church leaders face today is change. This has always been a major challenge for leaders throughout the eons. But in these times, it eclipses most other leadership challenges because change itself has changed. In our increasingly pluralistic, technological and connected world, the more familiar, fairly linear and predictable variety of "continuous change" we knew through much of the twentieth century has given way to a wilder, much less predictable variety.[12] The new version comes in a constant, seemingly random onslaught. But it also comes with such diversity, speed and ferocity that it threatens to capsize even the most nimble and resilient of leaders. In his new book, *The American Church in Crisis,* David Olson contends that for the American church the turn of the millennium represented a "tipping point," where three critical transitions had to be faced all at once: 1) the movement from a Christian to post-Christian era; 2) the movement from a modern to postmodern ethos; and 3) the movement from a mono-ethnic to a multi-ethnic culture.[13] Whether these transitions reached a critical mass of some sort in the year 2000, as Olson suggests, is debatable. But Olson makes a valid point that multiple currents of major change are merging today. These are creating extra turbulent waters for church and para-church

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[12] Alisdair MacIntyre and Jonathan Wilson and others argue that we no longer live in a pluralistic society (i.e. a society with coherent, varying ideologies and religions), rather we exist in a fragmented world where our communities and traditions are no longer rooted in coherent narratives or beliefs. The fragmented order gives the Church and her leaders the rare opportunity to offer a meaningful alternative way to live in the power of covenant communities centered in God. See: Jonathan R. Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 79.

[13] David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 162.

leaders trying to keep themselves and their churches and organizations afloat. Through these and the force of other changes, the church has lost much of its voice in society and is becoming increasingly swept to the margins of Western culture.

This reality of mega-shifts and the associated disequilibrium state of "liminality,"[14] Alan Roxburgh contends, is rendering church leadership training systems that were based on more stable times dated and ineffective. The in-house leadership savvy and strategic planning and management techniques that once aided church and organizational health no longer insure, nor necessarily even foster, qualitative and quantitative growth. Leaders are now required to climb a steep learning curve to acquire new "adaptive skills" and perspectives to lead their churches and organizations through these major transitions and into the future. Adaptive skills include those capacities leaders need to learn to navigate discontinuous change, such as: dialogue; communally indwelling Scripture; information sharing; drawing out the stories of the congregation and of non-Christians in the host context; collective leadership discernment; listening to the voices of context; entrepreneurial experimentation; and handling relational conflict.[15] Collaborative, relationally deep, learning environments are needed, where diverse kinds of leaders can come together to learn such skills and share perspectives, ideas and best practices. As Roxburgh advises, "Leadership in this context [of liminality] is not about

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[14] Alan Roxburgh defines "liminality" as a threshold experience where an individual or group is brought into a new, vastly different situation where they experience a complex tension between the two poles of wanting to recover the lost past and [wanting to] discover an alternative present." See Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, ID: ACI Publishing, 2005). 95-96.

[15] See: Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, ID: ACI Publishing, 2005), 41-43.

forecasting, but about the *formation* of networks of discourse among people."[16] Vehicles are needed for fostering this vital sharing and exchange among leaders.

Because of the sort of transitions David Olson identifies, leaders, along with the churches and organizations they lead, must also learn to re-engage culture from a new vantage point on the fringes of society. This increasing "exile" of the church, as some label it,[17] calls for a fresh emphasis on the missional formation of leaders, which I have noted involves an impartation of the perspectives, imagination, practices and attunement to culture leaders need to become missionaries to their neighborhoods and cities. Leaders need these elements activated in their own lives, so that they in turn can lead the people of God into missional lifestyles that meaningfully engage and enrich the world. Alan Roxburgh underscores the necessity of getting leaders into this sort of transformative peer community today: "…a leader develops skills in these practices [of missional life] by becoming part of a group of leaders willing to take the journey of learning these skills for themselves and holding each other accountable. This is the only way the leader can begin to invite people in the congregation to experiment in these practices."[18] New communal frameworks that provide this intentional missional formation of leaders are needed.

In these times of disequilibrium and change, one of the more crucial adaptive skills (or perhaps adaptive "arts") leaders need to be vigilant to cultivate within

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[16] Ibid., 89.

[17] Authors like Walter Brueggemann and Michael Frost see these times as reminiscent of the disorientation, loss of voice and marginalization experienced by the Jews who were exiled in Babylon. Hence, they (along with many missional writers and bloggers today) employ the metaphor of "exiles" to describe the present state of God's people in Western culture. See Walter Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997); and Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006).

[18] Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 153.

themselves and within their communities is a multi-faceted attentiveness or discernment. As Robert Webber asserts, leaders must find the time and means to inform their leadership through ongoing spiritual, cultural, missiological and theological reflection.[19] Such reflection, when conducted in community, allows leaders to keep their bearings and make wise decisions in the midst of rapid and diverse change. This enables them to collectively hear and determine what must be released, what must be re-learned or learned afresh, and what must be clutched from the past in order to have staying power and impact in the future.

Leonard Sweet actually argues that such discernment, or as he labels it "listening *and* hearing," may well be one of the most critical capacities needed in leaders in these times.[20] Sweet notes that there are many leaders who claim to listen, but few who cultivate the capacity to listen and actually hear (i.e. comprehend so as to elicit an informed, empathic response). Leaders need to learn to do their hearing work before they start calling out visions for their people. A new collective depth of hearing is required to enable leaders and their communities to "see" wiser, God-sanctioned visions, directions and plans. Within those specific neighborhoods or contexts where leaders focus ministry, this discernment requires hearing what fears, frustrations and pains mark the lives of normal people (i.e. what is perceived as "bad news" in a given context), as well as what people feel is "good news." This is critical for enabling leaders to have an empathic

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[19] Robert Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of a New World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 241. Webber calls these four streams the "circle of leadership." On page 240 he states, "there is no correct point of entrance into the circle, nor any linear sequence of understandings through which a person must travel. Enter at any point and the entire arena explodes with connections and interrelationships that continue to expand in numerous directions, none of which come to closure."

[20] As Sweet puts it, "Voice-activated leadership moves from vision to vibration, from eye to ear, from structure to rhythm. Instead of squinting at the future, perhaps we should keep our ears cocked and become 'all ears.' You are what you hear more than you are what you see." See: Leonard Sweet, *Summoned to Lead* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 57-60.

response as fellow participants and strugglers in touch with how their neighbors experience day-to-day life. The hope of the gospel can then be shared and shown as a peace evoking, "meaning-full," way amid those acknowledged joys and struggles. Discernment is also critical to help leaders tune into where God Himself is at work (and conversely, dark spiritual powers), not only in their neighborhoods and city, but in their congregations as well. Churches need to be asking such questions as: What is God doing in our midst? How is the Grand Narrative of the Bible speaking to us as a people? What does God want us to take on in terms of church-sponsored initiatives, and where would he have us partner with secular missional initiatives? These kinds of questions demand a wider, ongoing collaboration and communal discerning among leaders. What hope is there for church and para-church communities to be apprenticed into such hearing postures apart from leaders learning and practicing this art themselves? But, the options for peer community frameworks conducive to such learning and practice are sparse at best.

Leadership training and development today needs to include structured, relationally strong, peer-communities to help leaders benefit from diverse perspectives and learn needed adaptive skills. Such communities need to be fostered to equip leaders in practices that enable growth in discernment, while at the same time promoting their missional and spiritual formation. Our training approaches must also make provision for intentional ways of life, with accountability, that help leaders resist the pull of damaging scripts pulling at them from all directions. American leaders, for instance, are subject to an incessant saturation in individualism, consumerism, hyper-activism and a host of other destructive narratives. These are not neutral voices or scripts, but they can actually

ensnare leaders. David Fitch contends that many church leaders and Christians have sold out to these narratives. In his recent book, *The Great Giveaway*, Fitch argues that Evangelicalism has so succumbed to various "Modern maladies" that it has literally *given away* what it means to be "the Church." Fitch asserts that Evangelicals in North America have sold-out to "modernity's experts, techniques and socio-cultural forces."[21] This give-away has allegedly resulted in leaders trading in both faithfulness to Christ and what it means to be the Church for "effectiveness measures" rooted in pragmatism, consumer capitalism, and worship of the autonomous self. How can individual leaders resist being held captive by the excesses and dysfunctional values of the host culture? And, more positively, how might leaders consistently and boldly model a better and saner way to live that stands, where necessary, in contrast to culture? New modes of intentional leadership community are required that help leaders shed and resist the damaging aspects of culture's way of life, and that enable them to adopt alternative lifestyles that are alluring and prophetic to the people of God and to society at large.[22] Where can leaders go to be apprenticed and emboldened in such ways to live and lead?

According to author and pastor, Jonathan Wilson, what is needed in this hour are more communities that "provide a means by which an undisciplined and unfaithful church may recover the discipline and faithfulness necessary for [its growth in God] and

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[21] David Fitch, *The Great Giveaway: Reclaiming the Mission of the Church from Big Business, Parachurch Organizations, Psychotherapy, Consumer Capitalism, and Other Modern Maladies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 18. My own summary of the eight key areas Fitch flags is: 1. The way we define success; 2. The way we do evangelism and present the gospel; 3. The way we lead our churches like businesses; 4. The way we focus on producing intimacy and entertainment experiences in our gathered worship; 5. The way we preach the Word; 6. The way we have farmed out social justice to para-churches; 7. The way the church has farmed out spiritual formation to the professional "shrink community;" and 8. The way the church has outsourced the moral education/training of our children to the public school system.

[22] Roxburgh identifies this need as "apprenticeship in the art of formation in the alternative society of God." See Roxburgh, and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 123.

its mission in the world."[23] It is hard to imagine churches and para-church organizations significantly progressing in such faithfulness and discipline apart from their leaders earnestly pursuing and modeling it in their own lives. I want to interject an important sidelight at this point. In my encounter with Wilson and Roxburgh's thinking thus far, I notice they tend to emphasize the leader's development in capacities for faithful mission to the world. This renders missional leaders both competent and eligible (by their example) to pass on such capacities to their communities. This emphasis is critical, and I applaud the two authors for bringing it to light. But again, I think it is equally important to emphasize the inner "heart work" required in leaders today, that is, their growth in self-awareness, character, humility and God-dependence. The importance of such exemplary stature cannot be overstated, for leaders carry great influence. And that influence is well beyond simply passing on skills and competencies and behaviors. Parker Palmer highlights the critical need for leaders to take responsibility for their inner worlds, that is, for their core motivations and "shadow" issues:

> A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A *good* leader is intensively aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good.[24]

Palmer brings out the important aspect of inner development, which I think is excellent, even though I think his writings tend to skew toward the character development side of spiritual formation. Because I so strongly believe that this inner development must also include attention to helping leaders grow in their relationship with God, I added the

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[23] Jonathan R, Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 76.

[24] Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 78.

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parenthetical phrase "growth in God" to Wilson's statement above. On its own, I see

Wilson's statement as too utilitarian in its expression of the reason why discipline and

faithfulness ought to be sought. The church is not only an instrument to be fine-tuned to

better carry out the *missio Dei*. Neither are leadership communities to be viewed as

primarily instruments for promoting missional effectiveness. The Church and her leaders

constitute the Bride of Christ who is loved and courted for the pleasure of God. She and

her leaders pursue discipline and faithfulness to also promote the growth of their love

relationship with God, who is, to push the metaphor, their divine Husband. For some

leaders, part of this journey toward deeper intimacy with God may involve painful

seasons of doubt, wrestling and isolation, and even the proverbial "dark night" of the

soul. In those seasons, which may be misinterpreted by churches and other leaders as

indications of "backsliding," compromise or sinful unbelief, such disoriented leaders can

benefit enormously from an enduring community of peers who covenant to journey

alongside them for their growth. Leaders need communal frameworks to foster the

maturing of their relationship with God over the long haul, through both the ebbs and also

the flows of their faith journeys. Again, where can they turn to find such supportive,

transformational environments to mature them and to enable them to cast an enduring

light in a dark and often confusing world?

Apart from one-on-one mentoring or coaching arrangements, leaders,

unfortunately, often do not have ready access to leadership communities that support and

embolden their inward and outward development. Or if they do, they may not be prone to

pursue such options. In my experience, most Christian approaches to leadership

formation seem to have a built-in bias to the individual. Consider, for example, how

many resources and programs for the leader's spiritual formation available today are aimed at the individual, or are otherwise supported only by one-on-one spiritual directorship or coaching. Also, consider how many leaders there are today (me included) who often read their English-language Bibles through the lens of individualism, and who thereby miss the emphasis on the community ethos in which discipleship is intended to occur. This individualistic bias influences leaders to view their formation as a personal "me and God thing" (or a "me and God and my mentor thing"). And one might fairly argue that this bias is further accentuated by the centralized, lone-ranger configurations of church leadership that still predominate in many churches today.

Alan Roxburgh and others argue that the *sola pastora* (single pastor) model of church has not only sapped the missional impulse from the church, it has cast many pastors into relative isolation. Roxburgh claims that this model, with its focus on one dominant, usually shepherd-type leader, is "killing pastors," leading to "terrible discouragement and loneliness, and creating a deep sense of personal failure."[25] As a result of this prevailing leadership arrangement, many lead pastors lack a day-to-day interface with peer leaders who share some things in common, but who are otherwise very different from them in perspective, giftedness and experience. Lead pastors are often expected to embody numerous roles and capacities, without much regard for their need to be sharpened and challenged by the breadth and depth of perspective of other local leaders, in and beyond their church. Indeed, they may have elder teams and staff teams who care deeply about them. But pastors, nonetheless, are often viewed as the lone, anointed point leaders who are supposed to develop all the other leaders. Too many never consciously pursue a leadership pool to foster their personal formation.

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[25] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 190.

So, it would seem that on some level, a bias toward individualized development approaches might be fueled by our culture's individualism, but also by the Church's common fixation on the *sola pastora* model of church leadership. But, even in situations where lead pastors do seek out development programs in peer community, for themselves and for their leadership teams, they often find only programs that are skewed to the training of shepherd-type and teacher-type leaders. Leaders with entrepreneurial or pioneering orientations, unfortunately, only find limited value in such approaches. As Eddie Gibbs notes, "Our training models are conditioned by a Christendom mindset and the agendas of the academy. As a consequence, we neglect the three other areas of ministry listed first in Ephesians 4, all of which are of critical importance in the missional church: the gifts of apostle, prophet and evangelist."[26]

If there are indeed biases to apply leadership formation either too individualistically, or too narrowly (along the lines of only pastors and teachers), leadership communities are needed that intentionally promote deep reciprocal relationships, involving a diverse set of leader types. Such biases may have even greater implications for those neglected types of leaders Gibbs mentions. Alan Hirsch notes that such "APE" leaders, who often lead para-church organizations, ministries, church plants or other missional initiatives, frequently lack the relational investment of churches that pastor or teacher leaders garner.[27] These leaders may pursue their development on their own, apart from significant community. In any case, whether leaders are gifted as pastors, teachers, apostles, prophets or evangelists, they, as individuals and as leader clusters,

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[26] Eddie Gibbs, foreword to *The Missional Leader*, by Roxburgh and Romanuk, xiii.

[27] See: Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways, Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006) 169.

need the benefit of full-orbed missional leadership communities that include the five-fold perspective of Ephesians 4:11.

What options do leaders have that actually address this need for a new kind of holistic leadership formation that takes God's mission to the world seriously? I am not suggesting that we disregard or turn from most twentieth century systems and processes for developing and training leaders, nor am I suggesting that there is one utopian approach that is the perfect synthesis that will finally get church and para-church leaders back on track. Quite the contrary, much of the material and many of the approaches employed for promoting leadership formation address critically-needed components, such as character development, self-awareness, a biblical basis for leadership, basic leadership skills and spiritually-formative practices.[28] But these approaches need to be both updated and supplemented for the reasons I have mentioned thus far.

This need to improve our approaches to leadership development is further heightened by the groundswell of younger emerging leaders coming on to the scene. These leaders commonly long for a more tangible gospel rooted in an ancient piety. Fueled by the missional conversation mentioned earlier, many of these leaders are propelled outward to combat local and global injustice, poverty and the plight of marginalized populations. This activist impetus is adding new pressures in the lives of missional leaders, who often attempt to "incarnate" or embody the behaviors of Jesus

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[28] An example of the re-packaging of an older useful paradigm of leadership development is "vantagepoint3" (see http://vantagepoint3.org). This is a freshly launched leadership development and training impetus that draws heavily upon J. Robert Clinton's ideas and approaches popular in the eighties and nineties.

without the backup of spiritual rhythms and disciplines and supportive relationships in their own lives.[29]

In conjunction with this recent wave of missional activism among younger evangelicals, we do see a healthy, growing desire among such leaders to tap into the rich spiritual well of the varied historic streams of Christian tradition. As Robert Webber notes:

> …younger evangelicals desire…a piety that has the force of tradition behind it, a piety that is communal and participated in by Christians always and everywhere, a piety characterized by structure and freedom. They are finding this kind of spirituality in the ancient, more enduring forms of piety discarded by the modern innovative boomer leaders. This piety that of ancient and medieval Christianity, draws young people like a magnet. For many younger evangelicals, piety is not so much that of 'keeping the rules' of evangelicalism but more that of keeping the rule of spirituality, especially the rule established in and passed down from the great ancient and medieval traditions of the spiritual life.[30]

This is a welcome shift, but frequently young postmodern leaders struggle to bring such good desires into the realm of consistent praxis. More communal mechanisms are needed. How might we continue to encourage that desirable missional innovation, pioneering and social response, while at the same time create relationally transformative spheres to keep the outward reach a life-giving and sustainable posture?

Such questions, as well as others I have framed thus far, have led me to conclude the following: new mission-centered, formation-intensive, community-based approaches to leadership training and development are needed to produce in leaders the caliber, maturity, skills and staying-power required for twenty-first century church and para-

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[29] John Hayes, founder of InnerCHANGE, a missional Order that works among the poor in five countries, argues that: "Mission workers among the poor need a contemplative spirituality. We can be notorious doers. At the heart of being contemplative is abiding in Christ. The contemplative life helps to keep us replenished and centered when the pressures of mission life stretch us beyond all recognition." See John Hayes, *Sub-merge: Living Deep in a Shallow World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), 216.

[30] Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, 185.

church leadership. They have also motivated me to investigate the place today for a new kind of "Order" among leaders; an Order that orients its communal life around mission, and that has historic antecedents in certain ancient monastic traditions; an Order that is also identifiable in various contemporary expressions of Christian covenant community. In modern parlance what I am speaking of goes by the label of *missional Order*. With this background in view, I now move on to my thesis.

Thesis

Amid the complexities, distractions and pressures of these times, missional Orders offer church and para-church leaders unique formational environments that can impart the leadership perspectives, capacities and practices they need to sustain their growth in God, their fruitfulness in ministry, and their faithful participation in God's mission to the world.

Definitions

Realizing that certain words or phrases used in this dissertation might be ambiguous or confusing to the reader, I am using the following words or phrases in the manner described:

- Apostolic – When applied to leaders, this connotes their "sent-ness" but also is meant to capture the trans-local nature of their ministry (generally extending beyond a single church or context). When applied to the church, apostolic denotes that the church is both founded upon the testimony of the first apostles and also responsible to proclaim

Christ—meaning it has a dual charge is to both *represent* Christ and to *re-present* Christ.[31]

- Christendom – "the system of church-state partnership and cultural hegemony in which the Christian religion was the protected and privileged religion of society and the church its legally established institutional form."[32]

- Missional – of or relating to "our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."[33]

- Missional church – "reproducing communities of authentic disciples, being equipped as missionaries sent by God, to live and proclaim his kingdom in their world."[34] The "sent" and "live" elements are perhaps best described by the widely-used term "incarnational," which essentially describes the ecclesiology required to make Minatrea's definition a reality.

- Missional formation – that aspect of development that has to do with equipping leaders in the theology, language, perspectives, practices and attunement to context that enable a fruitful engagement of culture, for Christ's sake.

- Missional leader – those who are called to play a significant role in starting, leading or developing churches, ministries and/or organizations that attempts to keep the *missio-Dei* (mission of God) at the center of their identity and praxis.

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[31] Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 83.

[32] Ibid., 6.

[33] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 23.

[34] Milfred Minatrea, *Shaped By God's Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), xvi.

- Missional Order – "a voluntary society of members, related to broader Church structures, who respond to the Lord's calling, challenging and equipping to be committed to living out the Gospel and advancing the Reign of God through apostolic service in a common, radical and sustainable way."[35]

- *Shalom* – "a sense of personal wholeness in a community of justice and caring that addresses itself to the needs of all humanity and all creation."[36]

- Spiritual Formation – the process whereby people are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ through their growing attentiveness to God's voice, presence and activity in and around them, and through their escalating engagement with all that God discloses, allows and offers, toward the end of increasing their capacity to love him, and thereby be able to more fairly embody his gospel as a holy, whole, and outwardly loving presence in the world.[37]

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[35] Quoted by Rowland Crowder in an April, 2001 book review of Ashley Barker's *Collective Witness: a Theology and Praxis for a Missionary Order* (Victoria, Australia: Urban Neighbors of Hope, 2000), found at John Mark Ministries: http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/104.htm [accessed Dec. 19, 2008].

[36] Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward A Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom* (Philadelphia, PA: United Church Press, 1976), 185.

[37] This definition is my own derivation based on my interaction with various spiritual formation authors. It has been particularly informed by my interaction with Tom Ashbrook's dissertation, where he discusses the common goals of spiritual formation posited by various popular Evangelical spiritual formation authors. These include: 1) the holiness goal; 2) the service goal; 3) the wholeness goal; and 4) the love relationship with God goal. Ashbrook contends that love relationship with God is really the foundational goal of spiritual formation and that the other three goals represent the outcome of this primary goal. See: Tom Ashbrook, "Mansions of the Heart" (Doctor of Ministry dissertation, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2003), 16-56.

Chapter 2

AN OLD AND NEW VARIETY OF MISSIONAL MONASTICISM

In some of the more outreach-oriented monastic Orders of old, and in several

more recent expressions of Orders that exhibited (or now exhibit) a focused eye for

mission, we witness the sort of transformational community that aptly goes by the name,

"missional Order." In this chapter I briefly explore some of the monastic roots from

which modern missional Orders derive their primary characteristics and inspiration. I also

explore more contemporary versions of such Orders, commenting on their appeal and

varied application as well as how they relate to local churches and the broader Body of

Christ. My aim is to set the stage for relating the missional Order concept to mission-

oriented leadership communities (which I endeavor to do in chapter four).

Ancient Counterparts of Missional Orders

Historically, the church has resorted to covenant community in various forms as a

way to preserve its communal faith, life in God and witness, and as a way to confront the

erosion of these where that was experienced in the broader body of Christ. In the early

church era, for example, the church adopted certain "ecclesial practices," which were

buttressed by a process of catechesis and ongoing communal praxis. Inagrace Dietterich

identifies five categories of ecclesial practice, noting that such practices were historically

rooted, communal, experiential and dynamic elements. As overlapping, mutually-

influencing and enriching behaviors, these included: 1) Baptism – joining and sharing; 2)

Breaking bread – eating and drinking; 3) Reconciliation – listening and caring; 4)

Discernment – testing and deciding; and 5) Hospitality – welcoming and befriending.[1] By their repetitive nature, and through the vehicle of communal accountability and empowering by the Holy Spirit, these practices were meant to embolden a "Jesus-life" among adherents, on both an individual and communal level.[2]

In the second century, in the time of Tertullian, Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk note that in order to belong to the church a person was actually mentored into new habits of life that re-socialized them away from the destructive habits of the world. This focus on formation in Christ-centered community was greatly diminished with the rise of Christendom, when Constantine made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. Quoting church historian, Alan Kreider, Roxburgh and Romanuk note: "Conversion, which had made Christians into distinct people – resident aliens – now was something that made people ordinary, not resident aliens but simply residents."[3] Consequently, Roxburgh and Romanuk argue, church leaders shifted their work away from forming people into an alternative society exemplifying the power of God's in-

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[1] Inagrace Dietterich, "Missional Community: Cultivating Communities of the Holy Spirit," in *Missional Church*, ed., Darrell Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 153-182. On page 154, Dietterich argues that such practices constitute a solid received tradition that we can still benefit from, although we must be sensitive to the Spirit as to how and what we choose to accent and what we need to amend in expressing those practices today.

[2] Dorothy Bass and Craig Dikjstra argue for another specific set of practices: "Honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and saying no, keeping Sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, singing our lives – woven together, these constitute a *way of life*. Each of these practices could be found somewhere in the life of every Christian congregation." See Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dijkstra, "Christian Practices and Congregational Education in Faith," 7, found at the *Resources for American Christianity* website: http://www.resourcingchristianity.org [accessed October 26, 2008].

[3] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 120. See: Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 90.

breaking Kingdom to "oversight of orthodoxy, proper administration of the sacraments,

and regulation of spiritualized and privatized ethical practices."[4]

Later, monastic movements formed "Orders" to deal with laxity in attention to

such ecclesial practices (and the associated erosion of the quality of discipleship) as well

as the intrusion of worldliness into the church.[5] After the first wave of eremitic

monasticism (i.e. solitary hermits or ascetics), a new wave of community-based Orders

known as "Cenobites" followed.[6] Cenobites lived in a monastery and were served and

supervised by an abbot or prioress.[7] Cenobite Orders adopted a "Rule" or rhythm of life

to live under that involved the monks committing themselves to practices and a way of

life held in common, often involving ceremonial vow taking after a long initiation

process.[8] The Rule was the behavioral support for the vows, involving certain repetitive

practices and general guidelines conducive to building and preserving community

harmony and the Order's ministry foci. The Rule put flesh on the vows.[9]

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[4] Ibid., 120.

[5] Tim Dowley, ed., *The History of Christianity* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1977), 213.

[6] The web-based para-church organization, The Prayer Foundation, offers a historical chronology of Christian monasticism that includes four waves: 1. The Hermits, from about 250 A.D. and relatively small in number; 2. The Monasteries, from the early 4th century through the dark ages; 3. The Friars, from the 13th century onwards; and, 4. New Monasticism, from around the mid 1960's onward. See: Monk Preston, "Brief History of Chrisian Monasticism" at The Prayer Foundation website: http://www.prayerfoundation.org/brief_history_of_christian_monasticism.htm [accessed June 7, 2007].

[7] Joan D. Chittister. *The Rule of Benedict: Insight for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 31-32.

[8] Paul Dekar notes, for example, that Christian monasticism, historically, has had a "rhythm of life" that includes: "work, study, and set daily prayers; stability under a Rule of Life; a contemplative and sacramental lifestyle; and practices such as hospitality, simple living, and a sharing of economic resources…" See: Paul Dekar, *Community of the Transfiguration: The Journey of a New Monastic Community* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 1.

[9] I prefer the phrase "rhythm of life" as a contemporary equivalent to the older "Rule of Life" language. One has to be careful, however, about what these phrases mean for a given Order. For some Orders, a Rule of life includes guidelines and practices to aid one's relationship with God and to help order

Trevor Miller of the Northumbria Community expands on this concept, noting what his semi-monastic community means when they use the word:

> A Rule is a means whereby, under God, we take responsibility for the pattern of our spiritual lives. It is a 'measure' rather than a 'law'. The word 'rule' has bad connotations for many, implying restrictions, limitations and legalistic attitudes. But a Rule is essentially about freedom. It helps us to stay centered, bringing perspective and clarity to the way of life to which God has called us. The word derives from the Latin 'regula' which means 'rhythm, regularity of pattern, a recognizable standard' for the conduct of life. Esther De Waal has pointed out that 'regula' is a feminine noun which carried gentle connotations' rather than the harsh negatives that we often associate with the phrase 'rules and regulations' today...A Rule is an orderly way of existence but we embrace it as a way of life not as keeping a list of rules. It is a means to an end – and the end is that we might seek God with authenticity and live more effectively for Him.[10]

One of the most prominent Cenobite Orders that still has practicing adherents today is the Benedictine Order, with roots back to Benedict of Nursia, a 6th century monk who many consider the father of Western monasticism. The original Rule of Benedict, still observed by Benedictines today, is 73 chapters long. This Rule gives specific guidelines and prescribed behaviors for directing the life of the monastic community. As someone once said, Benedict's Rule is essentially a handbook that helps adherents rise to meet radical demands of the gospel. The authors of the book, *Inhabiting the Church: Biblical Wisdom for a New Monasticism*, make the bold assertion: "it is the Benedictines who are largely responsible for maintaining order and culture after the fall of the Roman

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one's work, leisure time and social relationships. For other Orders, a Rule may connote only the practices that support the vows or values, or it may include the vows along with the practices. This can lead to some confusion! As I understand it, a Rule of Life (or rhythm of life), in whatever specific way it is defined, generally places the strongest accent on the vows and practices.

[10] Trevor Miller, as quoted from the Northumbria Community website archives: http://www.northumbriacommunity.org [accessed December 9, 2007]. I classify the Northumbria Community as a "trans-local" missional Order, which I will refrain from describing until later in this chapter.

Empire."[11] Given that nearly all the monastic communities across Europe adopted Benedict's Rule, this assertion may be accurate.[12] The Benedictines arguably prepared the Church for the coming dark ages, an unforeseen "black swan."[13]

In monastic life, fidelity to the Rule and the underlying vows was aided by accountability structures built into the communal system. Over time, specific prayer rhythms were developed in the form of a liturgical cycle paralleling the church year, including the observance of "daily hours" or a "daily office." This involved a communal pausing at various times of the day to recite or sing a number of psalms, pray and reflect together.[14] Vigils, fasting, silence, reading of Scripture and commentaries on Scripture, along with doing good works, generally were included in these practices.[15] Many Orders had a "novitiate process," where prospective members or novices lived under a covenanted way of life in the community to test their preparedness and suitability for such a call. At the end of this period, if both the "novice" and the community had no substantial objections, the novice would take solemn vows in the presence of his or her monastic peers. For many monks who endured, such vows and practices resulted in a

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[11] Jon Stock, Tim Otto, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Inhabiting the Church: Biblical Wisdom for a New Monasticism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 1. In this short booklet the authors offer keen theological reflection on the three Benedictine vows of obedience, conversion and stability.

[12] See: Monk Preston, "A Brief History of Chrisian Monasticism" at The Prayer Foundation website: http://www.prayerfoundation.org/brief_history_of_christian_monasticism.htm [accessed December 7, 2007]. Preston notes that there were some communities that did not adopt Benedict's Rule, such as the Orthodox Communion, the Celtic Christian Church, the Augustinians and some others.

[13] According to Nassim Nicholas Taleb, a "black swan" is an event that lies outside the realm of regular expectations, carries an extreme impact and it appears readily explainable *after* the fact (see Taleb's recent book, *The Black Swan* (New York: Random House, 2007), xvii – xviii). Interestingly, it has long been the premise of those espousing spiritual disciplines that such "training in godliness" (I Tim. 4:7) is what prepares disciples of Christ to endure the unexpected "setbacks" of life.

[14] This daily office originated in the early centuries of the Church and was developed into a seven-times-a-day rhythm, supposedly sanctioned by Psalm 119:164 "Seven times a day I praise you..." See: Dowley, ed., *The History of Christianity*, 224.

[15] Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949), 267-299.

deeply satisfying and enriching life. Such devotion inspired change not only within the

broader Church, but also contributed to social uplift in society (e.g. compassion

ministries among the poor and neglected, education reform, and so on). Often monastic

Orders made a transformative interface possible for the average layperson or non-monk

through provision of a less-intensive status of belonging and Rule of Life praxis. The

Benedictine tradition has named such members "oblates."[16]

Some of the Orders of old were more apostolic or outward-oriented in their way

of life than others (e.g. the Franciscans and Dominicans of the 13th century, and later the

Jesuits of the counter-reformation period). And those that were not still retained a

missionary zeal to plant new monasteries across the Roman Empire and beyond (e.g. the

Benedictines).[17] Benedictine monasteries became the hospice centers of Europe, and all

manner of guests from the common class to nobility were accepted and cared for without

favoritism.[18] The Celtic Orders (actually pre-dating Benedict and finding primary

inception with Patrick in the 5th century) were arguably more effective in bringing

covenant community to bear upon mainstream society than the Benedictines. They

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[16] Paul Dekar explains that "the word *oblate* means a willingness to offer oneself in service to God and neighbor through a particular monastery without abandoning one's lay vocations." Cited in Paul R. Dekar, *Community of the Transfiguration: The Journey of a New Monastic Community* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 17. St. Francis of Assisi (and others after him) encouraged a similar status he called "third Order," respecting the fact that many would not be called to the Franciscan and Poor Clare Orders (the latter being among women).

[17] St. Francis was the founder of what became a Franciscan movement of Friars out among the masses of people. This 13th century movement paralleled that of the Dominicans, who were also missional or active out among the world, but among the more educated or intelligentsia. Francis provided a Rule of Life for lay folks in 1221, which became known as the "Third Order." This involved a commitment to such practices as simplicity, peace, and collections for the poor. It also involved rigorous attention to abstinence and fasting, which in later centuries was viewed as too difficult to keep for lay folks—and hence prohibitive to their participation in the Order. These practices were removed from the Rule in the late 19th century to make participation on some level by laypersons more attractive. See Dom C. Butler, *Ways of Christian Life: Old Spirituality for Modern Men* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1933), 69-72.

[18] Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict*, 143.

allowed for married monks, which may have helped their interface with families. But they were also generally more accessible to people in mainstream society. As George Hunter notes,

> The Eastern monasteries organized to protest and escape from the materialism of the Roman world and the corruption of the Church; the Celtic monasteries organized to penetrate the pagan world and to extend the Church…The Celtic Christians built their monastic communities in locations accessible to the traffic of the time, like proximity to settlements, or on hilltops, or on islands near the established sea lanes.[19]

The ancient Orders varied not only in how much energy they expended toward their inward life and outward expression in culture, but they also varied according to calling. Andy Raine of the Northumbria Community notes that the Orders of old actually modified their Rules according to their internal giftedness and the people to which they were called to serve:

> In the developing history of monasticism each community or monastic order has had its own particular areas of strength, calling and emphasis. One may be contemplative; another may have at its heart a calling to serve the poor; another the carrying of the Gospel to people of different languages or culture-groups; another may have its strengths in spiritual direction, education or discipleship. Their Rule will reflect this emphasis and provide a basic ground in the common calling of everyone identified as part of the community.[20]

The Dominican writer, Christopher Kiesling, underscores this further by pointing out that there has been a constellation of Order-ed spiritualities throughout the ages (e.g. Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican, Franciscan, Carmelite, Teresian, Ignatian, Passionist, Sulpician, etc.). Kiesling argues that each of these has often varied not so much in the practices themselves but rather in the emphasis given to various practices and

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[19]George Hunter, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West…Again* (Nashville: Abington Press, 2000), 28.

[20] Andy Raine, "Who We Are" section of Northumbria website: www.northumbriacommunity.org [accessed December 9, 2007].

the interrelationships among them. For example, "An attitude of poverty is characteristic of every spirituality," he notes, "but is strongly emphasized in Franciscan spirituality and takes precedence over practices that are of greater concern in other spiritualities."[21]

As to the Orders that were precursors of Evangelicalism, in the 14th century John Wycliffe founded a religious Order known as the Lollards, which was a band of itinerant preachers sent throughout England. Some identify the Lollards as the flame that ignited the Moravian movement, which in turn influenced nearly every Evangelical Christian movement subsequently.[22] Out of the pietistic movement of the 18th century and fueled by Moravianism, the Brethren of the Common Life, under the German Count von Zinzendorf, formed the missional community of Herrnhut and an Order known as The Order of the Mustard Seed. This Order eventually included Catholic bishops, governors and other dignitaries.[23] Such Orders echoed the ancient Orders but tended toward both a much simpler Rule of Life and a passion for evangelism and missionary activity. And leaders such as John Wesley found inspiration from them (and in the case of the Herrnhut model, a covenant structure) to form Methodism's famous "bands" and "choirs." These were essentially small covenanting clusters of Christians committing to certain practices for growth – not unlike various expressions of missional community operating both in and outside the local church today, as we shall see in our exploration ahead.[24]

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[21] Christopher Kiesling, "Dominican Spiritiuality and Vatican II's Expectations of Lay People," article found at: http://www.domcentral.org/oplaity/layspirit.htm [accessed June 7, 2008].

[22] Monk Preston, "Brief History of Chrisian Monasticism," at the Prayer Foundation's website: http://www.prayerfoundation.org [accessed on December 7, 2007].

[23] Pete Greig, The Order of the Mustrard Seed website: http://www.mustardseedorder.com [accessed December 3, 2007].

[24] Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley: Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1980), 53-64.

Contemporary Expressions of Missional Orders (and Their Appeal Today)

Today new expressions of monastic-type Orders have emerged that echo many of the communal vows and practices of their ancient counterparts but that are also decidedly missional.[25] We find, for example, Orders among the poor, such as the one started by Mother Teresa in Calcutta, The Missionaries of Charity. Mother Teresa captured well the blending of the inner life with mission in the world: "If we are contemplatives in the heart of the world with all its problems, these problems can never discourage us...I want you to find the poor here, right in your own home first. And begin love there. Be that good news to your own people first. And find out about your next-door neighbors. Do you know who they are?"[26]

The Missionaries of Charity is, of course, one of the more prominent Orders that have gained renown even well beyond the Christian world. Over the past few decades, Mother Teresa and others like her have inspired a good number of Evangelicals, mainline Protestants and post-Evangelicals to form small "intentional communities" in specific neighborhoods or sectors of cities around the world. More often than not, these communities live and serve among the poor and urban-deprived, or among other marginalized populations.[27] Many in the missional conversation use the language of

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[25] Thomas Merton notes that Orders (particularly Catholic ones) tend to be of two general types: "active Orders" that aim primarily at the love and service of souls, and "contemplative Orders" whose purpose is the contemplation of God. All Orders should have both active and contemplative expressions, but as Merton sees it, some will accent one of those primary aspects more than the other. See Merton, *The Waters of Siloe*, xxxiv-xxxv.

[26] Mother Teresa, as quoted by Pete Greig. The Order of the Mustard Seed website: http://www.mustardseedorder.org, under "2nd vow" [accessed March 7, 2008].

[27] "Intentional communities" are generally small groups of Christians who move into a given housing complex or neighborhood with the expressed intention of embodying or demonstrating Christ in their individual and communal lifestyles. Often such communities adopt a Rule or pattern of life together to help insure that such an intention becomes a lived reality. An example of this in my southeast Portland

"movement" to describe these communities, since they are springing up everywhere as organic or grassroots expressions that may or may not find their origin in the Church. Because they tend to form their communal life around certain vows and practices (more commonly, echoing Benedictine spirituality), such communities are often labeled "new-monastic communities." These communities, often comprised of only a handful of Christian adherents, tend to espouse a face-to-face, lived-out or demonstrated faith that makes a long-term commitment to the betterment of a given place or neighborhood. According to Jason Byassee,

> These [new-monastic] communities…have important differences in organization, style, finances and even theology. Some are churches, like Church of the Servant King and Church of the Sojourners. Some are related to churches. Reba sponsors two ecclesial gatherings nearby, so that one can worship with a Reba congregation without participating in Reba's common-purse arrangement. Rutba looks for support and wisdom from nearby St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, but members do not have to attend. Grace Fellowship is simply a mainline church committed to more radical living.[28]

In 2004 a number of the more prominent new-monastic groups (e.g. those cited in Byassee's quote above) converged on North Carolina and together forged something akin to a generic Rule of Life, called "the twelve distinguishing marks of the new monasticism." These marks are as follows:

1. Relocation to the abandoned places of Empire.
2. Sharing economic resources with fellow community members and the needy among us.
3. Hospitality to the stranger.
4. Lament for racial divisions within the church and our communities, combined with the active pursuit of a just reconciliation.
5. Humble submission to Christ's body, the church.

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neighborhood is an intentional community called "Old Growth" that exists "to know and to share Faith, Hope, and Love where there is great need" (see http://www.oldgrowth.us).

[28] Jason Byassee, "The New Monastics: Alternative Christian Communities," in the Christian Century Magazine, October 18, 2005 edition, at: http://www.christiancentury.org/article.lasso?id=1399 [accessed November 28, 2007].

6. Intentional formation in the way of Christ and the Rule of the community along the lines of the old novitiate.
7. Nurturing common life among members of intentional community.
8. Support for celibate singles alongside monogamous married couples and their children.
9. Geographical proximity to community members who share a common rule of life.
10. Care for the property/land given to the group along with support of local economies.
11. Peacemaking in the midst of violence and conflict resolution within communities along the lines of Matthew 18.
12. Commitment to a disciplined contemplative life.[29]

Although the North American groups who drew up these twelve marks may arguably be the original or more "authentic" version of "new-monasticism," numerous other groups and missionary communities in North America and beyond could rightly carry that label (although they have their own contextualized Rules of Life, not necessarily the "twelve marks"). John Hayes, who leads InnerCHANGE, a "mission Order" (as he calls it) among the poor in Los Angeles, certainly fits in this category. Urban Neighbors of Hope (UNOH) in Melbourne, Australia, led by Ashley Barker and under the umbrella of the Church of Christ, is another such new-monastic Order among the poor.[30] Again, what these and most new-monastic groups tend to have in common besides a community Rule (and often a long novitiate process) is their commitment to an enduring, long-term presence among marginalized or disadvantaged populations. This commitment to stability in a given context makes such Orders more like their Benedictine predecessors than the more nomadic Franciscan and Dominican Orders, where a way of

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[29] Quoted from the new monasticism website: http://www.newmonasticism.org [accessed on December 8, 2007].

[30] See the book by John Hayes, *Sub-merge: Living Deep in a Shallow World* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2006), which chronicles the history and work of InnerCHANGE, while providing an example of the theology, values and commitments that govern such Orders. The Urban Neighbours of Hope website (http://www.unoh.org) is also a rich resource for those wanting to know more about these new monastic groups working among the world's poor.

life was intentionally carried, exhibited and spread beyond a given local context (which explains why such roving Orders are at times labeled "dispersed" Orders). In his book, *The New Friars,* Scott Bessenecker draws attention to numerous groups, often comprised of young Westerners, that are more like the Franciscans, Jesuits and Moravians, rather than the Benedictines, in their service among the global poorest of the poor.[31] Many of these groups, as Bessenecker notes, essentially operate as "missionizing monastic Order[s],"[32] but often they go undetected or unpublicized because of their immersion in poverty beyond Western borders.

With technology improvements and broader access across the globe to the "world-wide Web," more missional Orders of the "trans-local" variety are emerging (meaning they practice their way of life together well beyond a specific local setting). These Orders frequently provide their own internet-based platform, allowing easy access to spiritually formative resources – devotional material; inspiring articles or commentaries on biblical texts; forums that promote connectedness and interaction; "virtual" environments for "live" practicing of spiritual exercises with fellow adherents, as well as other useful resources. The following is representative of how a trans-local Order might describe itself:

> The Order of Mission is a dispersed community of pioneers, people called to lead and influence within whatever context and culture they live and work: cities and rural areas, developed and developing countries, business, education, arts, health and social care, public and private sector, family and church. We are a people who have committed ourselves to the vows of simplicity, purity and accountability.[33]

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[31] Scott Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 23-24.

[32] Ibid., 23.

[33] The Order of Mission's website: http://www.missionorder.org [accessed December 7, 2007].

Some of the more prominent missional Orders that fit this trans-local classification would include groups such as: the Order of the Mustard Seed, The Order of Mission, and the Celtic Northumbria Community.[34] Another prominent trans-local missional Order is also on the rise at the moment among church and para-church leaders involved with the missional training network, Allelon.[35] This Order aims to unite and promote the development of missional leaders who serve in churches and para-churches, including older and younger leaders, men as well as women, and leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Alan Roxburgh's writings, and rich ongoing dialogue among Allelon's stakeholders, are contributing to a strong biblical, theological and practical foundation for the Order.[36] What is interesting about the Allelon Order is that this group is tapping into the Northumbria Community as the basis for its vows and communal prayer praxis. This makes it a leadership Order within a more generic missional Order, highlighting the flexible and diverse nature of trans-local Orders forming today.

Many Evangelicals and other Christians find great appeal in this kind of Order. Their trans-local nature provides opportunities for participants to connect meaningfully

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[34] Some might take issue with classifying the Northumbria Community as a missional Order, as Northumbria's trajectory is not as strongly outward as other missional Orders. However Northumbria is classified, many leaders who are decidedly missional in their orientation identify with the Order.

[35] More information can be found on these Orders at their respective websites: The Order of the Mustard Seed (http://www.mustardseedorder.com); The Order of Mission (http://www.missionorder.org); the Celtic Northumbria Community (http://www.northumbriacommunity.org); and the Allelon community (http://www.allelon.org).

[36] At a special gathering in which I was a participant recently, forty leaders (including Alan Roxburgh and at least a half dozen popular emerging church bloggers) assembled at the Seabeck Conference Center in Seattle to discuss the rationale and complexities of starting such an Order. The yield from our three days of interacting and praying together was a collective decision to pursue the following initial practices together: 1) A Daily Office; 2) Dwelling in Luke 10:1-12 and sharing/encouraging one another via a special missional Order forum at the Allelon website; 3) Practicing hospitality and peace to the stranger; 4) Offering peace to the "other" in our local communities of faith; and 5) Sharing stories and reflections upon the above "experiments" and practices. I appreciate the seriousness and patience of this group in doing the slow relational work associated with forming an Order. Len Hjalmarson summarizes the Seabeck gathering in his article, "The Birth of a Missional Order," posted on June 2, 2008 at http://www.nextreformation.com [accessed June 2, 2008].

with Christians from diverse backgrounds around the world, while at the same time not requiring them to relocate away from their home environments and churches. They also often allow Christians to experiment and participate from a distance with a Rule of Life and prayer, without requiring any formal commitment to the Order (i.e. allowing explorers to assume a sort of "pre-oblate" status). Most covenant members of a trans-local Order do agree to meet together in person on occasion throughout the year, so being a dispersed group does not preclude times of concentrated face-to-face community.

Some trans-local Orders allow a high degree of flexibility in the application of their vows, even for members. The Northumbria Community, for example, grounds its community life in the vows of availability and vulnerability, which they described in detail on their website. But the Community avoids *prescribing* specific practices to support these vows, choosing rather to *describe* some exemplary practices that participants have found helpful to aiding fidelity to the vows. Those participating are hence able, on some level, to contour their practices to meet their specific formational needs. The Order of the Mustard Seed (OMS) allows a similar flexibility in choice of practices. Pete Greig, the reviver of this 18th century Order and the founder of the more recent "24/7 prayer movement," requires all 24/7 new monastic communities to ascribe to the general OMS vows of: 1) being true to Christ; 2) being kind to all people; and 3) sending the gospel to the world. All local 24/7 communities, known as "Boiler Houses," are further required to adopt two clearly defined practices for each OMS vow. In contrast, various other groups and individuals make lifelong commitments to the OMS vows. And yet unlike the 24/7 communities, they are given the freedom to employ their own self-crafted practices to help them stay true to the three vows. In other words, they craft them

to match their particular needs or ministry call/sphere, just as the 24/7 movement has

crafted its practices to match their prayer and mission calling. While this flexibility in the

choice of core practices seems to be common among such Orders, not all trans-local

Orders allow this degree of flexibility. The Order of Mission (TOM), for example,

requires covenant members to commit not only to their three vows of simplicity, purity

and accountability, but they are also expected to practice TOM's eight "Lifeshapes"

(essentially eight core practices) as their rhythm or Rule of Life.[37]

Various elements of contemporary missional Orders, whether they are local or

trans-local, may in certain cases provide appeal even for non-Christians. Many people

today are in search of a disciplined or rooted spirituality, and at times they find the

concepts of pilgrimage and the monastic ideal very attractive (e.g. consider the massive

appeal of the Taize community in France in recent years). Pete Greig, leader of the

revived Order of the Mustard Seed mentioned earlier, notes that "individuals,

communities, and even secular programs for personal development are increasingly

adopting such Rules of Life as a strategy for fostering intentional change and growth."[38]

In my research I was surprised to discover that some people are even making solemn

commitments to the Benedictine way of life without ever intending to follow the

resurrected Jesus Christ. For example, John McQuiston, a lawyer and participant in an

Episcopal church in Tennessee, has written a powerful booklet with the title, *Always We*

Begin Again: The Benedictine Way of Living. The readable booklet translates the

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[37] These "Lifeshapes" are described in detail in chapter four, where I look at missional Orders operating among leadership communities and use The Order of Mission as an example.

[38] Pete Greig, *The Vision and the Vow: Re-Discovering Life and Grace* (Lake Mary, FL: Relevant Books), 150. Consider the power of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Steps, which are certainly indicative of what Greig has noted.

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Benedictine Rule into easy principles for normal people. And yet, McQuiston does not accept that Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity, the living Son of God we can personally relate to.[39]

It may be that missional Orders today make the greatest impression on non-Christians through their long term witness and visible contribution within given neighborhoods or areas. People in general are attracted to communities that are not fly-by-night, and that provide stability and a tangible return to their local environment and beyond. Such Orders, much like their ancient Celtic counterparts, can move beyond being a good example. They can actually provide opportunities for non-Christians to participate or "belong before they believe," which some argue represents a more normal pathway to faith for postmodern people today.

How Missional Orders Relate to the Church and to Enhancing Discipleship

As our world grows more culturally diverse and pluralistic, many contemporary missiological writers contend that the Church must return to seeing herself as a sent people operating increasingly from the margins of society.[40] This shift from more "attractional" or "come to us" models of church to less static, mission-shaped models of community seems to be creating an ethos favorable to the cultivation of missional Orders right within the heart of the local church. In his contribution to the book, *The Missional*

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[39] See: John McQuiston, *Always We Begin Again: The Benedictine Way of Living* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1996). McQuiston ascribes to the philosophy of panentheism, which he describes in his recent book, *A Prayer Book for the 21st Century* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2004), 4-13.

[40] This includes such authors as David Bosch, Lesslie Newbigin and Darrell Guder. See: David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981); and Paul Weston, *Lesslie Newbigin Missionary Theologian: a Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). In *Missional Church* (edited by Darrell Guder), various missional thinkers also provide a brilliant biblical and historical analysis of the Church's mission, claiming that this sent nature has always been God's intention for the body of Christ.

Church, Alan Roxburgh describes and visually depicts how an "Order-ed" spirituality can relate to and fit within this concept of church as a sent people (see figure 1, which is a slightly modified version of Roxburgh's diagram).[41] As Roxburgh explains it, the *telos* or direction of the missional church is toward the reign of God. This reign has come in dramatic manifestation in Christ's first coming; but it has yet to be fully consummated, and will only be so when Christ returns. The "pilgrim people of God," essentially a local congregation made up of committed disciples, non-Christians, and nominal Christians, move together as a "centered-set" community.[42] Their shared journey is toward both God's now and not-yet reign, and also a set of common values and commitments.

culture

Reign of God

Pilgrim people
of God

Covenant
Community

Pilgrim people as "centered set"

Covenant community
as "bounded set"
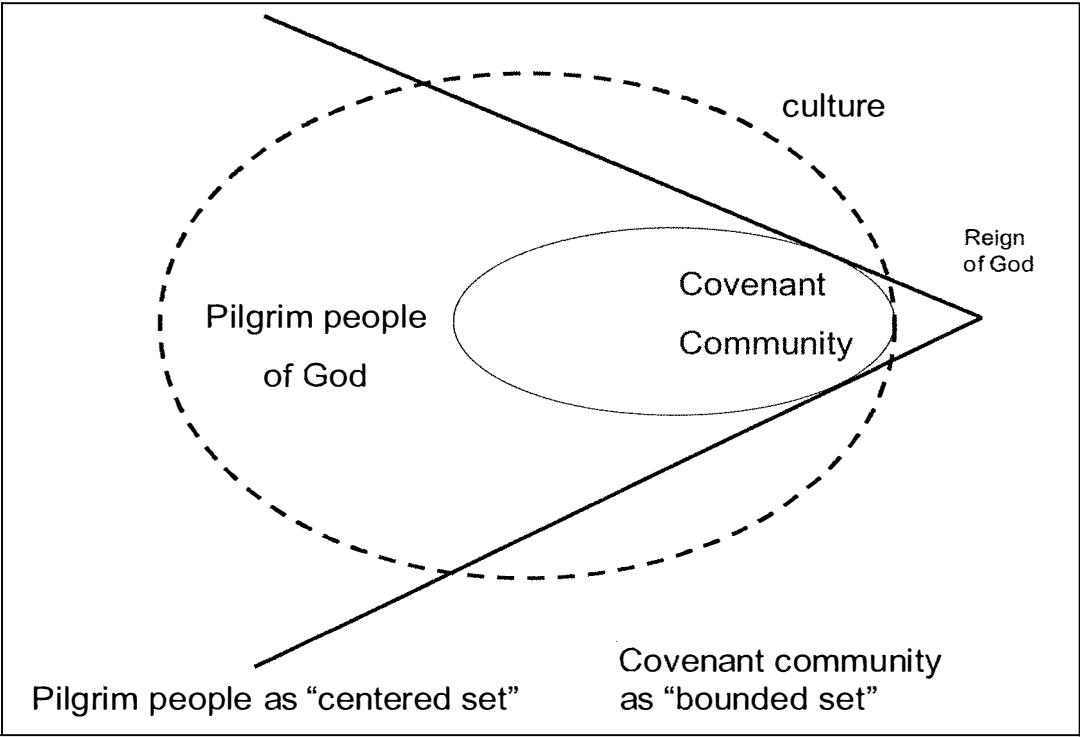
Figure 1. The local church as a "sent people" operating as a "secular Order"

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[41] Alan Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership: Equipping God's People for Mission," in *Missional Church*, ed. Darrell Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 213.

[42] Roxburgh notes that "centered-set organizations do not define membership and identity as the entry points or boundaries...[whereas,] bounded-set groups have initiation rites through which prospective members must move before they can join." See: Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership," in *Missional Church*, 205-206.

Roxbugh notes that "the inbreaking reign of God shapes the covenant community, invites and draws the congregation, and sends the entire missional community into its immediate context as a 'royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9)."[43] There is no formal membership in the centered-set congregation, and the congregation has permeable borders (marked by the dashed line surrounding the larger ellipse) where non-Christians and nominal Christians can find places of belonging among the general pilgrim people. Within this larger pilgrim set, moving in the same general direction, is a "bounded-set" group (meaning it has specific membership criteria) that operates as a covenant community, or as Roxburgh labels them, a "secular Order."[44]

Like the ancient Celtic Christians, Roxburgh's secular Order intentionally includes non-Christians in the community's journey, such that a "belonging-before-believing" dynamic is enabled. The bounded-set covenant community has a missional ministry among the common journeyers in the overall centered-set congregation and among non-Christians in the spheres of their daily life outside the church. The covenant community is also equipped and sent out into culture, so that everyday missionary living in the workplace, school, neighborhood, and other spheres of life, is widely practiced and continually yielding a strong relational interface with non-Christians. Such missional ministry within and without aims to move non-Christians into a novitiate process culminating in baptism and inclusion in the covenant life and practices and accountability of the Order. According to Roxburgh, church and para-church leaders must be equipped

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[43]Roxburgh, "Missional Leadership," in *Missional Church*, 212.

[44] Ibid., 183-220. Roxburgh sees a "secular order" involving people who "commit themselves to an ordered, covenant life within the reality of their everyday callings as spouses, children, siblings, workers who live in neighborhoods, and those who work in the larger community." (208-209).

in cultivating such Orders within local churches, which necessitates the training of leaders in spiritual formation, missional engagement of culture, organizational development and management of complex systems.[45]

This practice-based representation of church can give Christ-followers a simple way to describe what their church is about to their non-Christian friends and inquirers. If for example their church centers its life around a set of five or six community practices, it is much easier to explain, "We gather and focus on doing these five or six practices together…," rather than the more cryptic, "We have various gatherings, and we believe these things and value these eight statements..." An even greater bonus is that non-Christians can start adopting the practices themselves, which not only ties them more securely into the pilgrim people (local congregation), but also often renders them more amenable to accepting God's invitation to life in Christ.

Such a depiction of God's people provides an excellent way for churches to embrace a "missional ecclesiology," that is, a way of being and doing church that is founded upon an Ordered life-that orients itself toward God's mission in the world. And the beauty of such a representation of the church is that the vows and way of life expressed by the covenant community can be adapted to the needs and complexities of a given context or neighborhood. This is consistent with the monastic way as practiced over the eons (recall Andy Raine's quote above, where he notes that the Rule of Life of a given Order, historically, was crafted to match the Order's unique strength and calling). And such a situational discerning of how to shape the vows and life of the covenant people certainly helps to bolster the relevance, integrity and effectiveness of the church's witness in a given area.

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[45] Ibid., 209.

The depiction of church above shows how a missional Order might be naturally integrated within the very fabric and identity of a local church. As noted earlier, churches and Orders can be one and the same, although in general most Christian Orders seem to function as either appendages or servants to local churches and/or the greater Body of Christ.[46] The prominent historic Orders were generally given sanction by church authorities, and at times Bishops themselves were active participants in them. Even some of the less prominent Orders were seen as communities within the Church, or as outside entities that were directly supportive of the Church (e.g. Zinzendorf's Order of the Mustard Seed, the Lollards, etc.). Dietrich Bonhoeffer draws out this prophetic (calling-forth-of-a-higher-standard) role that monasticism has played and continues to play for the church:

> It is highly significant that the Church was astute enough to find room for the monastic movement…Here, on the outer fringe of the Church was the place where the older vision was kept alive. Men still remembered that grace costs, that grace means following Christ…Thus monasticism became a living protest against the secularization of Christianity and the cheapening of grace.[47]

On the contemporary scene, new-monastic communities (as noted earlier in Jason Byassee's quote), cover a broad spectrum in terms of how they relate to the Church. A number of these intentional communities actually identify themselves as churches, and perhaps might echo Roxburgh's ecclesiology depicted above. Others overlap as

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[46] Pete Greig contends that a missional or apostolic monasticism comprises a legitimate form of church, and is not necessarily subservient to local congregational churches. He cites missiologist Patrick Johnstone's book, *The Church is Bigger than You Think* (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 1998). where Johnstone argues that there have been at least three legitimate expressions of Christian community throughout the ages: 1) the congregational model (i.e. the local church); 2) the apostolic expression of church (e.g. missions agencies like Youth with a Mission); and 3) the monastic communities of old. See: Pete Greig, *Punk Monk: New Monasticism and the Ancient Art of Breathing* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 228-229.

[47] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1963), 46.

experimental appendages of local churches. Some new-monastic communities exist in a messy overlap with one or more local churches.

Trans-local missional Orders, such as those mentioned above (e.g. the Northumbria Community, The Order of Mission, and The Order of the Mustard Seed), demonstrate the place and value of para-church or virtual communities as complements and servants of the local church. Many if not most of the key leaders of such Orders have primary commitments to home churches. This underscores that rather than competing with local churches, missional Orders may actually provide a way for many leaders and disciples to stay meaningfully connected and accountable to other church leaders and spiritually enriching relational veins. This can only be good for the local church, where leaders are too often confined to a limited field of leadership relationships or are otherwise caught up in the myopia of their immediate context. The same goes for the wider body of Christ-followers in a local church. In their community commitments and practices, missional Orders often provide clearer pathways for holistic formation in community than many churches. The rich belief and values statements found on nearly every Evangelical church's website too often remain abstract commitments that fail to be translated into consistent practical behaviors. Against the background noise of our culture's hyperactivity and information-saturation, many Christians simply do not "hear" those values clearly and regularly enough to affect behavior. But, when Christians participate on some level in the practice-centered life of missional Orders, they are given a practical means to more faithfully live out their church's biblical values and commitments.[48]

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[48] This is vividly seen, for example, in St. Thomas Church in Sheffield, England, which, as noted earlier, uses the practices or Rule of Life of The Order of Mission called "Lifeshapes." For an elaboration

Not all Evangelicals are convinced that missional Orders ought to be subservient to the local church. A number of Evangelical leaders today decry the Church's capitulation to American culture's excesses and dysfunctions. They also bemoan Evangelicalism's loss of what Alan Hirsch calls an "incarnational ecclesiology," which Hirsch argues renders the church ineffective in engaging and enriching culture and local neighborhoods.[49] Some advocates of neo-monasticism, such as Jonathan Wilson, argue that the Western Church has so blended itself into the cultural mainstream that it has compromised its very mission. It has thereby lost its ability to live faithfully in covenant community, and hence is not an ethos in which an Order ought to operate or submit itself. Wilson actually suggests that a withdrawal or stepping-aside from culture and the umbrella of the existing church is necessary in these times, in order to re-form the church as a covenant people. Only then will the church be prepared to meaningfully engage culture.[50] This has an overly radical ring to it, for it assumes that only smaller separated and committed communities (with members generally living in close proximity to one another) can adequately represent the mission of the church today. As mentioned earlier, in his book, *The Great Giveaway*, David Fitch chastises Evangelicalism for giving away the church to culture's excesses, idols and dysfunctions, noting eight key ways in which

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on how St. Thomas and other churches apply these practices, see: Mike Breen, *A Passionate Life* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005).

[49] Alan Hirsch defines an "incarnational ecclesiology" as involving a theology of church that: 1) Takes its inspiration from the Incarnation; 2) Identifies with a people group targeted in all ways possible without compromising the truth of the gospel; 3) Implies a real and abiding presence among a group of people; 4) Implies a sending impulse rather than an extractional impulse (i.e. pulling people out of their natural contexts when they become Christians); and, 5) Involves people being able to experience Jesus from the inside of their cultural setting and lives. See Michael Frost, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2003), 37-40.

[50] Wilson, Jonathan R. *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 70-72.

Evangelicalism has catered to Modern maladies. In contrast to Wilson, however, Fitch is

not calling for a movement away from culture nor from the existing Church. As a matter

of fact, Fitch's home church is even exploring starting a missional Order to seed a new

church-planting network in its Chicago context.[51]

If "semioticians" or sign-readers like Wilson and Fitch are reading the Church and

culture correctly, missional Orders represent a much-needed exemplary, higher way for

established churches. Their intentional practices and way of life enable individuals and

communities to take practical, sustainable steps toward a more serious discipleship amid

the opposing currents of a Church in compromise and a culture that is, in many ways,

bound by destructive vices. And to whatever extent missional Orders succeed in inspiring

a community-supported, practice-centered way of life within and among congregations,

the Church overall experiences a net gain in its capacity to make disciples who more

fairly represent their Master, Jesus Christ.

Jerry Doherty's research on churches that are adopting practices akin to the

ancient Celtic Orders attests to this power of practices to change Christians and their

communities:

> In my doctoral thesis I researched how effective a rule of life was in people's
> lives. There was conclusive evidence that it made the Christian life more effective
> and meaningful to people. They could feel God in their lives and see God in the
> world. They could feel the presence of God in the community of which they were
> part. The parish became a vibrant place for prayer and spiritual development,
> learning, and growth and ministry to the larger community.[52]

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[51] For a description of this missional Order Fitch envisions, see Fitch's October 2, 2007 blog entry entitled, "The Missional Order of St. Fiacre," found at his website: http://www.reclaimingthemission.com [accessed December 7, 2007].

[52] Jerry C. Doherty, *A Celtic Model of Ministry: The Reawakening of Community Spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 70.

Diana Butler Bass also underscores this transformative power of community "practicing," drawing upon the figurative language of "pilgrims" and "tourists" to make her point. In her book, *The Practicing Congregation*, she quotes Zygmunt Bauman, a British theorist on postmodernism, on the roving lifestyles so prevalent in our society today: "Everything seems to conspire these days against distant goals, long projects, lasting commitments, eternal alliances, immutable identities."[53] Later, Bass notes in her book that this makes tourists out of people rather than pilgrims, again quoting Bauman:

> One can think of postmodern life as one lived in a city in which traffic is daily re-routed and street names are liable to be changed without notice....In such a city one is well advised not to plan long and time-consuming journeys. The shorter the trip, the greater the chance of completing it. To be rational in the modern world meant to be a pilgrim and to live one's life as pilgrimage. To be rational in the postmodern world means to be a vagrant or a tourist, or to act as one.[54]

And then Bass, using Bauman's contrasting metaphors, goes on to make the assertion:

> In an age of fragmentation, it may well be the case that the vocation of congregations is to turn tourists into pilgrims – those who no longer journey aimlessly, but, rather those who journey in God and whose lives are mapped by the grace of Christian practices...As was true in the earlier centuries of Christianity, practices have...[such a power].[55]

In whatever way they relate to the local church, missional Orders, with their focus on a balanced integration of key discipleship practices, can be a way to assist the overall Church in its critical role of converting spiritual tourists into pilgrims who truly love and follow hard after Jesus.

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[53] Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Washington DC: The Alban Institute, 2004), 50. See also: Zygmunt Bauman, "Morality in the Age of Contingency," in *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity,* ed. Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (Oxford, England and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 51.

[54] Ibid., 59. See also: Zygmunt Bauman, "Morality in the Age of Contingency," in *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity,* ed. Paul Heelas, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (Oxford, England and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 51.

[55] Ibid., 60, 63.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have tried to show that missional Orders have strong antecedents in ancient and more contemporary varieties of community-based monasticism, noting that some Orders have been more missional in their orientation than others. I have also highlighted the diversity among contemporary Orders in calling and praxis, to show the versatility of such communities in responding to various needs within the Church and in culture. Finally, I have sought to show how missional Orders have related and do presently relate to local churches and the Church at large (multiple churches and/or para-church communities), including how they enhance discipleship in general across the body of Christ.

Chapter 3

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR AN "ORDER-ED" LIFE ON MISSION
WITHIN LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES

In my opening chapter I attempted to establish the need for missional

transformational communities among leaders as a way to foster leadership development

within both my organization, Christian Associates, and within churches and para-church

groups in general. In chapter two I briefly delved into the history and characteristics of

community-oriented monastic Orders, directing much of my attention to identifying

historic and contemporary missional Orders and showing how they positively impact

churches and Christian discipleship. In this chapter I focus on certain Scripture-derived

dynamics that when collectively operative produce fertile soil for bringing the missional

monastic ideal to life in leadership communities. I have chosen to focus on the following

three categories as the primary biblical and theological underpinnings for missional

Orders, noting that there are only cursory indications in the Bible of such Orders existing

in intentional, integrated, more-developed forms: 1) Centrality of the *Missio Dei*; 2)

Holistic Practice-based Spirituality; and, 3) Vows and Covenant Community. Given that I

am attempting to apply the concept of missional Orders within the realm of mission-

oriented leadership communities, I have added a fourth category of "Enduring and Shared

Servant Leadership."

Centrality of the *Missio Dei*

In his recent book, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*,

Christopher Wright seeks to show that a "strong theology of the mission of God provides

a fruitful hermeneutical framework within which to read the whole Bible," noting that the whole Bible is itself a missional phenomenon.[1] That grand narrative of Scripture begins with a triune God who is himself a missionary. Wright explains that the now-popularized phrase, "*missio Dei*," in its earliest usage referred to the inner sending of God, that is, the Father sending the Son, and the Father and the Son together sending the Spirit. In this sense (and others), our God is truly a missionary God.[2] It begins with Him and with his actions in and among his triune Person. From this "missioning center," the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together send us as the people of God, the church, into the world. As David Bosch frames it, "To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love."[3]

This sending love of God continues beyond its Triune source with God's creation of mankind to be in relationship with him. Man is commanded to multiply across the earth, and to lovingly care for God's marvelous creation and its life forms, while using them in the service of God and man (Gen. 1:28). Despite the Fall we see God intervening to find a way to continue this flow of love relationship among man. That flow manifests itself through the Abrahamic covenant, where God speaks to Abram and unilaterally promises that all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abram (Gen. 12:3). Later, the Apostle Paul tells us that this word was an announcement of the gospel in advance to Abraham, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and that the promise would be founded upon and fulfilled with the coming of the Seed of Abraham and the

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[1] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 26.

[2] Ibid., 24, 62-63.

[3] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), 390.

Object of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:8,16-19). Jesus is the culmination of this sending love and missional impulse of God, as he comes to redeem and set right that which is marred and under bondage to sin and decay—both mankind and all of nature (for the pithy gospel summary of John 3:16 tells us "God so loved the *world...*"). And Christ passes this baton to his followers, who are sent in his authority and in the pattern of the sending God, who himself has sent Jesus (John 20:21).

Christopher Wright makes the significant point that this missional impulse, culminating in Jesus being sent and in turn sending us, is directly linked to all that has come before in the Old Testament. On the road to Emmaus the risen Lord Jesus presents himself to the two and then to the wider sphere of disciples as the focus of the whole canon of the Hebrew Scriptures: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: 'The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.'"[4]
Wright notes that Jesus seems to be saying here that the whole of what we now call the Old Testament "finds its focus and fulfillment both in the life and death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah, and in the mission to all nations, which flows out from that event."[5]

What Wright, Newbigin and others emphatically note is that the church indeed plays a key role as a sent people in the world, but it is not the totality of God's missional activity in the world. His reign covers all of creation, and he is at work beyond the doors of the Church. George Hunsberger adds an important element to this as he relates the Church to God's Kingdom or reign. He notes that when Jesus uses the phrase "Kingdom

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[4] Luke 24:45-47.

[5] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 30.

of God" or "Kingdom of heaven" (e.g. Mark 10:23; 12:34; Matt. 21:31,43; 25:34; Luke 18:24-25), he is describing the reign of God as a realm one *receives* as gift, or a realm one *enters* by invitation. The Kingdom is not described anywhere in Scripture as something we *build* or *extend*, which is often the language the church uses to describe the Kingdom and its relation to it.[6]

The call to mission is a call to meet our missionary God who is already at work ahead of us in the world. Mission is not circumscribed by the Church's activity. The Church represents, as a tangible sign and foretaste, the in-breaking reign of God—a reign that can be experienced in some measure now (but inherited in fullness in the future) as God's *shalom* touches human lives, bringing healing to sin-marred relationships and a created order under the bondage of sin and decay (Rom. 8). At the same time the Church represents, in an ambassadorial sense, "the divine reign's character, claims, demands and gracious gifts as its agent and instrument."[7] The Kingdom or reign of God includes the Church as its fruit and its witness, but it is bigger than the Church. As Hunsberger notes, this grounds mission in the greater work of God in the world, and not in the Church's efforts to extend itself.[8]

In further elaboration on this missional role of the Church alluded to above, Lesslie Newbigin notes that we must recognize the dual nature of the Church not simply as a sending vehicle, but as a people who are in motion themselves – a sent people (which I attempted to visually depict in chapter two). This means that the local church as a

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[6] George Hunsberger, "Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God," in *Missional Church*, ed., Darrell Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 93-98.

[7] Ibid., 102.

[8] Ibid., 82.

missional people keeps mission central to its identity and to everything it does, "from worship to witness to training members for discipleship. It bridges the gap between outreach and congregational life, since, in its life together, the church is to embody God's mission."[9]

When the people of God embrace their ambassadorial role as representatives of Christ in the world, this pursuit of *shalom* community means they will strive to properly adorn the gospel for the sake of "outsiders."[10] This requires a commitment not to be, first and foremost, relevant to culture, but to avoid being unnecessarily antagonistic to culture (in some substantial ways the people of God must, by biblical mandate, resist or live in contrast to culture). It also requires, as mentioned in chapter one, the capacity to "listen and hear" the soundings of context and the heartbeat and concerns of the people who reside there, so that the gospel can be communicated in a winsome way that can be readily comprehended.

If Scripture so strongly bears witness to the missional impulse emanating from within and through God to his people, culminating in Jesus' death and resurrection and

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[9] Lois Y. Barret, ed., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), x.

[10] Looking at Paul's letter to Titus alone, we see this call to a lifestyle and outward behaviors that adorn the gospel and preserve its missional edge (where the text is bold-faced I draw attention to this):
Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, **so that no one will malign the word of God**. – Titus 2:4-5
Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled…**so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us**. – Titus 2:8
Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, **so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive**. – Titus 2:9-10
Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and **to show true humility toward all men** [for the sake of the gospel]. – Titus 3:1-2
Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives [so that people looking in see that this good news really changes people for the good]. – Titus 3:14

mandate for the church to make disciples of the nations, then missional Orders in their primary (outward) thrust are well grounded in and consistent with the greater purposes of God and his Church.[11] I could go further in suggesting that to *not* be missional as an Order requires a special call, inasmuch as the general identity and trajectory of Christian community is meant to be outward to the world.[12]

A Holistic Practice-based Spirituality

For the body of Christ to be in the world as the life-imparting people God intends it to be, she must continually remain or "abide" (to use a less contemporary word) in the Source of Life, not a passive abiding, but an active engaging of God in a growing, life-giving relationship.[13] This is required to enable those human hearts which are united as the visible body of Christ in the world – the new mobile tabernacles of God's presence— to give away love, life, hope and power that is sustainable precisely because it is divine (i.e. sourced in and fed by God, not simply human will and effort).[14] We need to keep mission at the center, but not without continual attention to the depth and sustainability in

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[11] The imperative in Matthew 28:18 is "make disciples," not "go." The latter is an attendant participle describing the natural movement as disciplemaking is pursued in the immediate context and further afield (the further afield has been overemphasized by some who treat the participle "while going" as a command). See Wright, *The Mission of God*, 34-35.

[12] I am not suggesting that the church's and a given Order's primary purpose of enhancing participants' relationship with God must be subsumed to mission, but that growth in love relationship with God generally ought to express itself in love for and mission to the world.

[13] Whenever I make reference to the transformational dimensions of missional Orders, I am couching this within the fundamental assumption that the primary goal of spiritual formation is a growing love relationship with God. Other goals such as our wholeness, holiness and service to the world are also important but are a derivative of this primary goal. (See my definition of "spiritual formation" in chapter one, including the footnote).

[14] I intentionally make note of this tabernacle analogy, as both its mobile nature and its role as the receptacle of God's presence point to the coming filling of the temples of human hearts secured by Christ and effected by His sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell His people at Pentecost and beyond.

God that is required to keep this missional calling substantial and enduring. This is where the Scriptural call to trust in God's immediacy in the journey (in the provision of needed graces) is met with the call for us to exercise intention, discipline and perseverance toward godliness. Biblically and historically, this "training in godliness" (1 Tim. 4:7) has required the church's attention to holistic disciplines to enable a fuller appropriation of God's graces in the lives of disciples.

As far as who is behind our growth in God, it is clear, biblically, that God is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and that any growth in virtue or character is ultimately the fruit of the Spirit's work (Col. 1:29; Phil. 1:6). We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:10), and that divine-human reciprocation, with God as the Prime Mover and us as responders, continues as a repetitive process throughout the lives of those who aspire to grow in holiness and love. In other words, the human part in conforming our souls to the image of Christ via practices and God-responsiveness involves a cooperating with God's initiating graces.

In 2 Peter 1:3 the Apostle Peter tells us, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness." And yet we note later in the same passage (verse 5) that we are exhorted to "make every effort to add" to our faith various virtues, such as goodness, knowledge, self-control, etc. In this case Peter underscores the interplay between God's action and ours. We are not simply passive parties, but we have a role to play in our "training in godliness" (as 1 Tim. 4:7 instructs us). Gary Thomas notes that this responding or cooperating with the graces made available by God leads to our possessing in greater measure those qualities Peter mentions in verse 1:5, and further, that this effort actually keeps us "from being ineffective and unproductive" in our

knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.[15] In other words, God expects us to give attention to exercises or habits that position us to grow by his grace. As Dallas Willard so profoundly put it, "Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action."[16] Willard defines a spiritual discipline as "any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort."[17] Such intentional disciplines help enable our "spiritual formation," which I define as: the process whereby people are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ through their growing attentiveness to God's voice, presence and activity in and around them, and through their escalating engagement with all that God discloses, allows and offers, toward the end of increasing their capacity to love him, and thereby be able to more fairly embody his gospel as a holy, whole, and outwardly loving presence in the world.[18]

From Scripture we also note that God expects his people to "put off" certain destructive behaviors and ways of being, and to "put on" or clothe ourselves with various virtues and a God-centered way of thinking and acting (e.g. Eph. 4:21-25; Col. 3:5-17). Historically, the role of various spiritual disciplines or practices has been to help empower followers of Christ to rise to that high call of God. As mentioned earlier, the early church rallied around various ecclesial practices. These played a dual role of exposing a person's captivity to worldly ways of thinking and acting, while at the same

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[15] Gary L. Thomas, *The Glorious Pursuit: Embracing the Virtues of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 41.

[16] Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006), 166.

[17] Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 353.

[18] See the Definitions section, at the end of chapter one, for an explanation of how this definition was derived. Christian spiritual formation also forms the character, but I would not say that it covers the entire realm of character growth (which wise decision-making can produce, in both Christians and non-Christians).

time enabling a disciple's growth in godliness and faithfulness. These practices also needed to be learned via apprenticeship, and ingrained via repetition.

Some ancient practices for Christian formation are finding fresh expression within missional Orders today. Alan Roxburgh identifies three that he sees as critical, contending that leaders need to be practitioners of such in order to apprentice others in them: 1) the "Daily Office," which involves a prayer rhythm each day involving brief periods of individual and/or communal Scripture reading and prayer designed to keep people focused on their allegiance to and dependence upon Christ; 2) Hospitality, which involves not only inviting strangers to the warmth of a shared table, but cultivating a posture of availability for others; and 3) Learning, in the sense of reflective indwelling and dialogical processing of the biblical story in community.[19]   Missional Orders represent a way that the body of Christ is able to reassert or strengthen such growth-provoking practices or patterns by providing communal motivation, accountability and guidance in those practices. In this way such Orders are a servant to the Church and consistent with Scripture and its call for God's people to be "conformed to the image of Christ." (Rom. 8:29).[20]

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[19] Alan Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader*, 153-159, 181. As the primary leader of the Allelon Community, Roxburgh is involved in embedding such practices in a leadership learning community he hopes will grow into a missional Order. Roxburgh focuses strongly on the practice of learning via "indwelling Scripture" together. Such learning with an ear to discernment is fostered in both the gathered life as a leadership community and in its dispersed life when the community is apart. During its face-to-face working gatherings, ample time is allocated within the general working agenda to allow participants to repeatedly reflect on and share gleanings from various missional texts of Scripture. When the community is apart, participants practice the Daily Office on a regular basis together in a virtual forum. In this way Scripture is approached in a formational manner (allowing God to speak) rather than an informational manner (where it is mined primarily in a utilitarian sense "to get stuff done."). For more on this practice of reading for formation rather than primarily for information, see chapter five of M. Robert Mulholland's excellent book, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room, 2000).

[20] Some examples of a fresh accenting of old practices that we see within Evangelicalism: contemplative/mystic prayer; inhabiting scripture through Lectio Divina or spiritual reading; "resisting the

As to the importance of accenting the communal dimension of spiritual formation, it is important to recognize the formative power of our cultural backdrop of individualism. As Inagrace Dietterich notes,

> The modern emphasis on the autonomous self too often ignores, or even denies, the formative power of the various communities in which we participate. We assume that our 'habits of the heart' – the notions, opinions, commitments, and desires that motivate, order, and guide our lives – are chosen and formed in isolation from other human beings and social realities.[21]

This individualistic orientation infiltrates our perspective and praxis of spiritual formation. Spiritual disciplines become vehicles by which we as individuals work on and foster our personal growth in relationship with God. If one questions how deeply embedded this is within our thinking, he or she need only consider how often we as Western Christians read our English Bibles without an awareness of the deeply communal undertones of Scripture. New Testament examples abound of second person plurals that are often misinterpreted as singular pronouns (e.g. Matt. 5:16 – "In the same way, let your (plural) light shine before men, that they may see your (plural) good deeds and praise your Father in heaven"—and how often have we sung, "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine"?).

In emphasizing the communal dimension of spirituality, missional Orders are consistent with Scripture's call for spiritual regimens and practices to be grounded in, reinforced and worked out in community. If, as Trevor Miller notes, a rule is meant to be "a spur to growth," I see it as consistent with the charge to spur one another on to love

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Empire" or specific lifestyle choices that stand in contrast to our dominant cultural narratives (consumerism, busyness, individualism, narcissism, etc); joining missional causes that improve neighborhoods and a their sense of community; participating in social justice issues and creation care; indwelling our neighborhoods as agents that "seek the shalom of the city" (Jer. 29:7).

[21] Dietterich, "Missional Community: Cultivating Communities of the Holy Spirit," in *Missional Church*, ed. Darrell Guder, 150.

and good deeds (Heb. 10:24) – and that in the context of meeting together regularly (Heb. 10:25).

Missional Orders, involving disciplined rhythms of life, represent one way for the body of Christ and her leaders to intentionally and effectively "stay in practice." The third category I propose next, as a biblical/theological underpinning for missional Orders, relates primarily to this dimension of communal under-girding. This category could have rightly been subsumed under this category of a holistic, practice-based spirituality. But I have included it as a separate category since vows and covenanting play a unique and complementary role in adding direction, motivation and the relational ethos needed for practices to flourish and effect life change.

Vows and Covenant Community

Throughout the biblical narrative we see that our God is a covenant-making God (e.g. Gen. 9:9-17; 15:9-21; 17; Exod. 19-24; Num. 25: 10-13; 2 Sam. 7:5-16; Jer. 31:31-34).[22] As Jon Stock frames it, "…promise, commitment, covenant stand at the heart of Yahweh's way of dealing with disordered humanity," with God alone modeling "*hesed,*" an enduring covenant loyalty.[23] In that perfection we have both the ideal and the standard that together inspire less-than-perfect human fidelity to covenants or promises, be they between a person and God, or among humans in the name of God. Vows are not the same

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[22] The NIV Study Bible lists seven major covenants in the Old Testament, as per the above cited texts). See Kenneth Barker, ed., *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 19.

[23] Stock, Otto, and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Inhabiting the Church*, 12-13. Consistent with this "covenant loyalty" meaning of the Hebrew word, "*hesed*," on page 15 Stock translates Micah 6:8 as "He has shown you o man what is good and what the lord requires of you, but to do justice, and to love *loyalty*, and to walk humbly with your God."

as covenants, but they express similar solemn commitments by God's people to be loyal to the promises they make to God and to one another.

In the Old Testament (OT) we find no indication of anyone being commanded by God to enter into a vow, and it was not a sin if one chose not to enter into such a commitment (in this sense, vows might best be viewed as "an act of generosity towards God" as the Catholic Encyclopedia notes).[24] However, when people did enter into a vow, it was carefully regulated and solemnly binding (e.g. Deut. 23:21, 23; Num. 30:2; Eccles. 5:4).

Aside from Jesus' condemnation of vows wrongly used (e.g. Matt. 15:3-9; Mark 7:9-13), in the New Testament (NT) we find much less significant reference to vows than in the OT.[25] Jesus seemed to downplay the complex taking of oaths expressed in OT piety, calling rather for a more simplified version of consistency to one's word (see Matt. 5:33-37, culminating in the call to simply let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No" be "No."). Still, vows are obviously not done away with, as we note the reference in Acts 18:18, for example, where the Apostle Paul "had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken" (which most scholars take to be a "Nazarite vow" of purification).[26] We also see the ongoing significance of covenant relationship as espoused in the marriage relationship (which provides the relational framework to help couples stay true to the marriage vows they make as part of initiating the covenant). And, of course, in

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[24] The Catholic Encyclopedia website: http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15511a.htm [accessed November 19, 2008].

[25] Merrill C. Tenney, ed., vol. 5 of *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 891.

[26] A Nazarite vow is described in the Bible in Numbers 6 as a vow of separation that a man or woman could take that involved abstention from wine and fermented drink, no cutting of the hair on the head, and refraining from touching a dead body.

baptism and in our communal observance of the Lord's Supper, we have implicit this similar solemn pledge of commitment to Christ, which is reinforced whenever we share in new baptisms or partake of the blood and wine signifying Jesus' death that we might have life.

Vows and covenant-making in community are part of the means by which the people of God can enter into and walk out solemn, specifically-defined commitments before God. As social constructs that involve accountability and periodic public renewal, they are complementary to spiritual practices and can help members of the body of Christ "spur one another on to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24). As local churches and missional communities pursue loyalty to God and to one another, they in turn echo or reflect, although imperfectly, the higher *shalom* of God.[27] This echo of *shalom* declares not only the perfection and wholeness of our triune God (existing in eternal *shalom* community), but also His vision to move both mankind and creation toward wholeness and restoration. It has hence both an inward and an outward resonance that deepens the church's inner life while enabling her sensitivity to and winsomeness within culture.

Missional Orders provide the Church a way to bring this desired symphonic interplay alive as both cultivators and propagators of *shalom*. What is imperfectly refracted in the sustained communal observance of a given Order's vows is the perfect harmony and loyalty experienced within the Triune God Himself, after whose image (not just individually but communally) we are fashioned. As we are increasingly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29), God is glorified and His people are able to more visibly

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[27] As mentioned earlier, Walter Brueggemann defines *shalom* along these lines: "a sense of personal wholeness in a community of justice and caring that addresses itself to the needs of all humanity and all creation." This shalom, Brueggemann claims, is God's consistent vision for His people (e.g. Jer. 29:11; Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:14). See: Walter Brueggemann. *Living Toward A Vision: Biblical Reflections on Shalom* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976), 22-24, 185.

and credibly exude, point to and sow the *shalom* community that God wishes all men and women would humbly enter into.

Enduring and Shared Servant Leadership

From Ezekiel's castigation of the "shepherds" of Israel who failed to care for their flocks, to Jesus' exemplary washing of the feet of his disciples, to Paul's repeated call to imitate his and others' (and especially Christ's) humble leadership (e.g. 1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 2:3-11; 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:7-9), Scripture portrays servant-hood as the clearest mark of godly leadership. In most cases when describing or referring to leadership in the church, the New Testament writers, as David Fitch notes, actually use the Greek word *diakonos*, meaning "servant." Fitch adds: "It is this word alone that most captures the meaning given to us by Christ, the apostles, and the New Testament Church for understanding leadership."[28] Jesus actually instructs us that this kind of leadership stands in stark contrast to the world's way of leading:

> You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.[29]

The Apostle Paul suggests that this humble and integral servant lifestyle is the standard that ought to be imitated throughout leadership communities and churches. For example, Paul told the Corinthians: "I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son, who I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in

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[28] Fitch, *The Great Giveaway*, 87.

[29] Mark 10:42-45.

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every church" (1 Cor. 4:16-17). It is hard to imagine the Corinthians understanding Paul's "way of life in Christ Jesus" apart from seeing it manifest in Paul's apprentice, Timothy. We also see this call to imitate the godly example of leaders in other texts, like Heb 13:7 and 1 Thess. 1:6. The Apostle Peter specifically called other leaders (in these cases just mentioned, that would be church elders who were sharing in leadership) to be "examples to the flock," using language reminiscent of Jesus in Mark 10:42-45).

This call to imitate the godly example of servant leadership makes development of the heart and the associated tempering of the ego a top priority for leaders. The implications of not positively forming the heart of Christian leaders are not only negative for the leaders themselves (who may remain spiritually-stunted and/or prone to "run the race" poorly). They are also negative for followers who are not only deprived of a quality of leadership that is worthy of allegiance and imitation, but often are jaded and pull away from church involvement, and sometimes, even faith.

In the narrative and teaching of the NT, we also see leaders being called to operate as local leadership clusters representing and sharing in the leadership of given churches (e.g. various instructions regarding the selection, qualities and function of elders who share leadership in given churches, as noted in such texts as Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4). But we also observe leadership communities in collaboration across various local churches and cities and regions, with apostolic teams facilitating the linking of churches and the sharing of resources (e.g. Paul and Barnabas and Luke; Paul, Timothy and Titus; and Apollos and Priscilla and Aquila). This interplay of diversity and shared leadership is further seen in texts like Eph. 4:11, where groups of complementary

but different leadership gifts were in operations for the equipping of local churches and the broader Church at large.

The Scriptural portrayal of godly leadership involved such key elements as: careful attention to character and a lifestyle worth emulating; giftedness development (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:11-16); shared configurations of leadership among diverse kinds of leaders who cross-pollinate resources and perspectives; and leadership communities praying together and co-discerning important decisions for local communities and the broader Church. As we consider this portrayal, it is not an unjustified leap to suggest that missional Orders could be an ideal way for many church and para-church leaders to intentionally express and experience these same dynamics today. Essentially, a missional Order is a framework that helps Christ-followers rise to meet the biblical call to grow in their relationship with God, to deepen their experience of Christ-centered community, and to join Jesus in His mission among the world. One might argue that it is not unlike the progression in the early church's organizational development where the church settles into varied expressions of polity based on some broad-based instructions regarding elders and deacons. Just as the design of such structures, within the confines of the biblical guidelines for church leadership, is left for communities to prayerfully and creatively determine, so it is with missional Orders. They represent creative frameworks not specifically mandated by the biblical text, but certainly consistent with obeying Scripture's call to live the Jesus way of life. And, given the high call of leadership servant-hood that the Bible tells us is the station of Christ-centered leaders, missional Orders provide a strategic means for church and para-church leaders to walk in obedience to that call.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have highlighted the dynamics of the centrality of the *missio Dei*, a holistic practice-based spirituality, and vows and covenant-making as Scripturally-derived building blocks for missional Orders. I have also emphasized Scripture's call to enduring, shared, servant leadership as another foundation piece for the specific kind of missional Orders I am most interested in – missional Orders among church leaders and/or para-church. My premise is that the development and health of these leaders is strategic to the holistic development, health and multiplication-capacity of the churches and para-churches they lead. With these foundational dynamics in view, I now turn my attention to the specific need and outworking of missional Orders in Christian leadership communities.

Chapter 4

ORDER-ING LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES FOR LIFE TRANSFORMATION AND MISSIONAL IMPACT

Under-girded by both the biblical dynamics mentioned in chapter three and the attestation of existing and historic missional Orders mentioned in chapter two, I now direct my attention more crisply to the subject of forming and developing missional Orders among Christian leadership communities. In this chapter I attempt to show that missional Orders are ideal transformational frameworks for church and para-church leaders to be holistically formed and more attentive to God's missionary heart. I do this by making a case for the merits of missional Orders among leadership communities; by exploring some of the key dynamics that help enhance and preserve their transformational edge; and by interweaving occasional examples (and one brief case study), demonstrating their application within the local church and among various networks of churches. In chapter five I address the limits of missional Orders, which is an admission that they may not always be suitable or needed for *every* leader's development. Missional Orders are not "the" way, but "a" way and, I contend, a very good one.

The Need and Merits of Missional Orders Among Church/Para-church Leaders

To slightly alter the starting point for Jonathan Wilson's pithy phrase cited in chapter one, what is arguably needed in this hour is more *leadership* communities that "provide a means by which undisciplined and unfaithful *leaders* may recover the discipline and faithfulness necessary for [*their* growth in God] and *their* mission in the

world."[1] As noted earlier a number of contributing factors substantiate that conclusion. Leaders face a discontinuous change scenario, requiring them to tap into relational networks and learning communities to acquire adaptive skills. Various mega-shifts in the West over the past decade also mean leaders must adopt a collective hearing posture and re-enter their contexts afresh as trained missionaries. As well, leaders must overcome the dual drag of destructive cultural narratives and their own shadow-side issues. These, and the call of the gospel, mean leaders must "lead the way" in demonstrating alternative (*shalom*-exuding) ways of life; and that leadership requires the power of diversity-rich, peer communities that provoke spiritual formation and expand and inform leaders' perspectives. My contention is that all these factors can be uniquely addressed through cultivating the growth of missional Orders among church and para-church leadership communities. And such structures do not preclude the integration of other helpful leadership formation approaches, such as the one I have mentioned that was developed by J. Robert Clinton. In the remaining chapters, especially this one, I endeavor to elaborate on and strengthen my case for the suitability and value of missional Orders as a framework for provoking the kind of holistic formation in leaders that is desperately needed in the West today. I begin with the prospect of missional Orders as an ideal means for provoking a sustained, fruitful, God-pleasing way of life in leaders.

Most church and para-church leaders do not consciously strive to set up obstacles to impede growth in their inward and outward journeys. But in the real world of tight schedules, deadlines, and high expectations from every direction, not to mention the gnawing temptations that come with the territory of leadership (manipulation, lust for power, position, control or prestige, etc.), too many leaders stumble in their spiritual and

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[1] Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*, 76.

missional formation. Or they fall prey to the myth that they can keep sprinting in an existential "cope as I go" mode, rather than embracing the reality that their development will most substantially occur through a less frenzied, intentional lifestyle involving discipline, rhythms and accountability in community. Some leaders are admittedly more prone to this tendency. But even the most disciplined leaders, at some time or another, face the challenge of finding and staying engaged with intentional relationships and processes for their formation. For whatever reasons that leaders are held back in their development today, I am convinced that missional Orders provide a practical way to keep leadership formation "on the rails," so that key relationships and practices are continually accessed toward the strengthening of the leaders' inward and outward journeys. Furthermore, I suggest that missional leaders must themselves participate in missional Orders, if they hope to activate the sort of missional ecclesiology described in chapter two. The principle, of course, is that leaders can only lead their people as far as they have gone themselves.

Inagrace Dietterich contends that this work of showing the way by example is one of the most critical needs in the church today, especially as that pertains to missional Orders. Dietterich, alluding to the covenant community ecclesiology Roxburgh's diagram in chapter two captures, notes:

> [The work of leaders]...will equip and support the congregation on its journey, however tentative and exploratory that may be. But what determines the skills and strategies for leadership is the larger image of the pilgrim people of God as a covenant community. The leaders primary skills are directed toward intentionally forming such orders within the community. *This can only happen as leaders themselves participate in such orders. Leaders must exert the greatest attention and energy at this point for a number of reasons.* First, it is the covenant community that witnesses to the gospel as an alternative logic and narrative within the social context, including in particular the larger unbounded congregation. Second, this area is precisely where leaders have been given almost

no preparation; there are few models from which they can learn. *The leaders themselves must therefore become a novitiate, embark on a missional apprenticeship*, in order to give the kind of direction needed by the emerging missional community. This is a demanding task that cannot be given a secondary role in the church. [italics added][2]

It is imperative that leaders "lead the way" in experimenting with covenant community and various forms of missional Order within their congregations and para-church entities. They need to do this for the sake of their people, that they might also choose to grow as Christ's disciples and be more fruitful in their individual and collective witness for the gospel. In his book, *Monk Habits for Everyday People,* Dennis Okholm further underscores the power of modeling an accessible monastic spirituality, claiming that this enables congregations to confront biases, such as the evangelical penchant for individualism, skepticism about contemplative spirituality, or fear of alliances with non-evangelicals.[3] But leaders need to participate in transformational leadership communities not simply as a strategic way to pass on needed skills and practices. They also need to participate for the sake of their own character development and maturity. This under-girds their spiritual authority and stature, which are powerful agents for evoking life change in those under their care and influence.

Along this line, J. Robert Clinton makes an interesting assertion that spiritual authority flows primarily out of being, not out of doing. Spiritual authority, as he sees it, is a right to influence bestowed upon a leader by his or her followers because of the perceived spirituality in the leader, which Clinton argues is "attributed because of a godly

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[2] Dietterich, "Missional Community: Cultivating Communities of the Holy Spirit," in *Missional Church*, ed. Darrell Guder, 211.

[3] Dennis Ockholm, *Monk Habits for Everyday People: Benedictine Spirituality for Protestants* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 23-38.

life, knowledge of and experience with God, and gifted power."[4] If this is true, then leadership development programs and processes that overlook or under-value the development of the hearts of leaders forego (or greatly diminish) the leverage of spiritual authority as a means of evoking transformation in their followers (since most of those elements Clinton links to the bestowal of spiritual authority can only be added through attention to intentional development of the heart). Leaders can choose to demonstrate the seriousness of their commitment to personal growth by submitting themselves to the (generally) rigorous scrutiny and formative rhythm of life of a missional Order. And by choosing this route of development, they open the door for an increased right to influence not based on positional power nor on being the expert, but rather, based on true spiritual authority.

To enable leaders to be women and men of stature who live as compelling examples, who properly and humbly use their spiritual authority to invite others into a radical way of life that these leaders themselves practice, is reason enough for leadership communities to cultivate missional Orders. But there are other good reasons for forming such Orders among leaders. In helping leaders to navigate the stresses and demands of ministry in this new millennium, missional Orders can also provide covenant-fortified vows and Rules of Life that liberate leaders from destructive habits and distractions. At the same time, such Orders can usher leaders into rhythms and relationships that promote wholesome, *shalom*-laced lives. As alluded to earlier, it is often hard for leaders to shed the demands and expectations of a culture that applauds destructive ways to live. For, example, American culture seems addicted to busyness and hyper-activity, and in some sense these are viewed as the measure of a life well lived. How many church and para-

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[4] Clinton, *Focused Lives,* 264.

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church leaders are living that narrative? How many could honestly say they allow themselves the room for Sabbath of any significant nature? Missional Orders help build in replenishing rhythms, along with rhythms that help leaders become "contemplative activists."

Even the best kind of activism, that which is motivated by Spirit-birthed conviction and Jesus' compassion, however, can lead to a pattern of life that mimics our culture's frenzied pace and lifestyle. As Inagrace Dietterich notes above, leaders are at the bottom of a steep learning curve in pursuing a deeper missional formation. And she, along with other missional writers, conveys a sense of urgency about getting leaders engaged with such formation. Without appropriate rhythms and healthy boundaries defined and operable, leaders, who may have the best of intentions, run the risk of falling into a life-sapping activism. The increased social sensitivity and missional response means that they often expend more effort than in the past immersing themselves in and listening to context, building friendships with non-Christians, and pursuing compassion and justice initiatives to meet the needs of their "orphans and widows." Because this is new terrain for many leaders, the increased missional activities can displace the time and relationships they need for their own replenishment and growth (pastors may be particularly prone to this, since their natural propensities toward social compassion and care ministries draw such ready strokes from peers, churchgoers and our highly utilitarian culture).

Ashley Barker, who leads a missional Order among the poor in Victoria, Australia, known as Urban Neighbours of Hope (UNOH), notes the special challenge presented by missional activism:

We found that activism is not enough to sustain the journey of faith in the face of poverty. Burn out, cynicism and defeatism characterized a whole generation of Christian workers among the poor. Few lasted long enough to reach their impact years. We knew we could not take God's grace for granted or we too would end up this way. From the early days we knew we needed to dig deep the wells to sustain our walk with Christ by making conscious space to pray. This prayer changes us and those around us. The habits of spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation in a community and discerning prayer have been cornerstones in keeping us awake to Christ and his longings for UNOH and our neighborhoods.[5]

Barkley and his compatriots eventually cultivated a missional Order to embed the prayer rhythm and disciplines in a covenant community designed to protect and foster the health and sustainability of the UNOH workers. Their intention, however, was not to find a mechanism to help leaders merely *survive* ministry, but to actually help them *thrive* in ministry.

Missional Orders, and their "covenant community precursors,"[6] can be a remedy for leaders needing more disciplines and skills to confront such challenges as change, ministry among marginalized populations, and captivity to activist tendencies and "hurry sickness." And they can also provide a haven for those leaders feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, and/or ensnared in compromised lifestyles. The covenant framework of Orders makes provision for leaders to consciously look out for one another, as they commit to be praying, asking hard questions, confessing sin, assisting in discernment, and generally motivating each other to stay engaged with vows and a Rule of Life that enable them to stay yoked to Christ and Christ's agenda. In covenanting together, leaders are emboldened not to cave in to the world's pressures and the incessant demands of

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[5] Quoted from page 8 of the 2004 version of the Urban Neighbors of Hope constitution, found at: www.urbanexpression.org.uk/files/**UNOH**_Constitution_2004.pdf [accessed on July 2, 2008]. This 50-page document is a veritable handbook on the practical operation of a missional Order.

[6] By "covenant community precursors" I mean those leadership communities, which covenant together for their growth in friendship and accountability to an agreed-upon way of life on mission, that are the early-stage predecessors or "precursors" of bonafide missional Orders.

ministry, but to live as "a contrast community" displaying a saner lifestyle amid our culture's activity addiction.[7]

But such Orders in their diversity can also be a lifeboat to those (often broken) leaders who have left the church and who find themselves adrift and estranged from conventional Christian communities. Many of those who find themselves in limbo, outside the church, have left churches that proved unable to accommodate the questions and faith paradigm upheavals (or "dark nights") common to the longer journey of discipleship and Christian leadership development. In his book, *The Journey of Faith*, Alan Jamieson chronicles the not-so-uncommon departure over the past decade of Christians (some of them leaders) from conventional Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches.[8] Jamieson cites the research and writings of various philosophers, psychologists and spiritual formation advocates in making a case that the tearing down of people's faith is often a necessary preparation for the emergence of a more expansive and mature faith paradigm. He references the words of the French philosopher and writer, Paul Ricoeur, who endured tremendous suffering through the two World Wars: "…many people's faith is both 'uprooted and torn down', 'destroyed and overthrown'…[and] this need not be the end of Christian faith: merely the clearing of the ground of the soul in preparation for God's new 'building and planting'."[9] Where churches and para-churches

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[7] Consider the power of the "Daily Office", a regular rhythm of short communal bursts of prayer and Scripture reading throughout the course of the day. In the choices to pause amid the glaring noise and urgencies of daily life, we are reminded that every breath is a gift and that we are not slaves to the incessant demands of our hyperactive culture. In this sense, I agree with Alan Roxburgh that "keeping the daily office is a subversive activity." See: Guder, ed., *The Missional Leader*, 153-155.

[8] See: Alan Jamieson, *Journeying in Faith: In and Beyond the Tough Places* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004).

[9] Ibid., 10. See also: Paul Ricouer, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 249.

are not suited to help leaders through such deserts of faith development, missional Orders

may provide the safe, supportive relational ethos needed for disoriented leaders to

weather and benefit from desert meanderings.[10] And to the extent that leaders find God's

comfort through their peers, they are often able to comfort and help other leaders who

also find themselves disoriented, lost or parched in the journey (1 Cor. 1:3-7).[11]

A good number of the leaders who are floating on the periphery of mainline

churches are more apostolic, prophetic, or evangelistic in persuasion, as noted in Eddie

Gibbs' earlier quote.[12] Such "APE" leaders often do not fit under the *sola pastora* model

of church and find little latitude for the expression of their pioneering or missional

giftedness. Church pastors and teachers often see them as rogue agents who are loosely

attached to their churches. Alan Hirsch goes so far as to claim that APE leaders are

largely absent from churches today. He argues that these leader types are given little

room to operate in structures dominated by the pastor/teaching/didactic model of church.

Hirsch claims this "exiling" of pioneers has led to the reactionary formation of many

para-church organizations and missional Orders, and "has damaged the cause of Christ

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[10] If such Orders provide leaders with a safe relational ethos to embrace and navigate today's disorienting liminality, as Roxburgh and others argue, one would surmise that they provide a similar support to leaders struggling with faith and doubt.

[11] This pain is very close to home for me as a leader. I attribute my endurance in the leadership journey in great part to God's timely provision of Tom Ashbrook, who from the vantage point of his leadership of the spiritual formation Order, Imago Christi, walked with me through my own "dark night" of faith. Out of the depth of the Imago Christi Order, Tom has stood with me for nearly four years as an experienced guide and as a steadfast friend. Both Tom and Imago Christi have provided critical relational support, when both my own home church and para-church organization have provided little opportunity for peer-to-peer processing and prayer. From the comfort Tom has given me, I have begun to comfort other leaders in distress over their faith and relationship with God.

[12] According to Alan Hirsch, the apostolic type is an "entrepreneur, innovator and ground breaker" initiating the birth of new initiatives. The prophetic type is a "disturber, agitator, questioner" who challenges leadership decision-making and calls people back to God-awareness and responsiveness. The evangelistic type is the "communicator and recruiter to the organizational cause, who brings in outsiders and potential disciples." See: Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways, Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006) 173.

and his mission."[13] How many of these pioneering leaders have resorted to the lonely road of reactionary church startups or to jettisoning church involvement altogether, simply because their pastors have not been able to provide a relational framework for mobilizing and harnessing their giftedness? I believe that leadership communities functioning as missional Orders can offer safe re-entry points for such "off the map" leaders. And further, I assert that their re-integration into Orders can exert a vital "iron-sharpening-iron" friction on existing church leaders who need to be challenged by leaders of differing maturity, leadership style and giftedness.

Some argue that this interplay and exchange between leaders of diverse age, type and experience is critical to the maturation of the Church in the future. To the extent that they foster such learning communities, missional Orders could, from a Kingdom perspective, play one of the most vital and strategic roles on the planet today. The entire premise behind Alan Roxburgh's book, *The Sky is Falling*, for example, is that God desires to bring together the two major leadership tribes of the Church, the "Liminals" and the "Emergents," for meaningful dialogue and learning in community. Roxburgh defines Liminals as those who lead and maintain established churches and para-church organizations. The Emergents, he defines, as those (often younger) leaders who are immersed in the world of discontinuous change, and who are experimenting with new expressions of church and Christian discipleship. As Roxburgh sees it, Liminals need Emergents to help them navigate change and the shifting realities of postmodern culture. They also need them for their "gifts of imagination, critical evaluation and feedback, and

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[13] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 169.

holy restlessness..."[14] Emergents, on the other hand, need Liminals to help them grow as spiritual leaders and stay rooted in the great traditions, foundational theologies and time-tested transformational practices of the historic Church.[15] According to Roxburgh, as older and younger leaders (of varied church tradition, maturity, capacity, leadership style and ecclesial form) come together in the learning environments of missional Orders, the Church will be better postured to find its way into the future.

Such collaboration among diverse groups of leaders often goes against the grain of a leader's natural tendencies. How common is it for leaders to gravitate toward others who are like them in giftedness and passion, rather than toward a learning community of leaders very different from themselves. Leonard Sweet claims the Church is sorely lacking in what he calls "simultaneity," which he sees as the key to true collaboration:

> In a leadership context, 'simultaneity' means bringing people to the table who see things from a variety of perspectives; as women, as ethnic minorities, as the poor, even as the white males from whom we so often hear. The goal is not to duke it out until one perspective 'wins' over the others; neither is the goal to meld all the perspectives into a blended, mushy soup. Rather, the goal is to learn to see things from many perspectives simultaneously by listening to one another.[16]

This tendency to stick to the "like attracts like" pattern is perhaps even more pronounced when different generations are in view. Brian McLaren once lamented: "How sadly rare it is for the older Pauls to enfranchise and encourage the younger Timothys (cf. I Timothy 4:12)! How sadly common is it for the young Rehoboams to ignore the counsel of their experienced elders (cf. 2 Chronicles 10)!...[We need to] bias our structures

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[14] Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 23.

[15] Ibid., 23, 143-147.

[16] Leonard Sweet, *Summoned to Lead* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 91. Sweet advises leaders to choose teammates who are vastly different from them in perspective and giftedness, precisely because of this "like attracts like" bias among leadership teams in the Church.

toward both conserving expertise and welcoming fresh blood."[17] Roxburgh also echoes

this dilemma, claiming that neither Liminals nor Emergents have demonstrated much

capacity to really listen and talk, across tribes, to each other.[18]

Missional Orders can provide an ideal ethos for cultivating both Sweet's

"simultaneity" or blending of perspectives, and Roxburgh's and McLaren's desired

exchange among the "older Pauls" and "young Rehoboams." Orders, in general, foster

environments conducive to the growth of safe spiritual friendships, which allow

mentoring, spiritual direction, and the cross-pollinating of resources to flow naturally:

from old to young, and young to old; from church to para-church, and para-church to

church; and from the experienced to the in-experienced, and vice-versa. And this flow

among diverse leader types need not contradict the agreed-upon trajectory of a given

Order, but can remain a maturing dynamic as all members of an Order work toward its

uniting purpose or "charism."[19]

Missional Orders can also promote this interplay of diversity across

organizational cultures. Because so many churches and para-church organizations remain

entrenched in leadership perspectives and behaviors suited to late twentieth century

realities, the need for the sort of safe, collaborative learning environments missional

Orders can foster is particularly pronounced today. In their recent book, *The Missional*

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[17] Brian McLaren, *Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 103.

[18] Ibid., 22.

[19] In the missional Order conversation, one at times encounters the word "charism" (meaning gift or grace) to describe the way a given community orients its ministry in Christ's name. The premise is that God gives different charisms to different Orders according to their unique story, calling and context. As an example of the use of this word, see page 4 of the 2004 version of the Urban Neighbors of Hope constitution, found at: www.urbanexpression.org.uk/files/**UNOH_Constitution_2004.pdf** [accessed on July 2, 2008].

Leader, Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk explain how this leadership deficiency came to be, and why it is so important to address in this new millennium. The two authors present a complex change model that they claim has helped many leaders locate and respond to the causes of the dissonance, disorientation, and impotence they feel in leading their churches and para-churches today. They refer to this model as a "Zone Model of Missional Leadership."[20] Roxburgh and Romanuk propose the establishment of fresh learning community mechanisms as a way to employ the model and inform and update leadership-training approaches among Christian pastors, elder teams and para-church groups. This analysis is very relevant to the missional Order question, so I will endeavor to briefly explain it.

Using their model, Roxburgh and Romanuk identify three zones of organizational culture that churches and para-churches tend to form at various times: 1) the emergent zone; 2) the performance zone; and 3) the reactive zone.[21] Each zone, they note, has its own unique leadership habits, skills, behaviors and imagination. The idea is that apostolic leaders today need to be equipped to help churches and para-churches understand the predominant zone out of which they, as corporate entities, operate. This includes offering such entities perspective on how their particular mode of operation either hinders or promotes their ability to cope with change and the mega-shifts going on in the West. It also includes bringing the leaders of those churches and para-churches into deep and broad-based, collaborative conversations to help them cross-pollinate and devise approaches to navigating change that are both healthy and progressive.   According to Roxburgh and Romanuk, churches and organizations moving in the first zone, the

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[20] Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 41.

[21] Ibid., 41.

emergent zone, are strongly adaptive. This means they tend to: 1) cultivate innovative experiments; 2) respond to context on the basis of their self-initiated interaction rather than waiting on a top-down, preplanned strategy; and 3) develop needed practices and structures for ongoing fruitful engagement with their context. When moving in the next zone, the performance zone, churches and organizations no longer focus on adaptive skills but focus on passing on learned skills to the next generation of leaders. In this zone, the church or organizational culture focuses on: 1) cultivating well-developed structures and programs; 2) practicing centralized planning; and 3) defining and implementing effectiveness measures. Churches and organizations tend to move out of the performance zone and into the third zone, the reactive zone, when they encounter and seek to address the dissonance of high rates of change. The focus shifts to averting crisis and returning the organization to a state of stability by using: 1) regulation; 2) measures that align the organization with its strategic objectives and accepted ways of behaving; and 3) bold visionary "BHAG's" (big, hairy, audacious goals) designed to rouse the troops.[22] In order to survive into the future as effective representatives of the gospel in culture, all churches and para-church leaders must come to grips with the preferred zone out of which they and their communities operate. Furthermore, they must evaluate the continued suitability of their mode of operation in light of the changes happening within the context in which they are situated; and they must be willing to make radical adaptations over time, where necessary. Ultimately, Roxburgh and Romanuk claim that all missional leaders must

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[22] "Big hairy audacious goals" or "BHAG's" represents language developed by the business writer, Jim Collins who authored popular books, such as *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Business, 1994) and *Built to Last* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001). Many American churches and Christian organizations over the past decade have borrowed this language, along with Collin's approaches to pursuing organizational excellence.

become adept at cultivating an emergent zone culture in their churches and organizations, given the current cultural backdrop of discontinuous change.[23]

Through use of this zone model, Roxburgh and Romanuk make several key points that relate to the discussion of missional Orders among leaders. First of all, the authors note that a high percentage of churches and para-church organizations today still operate out of a performance zone mentality, since this thinking proved to be so effective in the stable, predictable environment that prevailed in North America in the mid to latter part of the twentieth century. Secondly, over the past decade, changes in culture moved from the steady, predictable variety into the category of discontinuous change. In response, many leaders tightened the performance belt and moved their churches and para-churches into reactive zone thinking, which only increased their inability to respond to the new kind of change. Thirdly, a good number of leaders, often younger, adopted an emergent zone response at the turn of the century, which has given them the ability to learn critical adaptive skills for navigating discontinuous change—skills, by the way, that are desperately needed by performance and reactive zone leaders. Roxburgh and Romanuk argue that performance and reactive zone leaders today must integrate emergent zone thinking and acting into their leadership, or their organizations risk increasing irrelevance and obsolescence. Fourth, while emergent zone leadership is most needed now, this does not preclude certain performance and reactive zone behaviors. It is just that these latter behaviors ought not to be dominant in church and para-church leadership communities at this time (of course, there are situational exceptions, where stability within a given

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[23] This is a condensed summary of much of chapter three, entitled "Change and Transition: Navigating the Challenges," in Roxburgh and Romanuk's book, *The Missional Leader*, 37-78. Roxburgh delves into this subject of change and its relevance to leadership training quite extensively in another book, which he has co-authored with Mike Regele, called, *Crossing the Bridge: Church Leadership in a Time of Change* (Rancho Santa Margarita, CA: Percept Group, 2000).

context may make performance or reactive zone leadership still somewhat viable). Finally, because of where Western culture is at in terms of its pluralism, fragmentation, and increasing exposure to discontinuous change, leaders in all zones need to learn and equip their communities to re-enter and re-hear the biblical narrative, in order to re-discover its implications for them as God's missionary people in their given contexts. They need to do this, while they at the same time equip their people in habits and practices that regularize engagement with their immediate cultural context.

I have taken pains to summarize Roxburgh and Romanuk's analysis (as best I can comprehend it) to help substantiate the claim that church and para-church leaders today must enter into collaborative learning communities in order to gain the leadership perspectives, habits and skills needed for leading their churches and organizations through the rough waters of discontinuous change. Missional Orders can provide safe, neutral arenas where performance and reactive zone leaders are able to interact with emergent zone leaders, and thereby slowly chew on and assimilate their ideas, practices and adaptive skills. Such interaction could embolden performance and reactive zone leaders to engage in emergent zone experiments within and out of their home churches and organizations. And emergent zone leaders could benefit from those performance and reactive zone leaders who have the systems and procedural savvy to help them move their organic, emergent churches and organizations into sustainable long-term viability and maturity.

Whether the collaboration promoted is across generational lines, organizational cultures, gender, socio-economic groupings, ethnic groups, or the spectrum of Ephesians 4:11 leadership gifts, my point is that missional Orders provide safe relational

environments conducive to rich and healthy cross-pollination of perspectives, experience, skills and habits. And, in the context of a missional Order, where prayer and sensitivity to the Spirit are emphasized, leaders can trust that they "will be given an imagination from the Spirit that is bigger than all their assumptions, positions and strategies."[24]

Much of this needed cross-pollination among leaders today will involve a mutual equipping in the practices of dialogue, listening and discernment. As Roxburgh and Romanuk explain, such practices are about helping people to find their identity and center in the biblical story, creating space for them to grow in their capacity to listen to one another and ask questions, and encouraging them to recognize and identify God's activities in their context.[25] When practiced in leadership communities, such behaviors help leaders raise their awareness of God's overt and finer motions in their lives, including what He is doing or wanting to do in their churches, organizations and cultural context. As was the case with their ancient counterparts, missional Orders can be natural environments for fostering such processing and hearing, as the Orders often incorporate wise and seasoned point leadership as well as spiritual directors. And a good part of this hearing is not only about noticing movement or activity or emotion or need. It is also about listening and hearing and embracing God's loving call to intimacy (maybe it is especially about that more than anything else).

All the factors mentioned above contribute to the versatility of missional Orders as a framework for leaders to find what they need to stay engaged and growing. I now turn my attention to two enriching dynamics that enhance the transformational edge of

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[24] Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 14. Roxburgh expresses this gift of imagination from the Spirit as a desired end in the collaboration between Liminals and Emergents, but I think it applies to any constellation of Christian leadership coming together learn from one another.

[25] See: Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 64, 74-75.

missional Orders among leadership communities. I then close this chapter by examining how one specific leadership Order among pioneering church and para-church leaders actually operates.

Enriching Dynamics that Strengthen Leadership Orders and Their Impact

Leadership "Communitas" and Covenanting Leader Clusters

In my exploration of historic and contemporary Orders I have come to see that enriching, committed relationships are the essence of any transformational Order. Somehow leadership community must maintain a "centrifugal force" (away from the center) that pushes leaders out of their comfort zones and into the risky zone of intensified trust in God and active interface with the world (including befriending those who have little understanding of Christ). But as missional leaders move outward, they also need to experience an equally compelling "centripetal force" (toward the center) that pulls them together toward a replenishing center—a center comprised of self-sacrificing relationships submitted to Jesus' leadership, exhibiting a one-for-all and all-for-one dynamic. With both centrifugal and centripetal energies at work, in the mind's eye one might see a moving communal center, not limited by proximity, and continually moving outward as it is continually drawing its participants inward. The closest concept I have encountered in recent years that describes this bonding-on-mission phenomena is "*communitas.*" And it very much relates to the missional Order conversation.

For years, Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch, Alan Roxburgh and others have been seizing upon *communitas*, an anthropological term that describes the deep forging of

relationships that happens when a group embarks on some risky journey together. *Communitas* is a word Victor Turner, an anthropologist, coined as he researched a particular rites-of-passage period among a certain African tribal group. Turner looked at that phase during which older boys are first cast out of the safe bounds of the tribe, beyond the shelter of their nurturing mother and friends, and into the wild. Here in this risky "liminal" phase between youth and manhood these initiates must together fend for themselves, occasionally being visited by holy men from the tribe. Then, eventually along the way they discover what it is to trust one other and the unknown, to discover adulthood essentially, so that as they return to the tribe, they return as men.[26] This risky journey together, much like Tolkien's little "Fellowship of the Ring" community who covenant together to journey toward Mordor, represents a step beyond community into a band-of-brothers-type bonding Turner labeled *communitas*. It represents an experiential bond in risk or danger that is so significant that the closeness forged is somehow carried in the hearts of those journeyers for the rest of their lives.

It is at this point that the concept of a missional Order perhaps most clearly departs from the conventional monastic community concept. When the depth and relationally hot center is moved out into culture, into the risky territory of the unknown and beyond the safety of the monastery, the "pioneering monastics" of missional Orders experience a high degree of *communitas*. This involves a community that is willing to move into the disequilibrium of our fragmented culture and stay engaged, while at the same time keeping in touch with the Center. It involves a community that does whatever it takes to help its participants find replenishment in their relationship with Christ, so that

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[26] Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2006), 108-129. See also: Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

they can carry on this pilgrimage with comrades who are loved as friends. This is the

fractal, the most basic communal pattern, which must be present within the bonded

relationships of leadership communities in order for it to be multiplied outward into the

larger communities those leaders shepherd. This is why I believe it is so strategic to

embed the missional Order framework among leadership communities, both within a

given church and across a number of churches and para-church groups. It seems this is

key to our seeing a deeper discipleship to Jesus spreading across the body of Christ, as

more and more Christians step into the risky, self-sacrificing follower-ship together that

they see exemplified in bands of Jesus-following leaders.

Alan Roxburgh notes that this *communitas* dynamic was apparent on some level

in the early church:

> We get a glimpse of this kind of leadership community in Acts 13, where the
> church in Antioch was comprised of a wonderful assortment of leaders working
> skillfully together…we do see a diverse group gathered around the practices of
> prayer and discernment for the sake of the church in the whole city and region.
> We know, at least, that there was a pastor and a apostle in the team—Barnabas
> and Paul – as well as certain prophets. One suspects that there were teachers and
> poets in the group. They came together for the church in Antioch, not just one
> specific congregation or experiment.[27]

The Apostle Paul and his traveling bands of missionary leaders certainly experienced this

dynamic in their journeys across Asia Minor and beyond, where they encountered all

manner of opposition and struggles and triumph-of-faith experiences together.

So, the concept of *communitas* is useful to convey the essential element of

leadership Orders that are truly missional: a deep relational bonding among leaders who

see themselves on a common journey to unite the church in a town, city or region so that

the collective Body of Christ becomes a more visible sign, witness and foretaste of the

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[27] Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 183.

coming Kingdom. This deep bonding must also be fostered continually on a day-to-day level, when the risky journey traveled together feels more like the doldrums of perseverance than an inspiring "*Braveheart* charge." Orders of old took significant measures to insure the growth of significant, life-enriching relationships. The strength or glue of many Benedictine, Celtic and other Orders of the past has been in the cultivation of deep relationships and intentional spiritual friendships. In chapter 72 of his Rule, Benedict, for example, speaks of the need for adherents to show respect and be patient in expressing to each other the pure love of brothers, "earnestly competing in obedience to one another."[28] In like fashion missional Orders can move toward establishing intentional structures and guidelines that help promote the growth of enduring friendships among leaders where the true "game" is to out-love one another.

As I have looked into various leadership Orders, I have noted that a number incorporate decentralized triads or self-policing clusters as their foundational relational structure.[29] This is how Allelon, for example, intends to structure the missional Order it is developing. In explaining the birth of Allelon's Order, Len Hjalmarson notes that all leaders joining the Order will be expected to participate in a "triad or similar unit."[30] Such intimate groups keep accountability to an Order's practices or Rule sharp and low-

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[28] Okholm, *Monk Habits for Everyday People*, 8. Alred of Rievaulx's classic writing, *Spiritual Friendship* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1977) on friendship among abbots and their mentees, as well as the Celtic practice of spiritual friendship with an "*anam chara*" (soul friend) also give us insight into the value and means whereby deep abiding relationships are cultivated.

[29] I have experienced the power of spiritual friendship groups operating as triads, and have seen their power when multiplied across a community. If we use the geometric shape, the tetrahedron (looks like a pyramid), we have a useful foundational shape for describing the most basic small group of an Order or church. The triad or spiritual friends represents the base of the tetrahedron or pyramid, with God being at the uppermost point – an image of key life-transforming relationships all tied to Christ our leader who is over us.

[30] From Len Hjalmarson's June 2, 2008 web log post "The Birth of a Missional Order," [accessed June 2, 2008] at http://.nextreformation.com.

maintenance, meaning that supervisory leaders do not need to intervene to keep up engagement with the practices. The small circle of committed friends naturally police themselves to keep the practices pressed to each other's heart. This exerts a shaping influence on each participant as the group comes together weekly to share their progress and challenges in living out their chosen rhythm. So, whether we call them "Life Transformation Groups" (as Neil Cole's labels them), "huddles" (the favored term used within The Order of Mission), or "covenant clusters" (used more generically for accountability groups over the years), it seems that some smaller, more diffuse communal arrangements need to be activated and cultivated by leaders to keep each other in rhythm.[31]

Interestingly, in her vast work with leadership communities across the business and non-profit organizational spectrum, Elizabeth Wheatley notes a direct correlation between united, caring relationships within leadership teams and organizational effectiveness and job satisfaction. But Wheatley goes further in also noting the power of a common focus or mission to unite the hearts and capacities of leaders in community.[32] I suspect that missional Orders uniting around a very crisp and clear missional purpose (e.g. cultivating a shared missional training ethos for leaders across a city) might also find it easier to sustain the sense of empathic connection among leaders, since each leader knows from their own similar experience the world through which the other leaders are navigating.[33] I would take this a step further yet, and suggest that the relational

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[31] The Life Transformation Group idea is developed in Neil Cole's book, *Cultivating a Life in God* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999); and the "huddles" concept used among leaders in The Order of Mission is explained on their website: http://missionorder.org.

[32] Elizabeth Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005), 157, 173-175.

connection is even more meaningfully fostered when the common focus involves some risky pioneering endeavor, such as building a church planting network, or forging partnerships across a sector of a city to see long-term social lift happen among its marginalized inhabitants. I suggest this because in such continual faith-stepping work, leaders, linked in an Order-ed life, experience a more enduring *communitas*. It is not simply a kind of *communitas* borne out of common goals on a short-term journey together, where there is some fond memory and feeling of comradeship in the wake of an intense and short experience. But it is of a kind that involves day-to-day reinforced comradeship as a group of leaders trust God together for the long run, at some real risk to themselves (e.g. financial, health, loss of privilege, etc.).

Shared "Point Leadership" by Servant Leaders of Varied Orientation

A number of the leadership-based missional Orders I have encountered in my reading, research and inquiry have found it helpful to have a diversity of leadership gifts and orientations represented within their covenanting communities, all under the orchestration of either a mature point leader or a small nucleus of seasoned leaders. Alan Roxburgh and the Allelon Community, for example, are exploring a missional Order leadership model that is meant to be much like the ancient Celtic Orders. In the Celtic Orders a mature and discerning "synergist" or Abbot/Abbess leader united a diverse and divergent set of leadership styles and types around mission.[34] As Roxburgh envisions the

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[33] Imago Christi, which approaches the concept of a leadership Order, actually unites itself around this common goal of spiritually forming pastoral leaders. As I have participated in the Imago Christi leadership community for the past two years, I have seen the power of their united focus on this agenda.

[34] As noted earlier, Alan Roxburgh notes that this leadership sharing among diverse leader types was evident on some level, biblically, for example in the city of Antioch, as described in Acts 13 (see: *The Sky is Falling*, 155).

operation of Allelon's Order, he sees such skilled, humble, experienced leader-synergists nurturing younger leaders in skills and practices passed down through the generations – skills and practices that can only be developed through a form of spiritual apprenticeship. The apprenticing ethos, Roxburgh asserts, requires "a community of leaders who unite around practices, habits, directions, commitments and traditions."[35] Whether it is a single synergist orchestrating an Order of leaders, or a group of synergists who lead together, such leadership must be defined by its servant nature and genuine concern for the development and progress of all participating leaders.

Dennis Okholm notes another critical contribution that Abbot/Abbess type leaders make in the development of leaders under their care. He alludes not only to the issue of the Abbot or Abbess demonstrating humility and pro-active attention to the development of those monks under his or her care. He also gets at the other side of the equation, the growth dynamic that takes place in any person when they commit themselves to humbly and lovingly follow another (in this case, the Abbot or Abbess).[36] In like fashion I see submission to the synergist(s) of a missional Order as part of the leader's ongoing training in "follower-ship." Too many pastors and Christian leaders have never learned to humbly follow another leader, or they have reached a level of age, position and authority where they will not surrender themselves to any "lesser" leader.[37] The requirement to

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[35] Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 147.

[36] See: Okholm, *Monk Habits for Everyday People*, 61-67.

[37] There are admittedly dangers of abuse of authority, so the community of leaders within an Order does need to wisely screen (by the same biblical criteria applied to church elder candidates), endorse and evaluate, on occasion, its point leadership. But I am presuming that the church and/or para-church leaders involved in a missional Order are generally experienced and mature enough to avoid being taken in by a synergist leader with abuse of authority propensities.

follow a leader or group of leaders is not an odious demand, but a welcome opportunity

for promoting growth in the one choosing to follow.

Some missional Orders empower not only Abbot-type or Abbess-type leaders as

their point leaders. They actually pursue a balance between these typically more pastoral

leaders apostolic leadership. In other words, some Orders appoint an apostolic, outward-

focused leader to work alongside their pastoral Abbot/Abbess type leader. In such a

shared arrangement, a division of labor is defined so that both synergists operate within

the realm of their primary orientation. This helps preserve the inward and outward

dynamics (what some missiologists years ago labeled the "modalic" and "sodalic"

functions), so that the Order stays on track with its double aspirations of inner

transformation and commitment to missional engagement in culture.

Both The Order of Mission (TOM) and the Northumbria Community have chosen

such a shared and balanced leadership structure. TOM is a global missional Order among

mostly pioneering leader types. The Order, which arose out of a movement among local

church and business leaders in Sheffield, England, tries to keep a balance between

apostolic and pastoral types on its primary oversight team.[38] TOM operates under the care

and leadership of a small cluster of leaders, called "guardians," who cover the spectrum

of both "pioneer leadership" (apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic leadership) and

"settler leadership" (pastoral, teaching-oriented leadership).[39] Like TOM, the

Northumbria Community, although not strictly a leadership Order, also has seen the value

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[38] Derived from interacting with The Order of Mission website: http://www.orderofmission.org [accessed April 5, 2008]; and through telephone conversations I had on March 31, 2008 and April 10, 2008 with one of TOM's "network guardians," Diane Kershaw, who oversees the process of exploration on the way to temporary and permanent membership within TOM.

[39] This pioneer and settler language as it pertains to leadership is developed more extensively in Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad's book, *A Passionate Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005), 155-161.

of diversity among the primary overseers of their Order. A bishop or apostolic type keeps the Order's missional zeal and activism alive. And a contemplative abbot-type promotes the ongoing building of community and its growth in relationship with God. A "Seniors Team" made up of apostolic-type leaders and abbot-type leaders forms an additional body under the two primary leaders. In the case of both TOM and of Northumbria, the inward and outward journeys of the Orders are kept in an integrative harmony by such blending of sodalic and modalic leadership. In the case of Northumbria, Pete Askew claims this sharing of the outward-oriented and inward-oriented perspectives has enabled the Order to experience both depth in its internal life and also responsiveness as a community to the *missio Dei*.[40] Perhaps such a shared leadership pattern is worth replicating in all missional Orders?

Adding pastoral leadership to the mix of missional Orders that specifically aim to unite pioneering or highly entrepreneurial leaders may in fact be necessary to counteract the task-orientation of apostolic leaders. J. Robert Clinton notes, "Apostolic-types tend to be strong-willed leaders. That is one of the reasons they get things done. But often it is at the expense of people. Apostolic leaders tend to use people rather than develop them. Or development is only in order to use them."[41] As I attempt to cultivate the soil for missional Orders within the context of my Portland setting and within Christian Associates (which I elaborate on in my closing chapter), I am keeping Clinton's warning in view.

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[40] Askew explained this at Allelon's Missional Order Gathering, which I attended from October 15-18, 2007 at the Seabeck Conference Center in Seattle, Washington. Again, Len Hjalmarson has documented this special gathering in his June 2, 2008 web log post "The Birth of a Missional Order," at http://.nextreformation.com [accessed June 2, 2008].

[41] Clinton, *Focused Lives,* 264.

Part of the sensitive, strategic work of the synergist (or synergist core) serving a missional Order involves the art of keeping the Rule of Life flexible enough to accommodate the situational needs and maturity of given leaders. As a given leadership community employing such a model moves into covenant life together, they might for example formulate a general rhythm appropriate for beginners or those young in the faith. To suit the journeys and maturity of seasoned leaders, a deeper, more expanded rhythm might be designed. This allowance of diversity is not unlike that practiced within the ancient Celtic Orders. Jerry Doherty quotes Kathleen Hughes, an author with expertise in Celtic Monasticism: "Irish monasticism accepted that men had different gifts and different capacities and God did not call them all to the same degree of discipline."[42] Doherty suggests that Celtic communities allowed varying kinds of rules to be adopted, but the monks themselves held the community together through their particular call to prayer, study and teaching of Scripture, and celibacy. Leading each participating leader uniquely within a general framework of vows and practices adds to the complexity of a missional Order. Hence, such situational and synergistic leadership may only be manageable within more highly developed Orders.

The Order of Mission (TOM) as an Exemplary Missional Order Among Leaders

As part of my research on missional Orders among leadership communities, I have probed the workings of one particular Order, The Order of Mission (TOM). I chose to investigate TOM because they, like Christian Associates, have a mandate to work primarily among pioneering leaders. My interaction with TOM has involved several

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[42] Doherty, *A Celtic Model of Ministry*, 49-50. See also: Kathleen Hughes and Ann Hamlin, *Celtic Monasticism: The Modern Traveler to the Early Irish Church* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), 15.

phone calls with one of the Order's primary leaders (who handles inquiries about the Order as well as membership); perusing the TOM website and a particular book highlighting the Order's Rule of Life; and several brief meetings with TOM's founder and several leaders affiliated with the Order.[43]

As a missional Order TOM has an interesting history. The Order grew out of St. Thomas Church in Sheffield, England, and was officially launched in 2003 with an inauguration ceremony by the Anglican Archbishop of York. I mention the latter ceremony, because it reflects TOM's commitment to be a servant to the local church. The Order incorporates primarily pastors, church planters and business leaders, and is led by a group of "network guardians" who protect the integrity of the TOM way of life and advocate for its adoption among pioneering leaders. A second tier of leadership constitutes "church guardians," who are essentially leaders of churches who express the TOM "DNA." Mike Breen is the overall "senior guardian" of the Order.

As mentioned earlier, The Order of Mission describes itself as "a dispersed community of pioneers, people called to lead and influence within whatever context and culture they live and work: cities and rural areas, developed and developing countries, business, education, arts, health and social care, public and private sector, family and church...[committing] ourselves to the vows of simplicity, purity and accountability.[44] The Order has defined a Rule of Life known as "Lifeshapes."

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[43] I had lengthy SKYPE (internet telephone) conversations on March 31, 2008 and April 10, 2008, with Diane Kershaw, who is one of TOM's "network guardians," with specific responsibility for those inquiring into the Order as well as those making a step toward permanent membership (called "temporary members"). The book perused is one I referred to earlier: Michael Breen and Walt Kallestad, *A Passionate Life* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005).

[44] The Order of Mission's website: http://www.missionorder.org [accessed December 7, 2007].

Like many missional Orders, TOM fosters the practice of its Rule of Life via small groups of Christians meeting regularly in micro-community "huddles." Each member of TOM is encouraged to contribute a minimum of 10 pounds (or equivalent) per month to the Order, which is a registered charity in England.[45]

TOM has immensely aided the accessibility of its Rule of Life for both its participating leaders and its affiliated churches. It has done this by means of a provocative and simple to understand set of practices captured in eight geometric shapes. Each "Lifeshape" provides a pattern for growth in a key aspect of discipleship. Breen, formally the pastor of the large St. Thomas Philadelphia church (comprised of a high density of young postmoderns), uses both his books, several websites and occasional "pilgrimage events" at St. Thomas to get a consistent, easy-to-explain message out regarding LifeShapes.[46] All leaders taking the TOM vows of simplicity, purity and accountability practice the Rule, which is a reconstitution of the traditional monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Rule is seen as a pattern of life that enables fidelity to the vows, while at the same time enabling "missionary living grounded in biblical insights."[47] In the briefest of summaries, the LifeShapes Rule involves the following processes that are each visually underscored by a given geometric shape:

1) The Circle – learning to find God in the events of normal daily life through a continual circular process of observing, reflecting and discussing (repenting),

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[45] From the TOM website: http://www.missionorder.org [accessed December 7, 2007].

[46] TOM organizes annual Order gatherings where members gather to celebrate, pray, share stories, learn together, and confer temporary or permanent member status on individuals taking the TOM vows. They are also planning a large International Gathering every six years. From TOM's website: http://www.missionorder.org [accessed December 7, 2007].

[47] The Order of Mission's website: http://www.missionorder.org [accessed December 7, 2007].

followed by planning and acting under accountability with others (believing) – with each spiral taking us closer to the heart of God;

2) The Semi-circle – seeing work and rest as a balanced rhythm of fruitfulness and abiding, like a swinging pendulum;

3) The Triangle – balancing the upward, inward and outward relationships of life.

4) The Square – exercising servant leadership in discipling and leading others based on Ken Blanchard's four styles of leadership according to the maturity and experience of a given disciple;

5) The Pentagon – helping disciples discover their giftedness orientation based on the Ephesians 4 gifts (Apostolic, Prophetic, Evangelistic, Shepherding, and Teaching) believed to be latent within all disciples in varying degrees.

6) The Hexagon – learning to pray, following six aspects of the Lord's Prayer Breen sees as a guiding pattern;

7) The Heptagon – incorporating seven processes God has put in his world to help give his people life: movement, respiration, sensitivity, growth, reproduction, excretion, and nutrition;

8) The Octagon – involving God releasing his graces to help individual leaders and disciples find the right people, that is, the person of peace whom God has prepared in advance for them to talk to.[48]

Again, the brilliance of LifeShapes is that missional leaders can readily explain to their churches the pattern of life around which they themselves are covenanting. It would not be an overstatement to claim that the LifeShapes rhythm has re-invented discipleship

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[48] Derived from interacting with Mike Breen's and Walt Kallestad's book, *A Passionate Life*, and these two websites accessed on April 9, 2008: The Order of Mission website: http://missionorder.org; and Mike Breen's training site: http://3dministries.org.

among the St. Thomas church community in Sheffield, particularly among its young postmodern membership. The eight practices do not communicate elitist behaviors of a closed leadership Order, but as an accessible, easy-to-grasp pattern that church communities can readily implement.[49]

As leaders participating in TOM guide their church communities and small groups in the practice of the Lifeshapes Rule, the process helps embed the Rule more deeply in their own lives. This is much like any process or training that is enhanced in a person's life when he or she learns how to pass that on to others, or, on an even deeper level, train others to be trainers themselves. This underscores the strategic advantage derived by creating a synergy between an Order and the churches affiliated with that Order, who actually practice the same Rule of Life as their leaders.

In my phone conversations with TOM's leadership I asked what they see as the unique developmental needs of pioneering leaders that their Order aims to address. They identified the following needs:

- The need for accountability. Leaders need a place where they can be honest, open and vulnerable. Also a place where they can be encouraged and exhorted and challenged. This includes helping leaders avoid the snare of excessive busyness, drifting away from their call by being pushed into the wrong context (i.e. a leader may lead well in one context, but not in another), and saying "yes" to too many opportunities and relationships;

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[49] While TOM and St. Thomas Philadelphia practice the same Rule (LifeShapes), the church does not appear to strongly emphasize the TOM vows, nor the daily office or depth of covenanting practiced by all TOM leaders.

- Having a context where DNA is shared so that they are not having battles everywhere over everything;

- Having more mature, experienced leaders further along in the journey, which can apprentice them. Also mature leaders who broker apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic leaders into trans-local ministry with churches and denominations, so that they do not express their orientation in defiance of the local church;

- Equipping in missional living, especially business leaders and those working outside churches.

In my interaction with various leaders in TOM, and also with pastors who are affiliated with the Order, I found it difficult to ascertain the impact that this way of life has on leaders' lives, although I was assured that it is provoking deep discipleship in the context of communities on mission. The Order is obviously fairly new and still in maturation. On a slightly dour note, the TOM Rule of Life strikes me as being a bit too prescriptive and overly defined for participants. I also find the TOM vows not as appealing as the vows expressed by other missional Orders, such as, the Northumbria Community or The Order of the Mustard Seed. But I suspect TOM will continue to grow and adapt, since its primary leaders seem to highly value operating as a learning community.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have sought to show that missional Orders do represent an appealing and helpful community framework for leaders responding to a host of different challenges today. I have also tried to show that certain enriching dynamics (e.g.

communitas, covenant groups, and shared, servant leadership), when activated, help sharpen the transformational edge of such leadership Orders. Finally, given its relevance to the apostolic world in which I move under the Christian Associates banner, I have described in some detail how a particular missional Order among pioneering leaders actually functions.

CHAPTER 5

ADDRESSING LIMITS AND CHALLENGES OF FORMING AND OPERATING
MISSIONAL ORDERS AMONG LEADERS

In chapter three I elaborated on four primary dynamics that find biblical and
theological warrant as components of leadership formation within an Order-ed
framework: 1) centrality of the *missio Dei*; 2) a practice-based spirituality; 3) vows and
covenants; and 4) enduring servant leadership. As leaders experiment with how to bring
these dynamics into a cohesive interplay toward the forming of a given missional Order, I
think it is important for them to be aware of some of the challenges and limits that may
arise. With the focus on vows and various disciplines, there is always the danger of
legalism or a faith based primarily on works. Pride and elitism can also emerge as Orders
stand in contrast to the general culture of the Church. Their complexity, more rigorous
commitment and insider language can also act as barriers to involvement. In this chapter I
attempt to address these potential challenges and limits, which I believe are not at all
insurmountable. But before addressing these, I take time to address one caveat that relates
to the forming of missional Orders. This has to do with the cultivation period that
precedes the birth of an Order. I will proceed to this, and then move on to addressing the
other, more obvious limits that missional Orders often face.

What are the Value and Limits of "Missional Order Lite?"

In these times of disequilibrium, disorientation and rapid change, leaders may be
tempted to pursue quick fixes for themselves and for their leadership teams. Missional
Orders in recent years have become a popular, almost trendy, concept in the "blog

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sphere," and particularly in the missional conversation provoked by missiological literature, such as the book written over a decade ago, *The Missional Church.* My concern is that the temptation of pragmatism may prevail upon the many restless or impatient leaders who hear others benefiting from missional Orders, and in response naively announce that they too are "starting a leadership Order." Some leaders may imagine that the difficult cultivation phase, *which only sets the conditions right for the birth of an Order*, can somehow be skipped by a shrewd application of cutting-edge technique. I fear that such a naïve and shallow dipping-in will lead certain leaders to conclude that all is well with them because they have succeeded in starting what is in essence a counterfeit version of a true missional Order, perhaps rightly labeled "missional Order lite." Without the preliminary investment of prayer and relational vulnerability and "saturation listening" to the leader's local context, I have doubts that an enduring transformational Order can be birthed. In other words, there is a danger that such quick startups of Orders become such "lite" versions of the real thing that leaders eventually discard them for the next popular approach, in tribute to a "been there, done that" spirituality.

What I want to address here are two concerns that have less to do with missional Orders being problematic as a leadership formation structure. My concerns have more to do with the fallacy held by some leaders that: 1) missional Orders can be implemented as quick-fix solutions to meet leadership development needs (including the related concern that the wrong conclusions are drawn about the value of Orders when leaders drop the "lite" versions and move on to the next promising approach); and 2) the cultivation phase preceding the birth of a missional Orders is wasted time if an Order is not actually birthed

at the end of the process. Right from the start, participating leaders need to be made aware that the "plowing the ground" cultivation phase for an Order cannot be circumvented. And further, they need to own the reality that the plowing work itself – praying, wrestling, listening, discerning, supporting one another together – is good work *even if that work of tilling the soil does not yield a functioning missional Order*. The leadership formation take-away from such cultivation can be of great benefit to leaders, although one would hope that this could be deepened even more by actually having a missional Order out of the womb and functioning and growing.

At a recent gathering I attended in Seattle, Pete Askew described the valuable period that went into the forming of The Northumbria Community as a dispersed Order. That period, as he describes, was both heart wrenching and also beneficial to the development of the founding leaders and their relationships and common story. Askew notes that early on (in the late 1970's and early 1980s) a number of friends in the area of Northumbria began to share their dissatisfaction as people feeling a sense of disorientation, exile and marginalization within culture. Out of that wrestling and sharing together, the following questions surfaced: What is it we seek? How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? And, how then shall we live? From these questions, the Rule of the Northumbria Community eventually emerged. The relational work, the prayer, the conflict and the sharing of frustrations and yearnings together in the gestation period preceding the birth of Northumbria's Rule were invaluable to those leaders and individuals who were seeking to hear and respond to God together.[1]

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[1] Askew explained this at Allelon's Missional Order Gathering, held from October 15-18, 2007, at the Seabeck Conference Center in Seattle, Washington. The story of how Northumbria was formed can be found at the community's website: http://www.northumbriacommunity.org, under "A Brief History of the Northumbria Community," [accessed March 6, 2008].

In his book, *The Vision and the Vow*, Pete Greig notes that the Order of the Mustard Seed itself took about two years to form into a defined, relationally strong Order. He explains, "There was a key moment of commitment and initiation…but this was part of a process of growth and deepening relationship."[2] Several years later, Greig records in his next book, *Punk Monk*, his own group's experience in forming the Rule for their "Boiler House" communities (which incidentally anchor themselves in the vows of the Order of the Mustard Seed). He notes: "The Rule didn't emerge lightly. It was the product of five years of hard work, hammered out on the anvil of real life and relationships and forged in prayer."[3]

Interestingly, the idea that there would even be a needed cultivation period for an Order seems to come as a surprise to some. I have heard a number of leaders in my Portland context and in CA naively say, "Let's just start an Order." They assume that simply because they understand the concept, through their reading of books, website postings and articles, they are ready to birth a missional Order. What they fail to realize is that any birth has a gestation period, which cannot be circumvented. It is perhaps more appropriate to announce an *intention* to develop a missional Order, and to humbly note that much prayer, conversing and community-building activities are on the horizon. These and the forging of a common story together, it should be noted, may not lead to the formation of an Order. But again, that cultivation work is valuable work, even apart from achieving its desired yield.

With this caveat in view about the danger of leaders circumventing or undervaluing the vital cultivation phase of missional Orders, I now turn my attention to

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[2] Greig, *The Vision and the Vow*, 136.

[3] Greig, *Punk Monk*, 109.

the more obvious and real limitations of missional Orders. I also offer some suggestions for diminishing the impact of those limitations.

Do Orders Lead to Legalism or a "Works-oriented" Faith?

Most Christians who have endured in trusting Christ over many years recognize both the allure and the pitfalls of a faith founded on obedience to rules or commands or various prescribed pathways for spiritual growth. On the one hand, they see that commitment to disciplines and ways of being and acting are beneficial for fostering maturity. On the other hand, they recognize that an inordinate focus on proper behaviors or merely "doing the right thing" can lead to a futile attempt to secure by human effort what only God can deliver. "If I could just master these behaviors, then I'll finally be the man or woman God wants me to be," so they imagine (whether consciously or unconsciously).

When leaders employ missional Orders as a framework to evoke their personal and collective development and conformity to the image of Christ, they walk right into the center of this tension. And being a leader does not necessarily mean one is less immune to adopting a warped, formulaic or performance-oriented view of what it means to follow Jesus, especially if that is framed in sacred practices and vows and whatever else is seen to constitute the desirable "monastic ideal." This sort of piety may be greatly alluring. At the same time it may well provide an occasion or excuse to default to a works righteousness or performance-based view of faith, especially if perfectionism or performing for acceptance have been snares for the leader in the past. (I think most leaders actually have to continually address and correct for the occasional drift away

from the simplicity of faith-as-gift into a mode of striving for God's and others' acceptance).

In his years of experience in working toward the spiritual formation of church and para-church leaders, Tom Ashbrook, founder of the spiritual formation Order of Imago Christi, contends that much of Evangelicalism is stuck in a mode that focuses people on doing things for God rather than growing them in their relationship with God.[4] He identifies this stage as "Mansion Three," using a seven "room" formation paradigm derived from the writings of the 16th century Catholic mystic, Teresa of Avila. Mansion Three, Ashbrook explains, is characterized by balanced attention to a number of key discipleship disciplines, but the overall focus is on maintaining a well-organized and compartmentalized Christian life. Ashbrook contends that far too many church leaders are stuck at the same developmental plateau (which explains why the Evangelical churches they lead tend to be stuck at this stage). From their own Mansion Three vantage point leaders operate as if their "goal is to produce an enlightened, well-behaved, and organizationally effective church member…[which does] not deal with how to go beyond doing ministry, into the depths of being God's child, experientially."[5] To the extent that Ashbrook's assertion is true, Evangelical leaders choosing to participate in missional Orders need to both stay awake to this background works propensity, while they at the same time keep the goal of spiritual formation in view—growth in love relationship with God.

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[4] Tom Ashbrook, "Mansions of the Heart" (Doctor of Ministry dissertation. George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2003), 93, 99

[5] Ibid., 163.

As I involve myself in the broadening conversation on the relevance of missional Orders today, I recognize that the strong prophetic "call to action" language used by Order advocates could be taken in the wrong way by some leaders, especially those frustrated with the worldliness of their leadership community and congregation. When such leaders encounter quotes like the following one by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, they may be emboldened to seek the desired change in their people by hastily creating an Order as a remedy, or worse yet, imposing an Order upon their leadership team or church: "The renewal of the Church will only come from a new kind of monasticism, which has only in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount. It is high time men and women banded together to do this."[6] Missional Orders, as I have argued above, have a cultivation period, but, more importantly, they are not primarily about getting people to finally do the right things. Discovering God and grace at a deeper level are basic to their purpose, with a higher ethic, of course, being the expected result of fostering relationship with God and immersion in grace. As I have alluded to earlier, the most strategic step frustrated leaders could take to bring change in their people might be to experiment with an Order-ed lifestyle in their own journey of discipleship. They might enlist other interested parties to journey with them, and allow the power of an Order-ed life to speak for itself over time. I agree with Bonhoeffer that it is indeed "high time that men and women banded together to do this." But the doing ought to be done in the right

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[6] Quote is found at The Prayer Foundation website on this webpage: http://www.prayerfoundation.org/brief_history_of_christian_monasticism.htm [accessed October 24, 2008]. See also: Extract from a letter written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to his brother Karl-Friedrick on the 14th of January, 1935.

spirit and not by coercion or manipulation, lest leaders be guilty of forcing an agenda upon others.[7]

One other thing needs to be said that pertains to the active life of leaders that can so readily skew toward striving, performance and results. As leaders consider immersing themselves in various missional Orders, it is also important that they assess the appropriateness of this communal framework in the light of where they find themselves on their personal faith journey. A number of spiritual formation writers acknowledge spiritual deserts and classic "dark nights of the soul" as normal parts of the longer developmental journey.[8] For growth to take place, such long periods of reflection, dryness and doubt cannot be skirted through adopting the latest technique or vehicle for growth, including missional Orders! In some cases of faith paradigm upheaval or prolonged spiritual dryness, precisely the wrong thing to do would be to plunge oneself into the radical lifestyle described by Bonhoeffer and some of the new-monastic leaders mentioned earlier. As Alan Jamieson reminds us, "…many deserts, perhaps most, are not the result of what we have done or not done…[they] are 'adult' places that reveal childish, immature notions about God. Notions like if I do this, God will do this…"[9] Leaders need to walk *through* their God-sanctioned deserts, and certain missional Orders

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[7] Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon note that even the Sermon on the Mount was less about establishing an ethic based on imperatives – "Do this…or Act this way…" The Sermon was essentially about Jesus painting an eschatological vision for the in-breaking Kingdom he was proclaiming and demonstrating. The now and not yet reign of God is already manifesting, Jesus was saying. "Therefore," as Hauerwas and Willimon assert, "Christians begin our ethics, not with anxious, self-serving questions of what we ought to do as individuals to make history right, because in Christ, God has already made history come out right." See: Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know Something is Wrong* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 87.

[8] For example, in the book, *Spiritual Passages*, Benedict Groeschel discusses various normative stages of spiritual development over a lifetime. See *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999).

[9] Jamieson, *Journeying in Faith*, 19, 26.

are no doubt very helpful in assisting this. But if a highly activist Order is chosen as a way to skirt or accelerate the way out of the dessert, then it is probably the wrong vehicle in which to travel at that particular juncture of a leader's journey.

Such concerns expressed here have less to do with any fault in missional Orders themselves as transformational frameworks. They have more to do with acknowledging that leaders need to wisely assess both their motives in pursuing an Order as well as the suitability of such a communal structure at their given stage of faith development.

What About the Danger of Pride or Projecting Elitism?

Closely related to the above danger of legalism and a works-righteousness is the danger of pride or elitism. Missional Orders can become a means whereby immature leaders arrogate themselves above those outside the Order. If leaders are drawing attention to their participation in an Order, or conveying that they are in an elite class, spiritually, then they have certainly caved into pride. The calling to participate in a specific missional Order is just that, a "calling." This means that God is not inviting every leader to participate in such an Order. And to those He is inviting, such participation must be counted as a privilege and not as an achievement to boast about. A missional Order is intended to make us more humble and loving servants of Jesus and His body. That is how leaders should seek to portray their Order-ed life. The aim is not to create "God's A-Team," and we must guard against such a projection. But there is one caveat that relates to this issue of an exclusive class (which I also further address in the next section). Because an Order requires sacrificial community, it will always have some ring of exclusivity in the ears of a culture (and sometimes a Church) that avoids

commitment and sacrifice, or that operates out of a paradigm of performance and hierarchy. As the UNOH constitution so aptly states, missional Orders ought to be appropriately selective:

> Saying people cannot join together to live out a collective charism is limiting in the extreme. Selectivity is not the same as elitism as Jesus demonstrated by choosing 12 to be apostles. If the lost and poor are to be reached there is the need for highly focused and committed groups. Generalists will not be enough. We believe highly focused groups are what it takes to reach the many millions of tribes today. By banning such focused communities, the poor and lost will be left out, not included.[10]

Are Missional Orders Too High a Threshold for Most Leaders?

When I first shared my thoughts with a respected academic leader and friend about focusing my Doctor of Ministry project on missional Orders, he immediately expressed skepticism. As he saw it, missional Orders seemed too exclusive and would raise the bar too high and thereby exclude most busy leaders from participation. The language alone of "Orders," "Rules," and "vows" he found exasperating. This was somewhat deflating, but useful, feedback right out of the starting gate! Since that encounter, I have mulled over this perceived limitation and come to some conclusions about how it might be addressed.

As to exclusivity, I think my friend makes a legitimate point. First of all, the language of commitment that so characterizes monasticism does project a daunting threshold. This is actually important to convey, since Orders by their design and intent do provoke a more serious discipleship. The backbone construct of a Rule of Life, for example, sounds rigid to many. The choice of alternative language, such as "rhythm of

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[10] Quoted from page 33 of the 2004 version of the Urban Neighbors of Hope constitution, found at: www.urbanexpression.org.uk/files/**UNOH_Constitution_2004.pdf** [accessed on July 2, 2008].

life" or "communal agreements and practices," may moderate this to a degree. But it may be more helpful on the front end to focus leaders on what a Rule actually constitutes and seeks to deliver rather than on what commitments it involves. A Rule is not primarily about constraint and conformity and a heavy yoke of discipline, as some think. Quite the contrary, it is about enhancing freedom to love, as Henri Nouwen notes: "[a Rule offers]...creative boundaries within which God's loving presence can be recognized and celebrated. It does not prescribe but invite, it does not force but guide, it does not threaten but warn, it does not instill fear but points to love. In this it is a call to freedom, freedom to love."[11] Tim Otto qualifies Nouwen's statement somewhat:

> ...there is no growth without discipline, and that freedom is always freedom within a form. In effect, we all live within a rule but usually it is implicit, which allows us the wiggle room to ignore it when we choose. But for most of us in western culture, the implicit rule is that 'I' comes first and good ends are defined by how they affect me and my concerns.[12]

Otto also makes the point that the Rule is not the goal; rather, God is the goal. A Rule simply makes certain behaviors explicit and accountable which help promote our growth in God and faithfulness to His agenda.

Taking time to explain such things may help diminish the language barrier for inquiring leaders. But other factors deter leaders from becoming involved that are not as easy to address. Leaders may, for example, fear that they will somehow either become "monkish eggheads" that can no longer relate to normal people, or worse yet, that they will fail and be seen as only mediocre disciples. Leaders may also feel they lack options for the kind of Order they envision or feel would suit them. Or they may lack friendships

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[11] Tim Otto, as quoted from the Northumbria Community website archives: http://www.northumbriacommunity.org [accessed December 9, 2007].

[12] Quoted from Len Hjalmarson's blog entry on "The Birth of a Missional Order," posted on June 2, 2008 at http://www.nextreformation.com [accessed June 2, 2008].

with other local leaders and conclude that this disqualifies them from participating in an Order. Many leaders I find are intrigued with the prospect of participating in a missional Order, and yet they feel bound by other important job commitments, or limitations arising from health or family issues. I see a variety of ways that such concerns might be addressed.

First of all, as briefly mentioned in the discussion about elitism above, missional Orders do involve a sacred and sacrificial commitment to a form of community that will seem elitist to some observers. But this would hopefully be moderated by the fact that missional Orders by definition propel adherents outward into the center of normal everyday relationships. One would think this outward trajectory would be sufficient to keep leaders "in the world but not of it" (which in this case I would interpret to mean preserving faithfulness to a given Order's way of life, without unnecessarily projecting an obtrusive piety).

As to fear of failure and/or the perceptions that options are lacking, some leaders will simply need to take the plunge and "try out" an Order to discern if it represents a lifestyle they want to pursue. And from the start, they will need to assure themselves that to back out of the Order, or to reassign oneself to an oblate status, does not constitute failure. Some leaders will simply need to take a developmental step and decide that they are not going to live under the tyranny of meeting people's expectations. The variety of missional Orders being conceived today ought to give leaders more opportunities to find an Order that is accessible and congruent with their calling, giftedness and place in the faith journey. So, getting them in touch with the diversity of options for involvement in a missional Order that is out there is an important step.

Creating a "middle zone" or less intensive avenue of belonging to and participating in an Order may be the best way to make missional Orders accessible to more leaders. This has historic precedent, as numerous ancient and contemporary Orders (e.g. the Benedictines and Franciscans) have offered the possibility of "oblate" or "Third Order" status, as already mentioned.[13] This level of participation allows the average "lay person" to make a solemn long-term commitment to an Order and, as Paul Dekar notes, "to share to the best of their ability in the rhythm of prayer, study and work of a specific community."[14] Some contemporary missional Orders among leaders have created their own oblate-like category, so that more leaders can participate or otherwise experiment with the fit of the Order with their calling, personality and lifestyle. The Order of Mission (TOM), for example, has an "associate member" status.[15] This allows a leader to practice the Order's Rule of Life without taking vows, and to benefit from some relational interface with full-fledged members of the Order.

Some leaders may find a missional Order too high a threshold for another reason unrelated to language and the stringency of the Order's requirements. Leaders who have little option for local relationships with other leaders, or who are not embedded in church leadership teams may exclude themselves from pursuing an Order because they feel they have too few quality relationships with local leaders. This may include such leaders as: church planters; denominational or para-church leaders serving multiple churches or church plants; and pioneering leaders or recovering leaders who have drifted out of

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[13] I personally have benefited by an oblate-like status called "missional membership" under Imago Christi, the spiritual formation Order among leaders I mentioned earlier. While Imago Christi is not specifically a missional Order, I agree with their values and occasionally access their communal life and various retreats and resources to which missional members are privy.

[14] Dekar, *Community of the Transformation*, xxii.

[15] See The Order of Mission website, http://missionorder.org [accessed May 7, 2008].

conventional churches. Such leaders hold the presumption that close-at-hand relationships are required for a missional leadership Order to work. But, is that presumption really true?

Jon Stock and other new-monastic advocates would insist that face-to-face, close proximity community is indeed necessary to insure fidelity to the vows of a given covenant community. Stock contends, "If new monasticism has any parallel with these ancient societies [i.e. monastic Orders] it is, despite individualistic Western life, they live in close proximity and are daily accountable to one another."[16] This daily accountability is accentuated not only by immediate friendships with others in the community, but by a healthy communal pressure overall. Stock notes that the making of a vow in the ancient world was a public event, where a person's honor in society was called upon to help insure fidelity to the vow. In other words, most societies, from the Assyrians down to the Romans, were honor–shame societies that added the real threat of public shame if a person reneged on their vow.[17] As ancient Christian monasticism came to the fore, this honor–shame mechanism was no doubt moderated by the ethos of grace, but there still was the sense of valuing one's word and buttressing that through close proximity relationships. Today, society rarely provides any stimulus to provoke faithfulness to such solemn commitments, and even churches frequently lack meaningful accountability structures to aid fidelity to the vows members take (whether they be baptismal, marriage, or other kinds of vows.). This reality of minimal extrinsic motivation to keep to a person

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[16] Stock, Otto, and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Inhabiting the Church*, 8.

[17] Ibid., 8. See also: Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3d ed., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 27-57.

on track with his or her vows adds weight to Stock's contention that face-to-face

community is required to insure accountability.

Others contest the assertion that local proximity is required, arguing that the

Internet permits a dispersed monasticism echoing the lack of attachment to place seen in

ancient Orders like the Franciscans or Dominicans.[18] As a trans-local Order the

Northumbria Community, for example, claims: "We are not a Community because of

physically living close to each other (although some do) but because we live close to our

chosen way of living, which unites us at a heart level."[19]

Still, Stock's claim about the need for daily face-to-face relationships within an

Order must be taken seriously. Granted, he is not specifically addressing leadership

Orders, but one might argue the same proximity principle applies. Historically, we do

note that vows in monastic Orders and covenant communities (akin to Wesley's "bands"

and "classes") generally involved the support of significant local spiritual friendships to

aid follow-through.[20] Of course, it is only in recent times that multiple leaders could

actually be "in touch" through popular Internet-based, audio-visual communication

technologies like "Skype." Stock, I think, may be overly insistent on the necessity of

geographic proximity, when virtual technology and occasional on-site visits together can

actually foster significant committed relationships from a distance. I do, however, echo

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[18] Len Hjalmarson, and John La Grou. *Voices of the Virtual World: Participative Technology & the Ecclesial Revolution* (Wikiklesia Press, 2007), 115. Virtual Orders I believe compensate for the low-commitment level often found on relational networks on the internet, where the organizing principle is common interests and activities and where participation within a given online community goes only as far as the participating individual's needs.

[19] Quote from Trevor Miller at the Northumbria website (www.northumbriacommunity.org [accessed October 16, 2007].

[20] Part of the novitiate process in Celtic Orders actually involved provision of an *anam chara* or soul friend to walk alongside the new initiate. This was also the basis of the same-gender bands started by Zinzendorf, and later of Wesley's permutation of those. See George Hunter, *Celtic Way of Evangelism*, p. 48; Also Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley*, 126.

his supposition that "vows, ultimately, are only as true as the life together they represent."[21]

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to note and address common misperceptions and limitations about missional Orders that are cultivated and grown among leadership communities. I noted the dangers of legalism and performance-orientations that the Order-ed life may evoke in certain leaders. I also mentioned the dangers of pride and elitism among members of an Order. Finally, I addressed the perception that Orders are exclusive communities inaccessible to most leaders. My intention in mentioning and addressing these limits and challenges has been to show that missional Orders, while admittedly not suitable for all Christian leaders, do indeed provide a workable, transformational framework for many missional leaders today.

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[21] Stock, Otto, and Wilson-Hartgrove, *Inhabiting the Church*, 8.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

Summary of Chapters

In this dissertation I have attempted to show that missional Orders—with their communally supported rhythm of life; their vows held in common and with accountability; and their framework for consistent shared praying and journeying on mission—do provide one tangible, deep, relational framework for effecting the desired and needed transformation of leaders today.

In chapter one I underscored the challenges leaders face today as a result of the rate and unpredictability of the changes going on around them. These, I argued, require leaders to be equipped in new capacities of missional engagement, listening and discernment, and to re-learn ancient practices that enable sustainable, thriving leadership over the long haul. I noted the snare of culture's damaging narratives, such as individualism and hyperactivity, and how these and other inner life issues often keep leaders from accessing meaningful peer community. With these factors in view, and from the vantage point of my own leadership journey within Christian Associates, I proposed the thesis that missional Orders offer unique formational environments that impart the leadership perspectives, capacities and practices church and para-church leaders need to sustain their growth in God, their fruitfulness in ministry, and their faithfulness to mission.

In chapter two I explored the roots of missional Orders in ancient monasticism, noting the characteristics of "Order-ed" communities and the diversity of their

contemporary mission-oriented counterparts, including how such Orders relate to the Church and enhance discipleship today.

In chapter three I rooted missional Orders in four perspectives and dynamic principles that stand prominent in the Bible, and when activated together form the building blocks of transformational community among church and para-church leaders.

In chapter four I attempted to show how missional Orders specifically address the developmental needs of church and para-church leaders today, including how such Orders can tie diverse kinds of leaders into mutually-edifying learning communities. I also noted the power of *communitas*, covenant clusters, and shared servant leadership in strengthening the transformational edge of missional Orders. I ended the chapter by briefly examining the operation of one particular leadership Order, The Order of Mission.

In chapter five I addressed certain perceived and actual challenges and limitations commonly associated with the forming and operating of missional Orders among leadership communities, concluding that such challenges and limitations are either misperceptions or minor surmountable obstacles.

As I bring this dissertation to a close, I offer the following synopsis on my present experimentation with the missional Order framework among Christian leaders, including how I hope to see this evolve in both my local context and within the broader leadership community of Christian Associates. I close the main body of this work with some brief reflections and thoughts on the future of missional Orders among church and para-church leadership communities.

My Present Experimentation with Cultivating a Missional Order

For over a decade I have been on quest to find a practical framework to promote leadership formation within the sphere of missional ministry. I have struggled to articulate and implement this on both a conceptual and practical level. Some of this struggle has found resolution in the journey toward a focus for this doctor of ministry program. Two years ago while grappling with the missional Order concept I coined a phrase to capture its relevancy to pioneering leadership communities: "bonded apostolic advocacy." Although my supervisors understandably found the phrase cryptic, what I was after at the time was a concise way to describe how I envisioned CA's leadership team functioning. Viewing this in reverse, "apostolic" represented for me our call as a leadership team to be men and women of stature, exuding "sent-ness" in our lifestyles, but also acting as guardians of CA's vision, values, doctrine and community culture. It also connoted our team's call to move trans-locally out beyond our individual home churches and neighborhoods, linking our projects into a cross-pollinating network and tying our organization to the outside resources we need. I used the term "advocacy" to describe our leadership team's ministry of coming alongside our church plant team leaders, as Barnabas-type leaders offering encouragement, prayer, exhortation and strategic coaching and mentoring. Finally, I chose the word "bonded" to describe the solemn relational commitment to God and to one another that I felt we desperately needed within our core team. In that term I saw echoes of the older word, "bondservant," used in my weathered New American Standard Bible (e.g. Phil. 1:1). For me, this word described one that has made a choice to bond himself or herself to God for lifelong service, much like the practice of Hebrew servants who could voluntarily choose to

become lifelong servants to their masters (Deut. 15:17). "Bonded" also captured the horizontal dimension of covenanting with others in deep friendship, as David and Jonathan covenanted to be faithful friends in the Bible (1 Sam. 20).

As I conveyed to my supervisors the meaning I was attaching to these key terms, I meandered toward the conclusion that a structure was needed to help us realize such a desired ideal. I noted that nearly every leader within CA's leadership community would give a hearty "yes" to covenanting together for mutual growth in God and toward one another. And nearly every leader would say that he or she is longing to experience not only deep community together, but also *communitas* (that uniting bond deriving from sharing in risky mission together). What we lack, I argued, is a framework to support and enable our inward and outward journeys, so that we as leaders might more consistently stick to our relational and missional promises to God and one another. At the end of 2006, I proposed in writing that I explore seeding a missional Order among church planters and missional leaders as an experimental framework to address CA's unachieved aspirations for leadership development and missional formation. As Director of Pacific Northwest Development, I articulated my vision as follows: "To create a 'missional Order' of leaders and churches along the West Coast of North America who rally around a common DNA, who commit themselves to reproducing healthy leaders and churches, and who humbly choose to serve, encourage, and complement the missional impulse of the broader body of Christ in this region."[1]

I think my supervisors have yet to fully comprehend what I mean by the phrase "missional Order." But I hear our project leaders using that phrase, along with the phrase

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[1] This vision is captured in a document called "Toward a Pacific Northwest Strategy for Christian Associates," which I wrote for my supervisors in CA in December, 2006.

"core practices," more frequently from month to month. A number of our church plants in Europe, for example, have adopted a cache of (usually five) practices as their way of life in community.[2] CA's founder and President, Linus Morris, has also begun to grasp the importance of a practice-based way of life for our organization as a whole, even going as far as to introduce five "defining practices" he would like to see all our leaders adopt. Linus claims: "As these five practices occur, an authentic sense of community will emerge that is the true basis of church planting and re-Jesus-ing a city."[3] While I view this and other developments as progress, they fall short of the covenant framework I think we need to adopt to insure fidelity to practices. How will these practices "occur," for example? Will they be motivated primarily out of the spontaneous self-motivation of individuals? I am skeptical that transformational community can emerge when practices are not surrounded by the other elements typically found in missional Orders. For instance, we lack a specific commitment to prayer and discernment and spiritual formation; required accountability structures; and the communal forging and solemn endorsement of the practices by our team leaders and staff. Our leadership community does not tend to operate as an intentional learning community that cross-pollinates both best practices for missional church planting *and* concrete approaches to spiritual formation. I think the missional Order framework, or at minimum, its covenant community precursor, could enable us to achieve the high ideals or aims expressed in the practices CA's President has articulated.

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[2] In Appendix I, I include a specific example of how one particular Christian Associates church plant in Glasgow, Scotland, is employing a community Rule of Life.

[3] Quoted from a document sent out via email to CA's leaders by Linus Morris on August 19, 2008. Linus articulates these practices as: 1) a generous hospitality to others; 2) a lavish planting of the Gospel; 3) a passionate devotion to Christ; 4) a constant "as you go" disciple-making; and, 5) a risky community, mission and service.

As I reflect on CA's limited success in engaging a way of life conducive to the growth and sustainability of its leaders, I suspect that a good part of our problem relates to our particular "organizational character." Since this may relate to other missional leadership communities who have an overabundance of APE type leaders, as CA has, I will take a moment to explain this and how it relates to missional Orders. In his book, *The Character of Organizations*, the organizational development specialist, William Bridges, correlates the Myers-Briggs personality types with organizational behavior. He argues that organizations tend to reflect the character type of their primary, or most influential, leaders. In Bridge's analysis of the role of character type in organizations, he makes the point that certain organizations have a signature persona that makes attentiveness to discipline and follow-through extra challenging. Interestingly, he identifies highly relational, fast-moving, entrepreneurial organizations, typically led by strong "P" or "perceiving" types, as particularly prone to these tendencies.[4] Bridges see the following dynamics as characteristic of perceiving organizations. They: "keep [their] options open and seek more information; May be weak in decision-making; Set general standards [as opposed to clear, specific standards]; Leave many things vague and undefined; Are loose and fairly tolerant; Have as a motto, "Don't miss an opportunity."[5]

This is not the place to delve deeply into Bridge's analysis. However, I thought it important to bring attention to this issue of organizational character because such perceiving-type leaders do lead many pioneering church and para-church organizations (and they also tend to attract others like them). CA, for instance, is a classic

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[4] William Bridges, *The Character of Organizations: Using Personality Type in Organization Development* (Mountainview, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 2000), 43-47, 107-125.

[5] Ibid., 32.

entrepreneurial, "perceiving" organization, with a high density of "P" leaders. I have

noted over my fifteen-year tenure with the organization that as a community we have the

sort of biases and blindsides cited by Bridges that militate against the embedding of

intentional formational processes and accountability structures. This is part of what has

drawn me to explore the relevance of missional Orders. I believe this kind of Order-ed

life in community could provide a relational framework and cadence that would allow

formational practices to be embedded within CA, without stifling the organization's

entrepreneurial call. I presume such Orders could help address the same organizational

"character deficiencies" experienced within a host of other pioneering churches and

apostolic organizations and networks.

Alas, lest I sound somewhat critical (that is not my intent, as I deeply appreciate

CA), I am hopeful that CA's leadership community will continue gravitating toward the

Order-ed life on mission. At this stage I am operating under the premise that if I can

develop and point to a functioning missional Order in my context, it will help pull this

conversation out of the abstract and inspire further, perhaps even organization-wide,

experimentation with the missional Order framework. As I endeavor to lay the

groundwork for a missional Order in my city of residence, I am emboldened by other

church planting networks and organizations that have in the past adopted or are presently

attempting to adopt a missional Order approach. These help me to believe that what I

have articulated, vision-wise, is an achievable ideal. For example, two years ago Brad

Brisco, a church planting strategist for a network of churches in Kansas City, Kansas,

created a website called "missional church network" as a resource for missional leaders

and planters.[6] Brisco and two of his friends at that time apparently entered into discussion about creating a network that would inspire and challenge their church planters to give attention to spiritual formation. In November of this year, they decided to take this a step further and create a web log called "Missional Order."[7] As Brisco explains:

> All of the conversations over the past year have led us to create a missional order blog that is organized around three common commitments: sacred rhythm, continuous formation, and participation in the Missio Dei. We believe these commitments will assist us toward daily rhythms that push us toward God, aid our sanctification, and empower us participate in God's kingdom.[8]

Brisco and the church planters in his network have seen the value of structuring their leadership community as missional Order. And since they are in the same "business" as CA, I now have a relevant, working example to which I can point my supervisors. I am also tracking David Fitch's experimentation with a missional Order among church planters in the Chicago area. Fitch, who I referenced earlier, has articulated a vision for a church-planting network that would operate within the framework of a missional Order. Fitch has named the Order he envisions, "The Missional Order of St. Fiacre." On his web log he lists twelve commitments that he sees as the Rule of the Order. The Order of Fiacre will originate out of Fitch's home church in Chicago, and its main goal will be to prepare and send teams of eight to twelve people to "be Christ in a given geographic context."[9] My only concern with Fitch's forming Order at this point is that he seems to have announced the intention to start the Order, and even

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[6] See http://missionalchurchnetwork.com [accessed November 8, 2008].

[7] See http://missionalorder.com [accessed December 21, 2008].

[8] Quote from: http://missionalchurchnetwork.com, posted by Brad Brisco on Sept. 10, 2008 [accessed Nov 12, 2008].

[9] See http://www.reclaimingthemission.com, Fitch's October 9, 2007 posting [accessed Dec. 7, 2007].

gone so far as to propose its commitments, rhythms for gathering, and communication protocols, without having done the on-the-ground cultivation work, communal praying/discerning, and forging of a common story that generally precede the birth of a missional Order.

One final example I have begun to explore more thoroughly is Alan Roxburgh's vision for linking churches, church plants and missional initiatives across a city, with the missional Order framework providing the uniting structure. At the end of his book, *The Sky is Falling*, Roxburgh proposes the following missional Order:

> In a city or town a combination of congregations, church plants, and house churches would form a common leadership *communitas* under the direction of an Abbot/Abbess. It functions for all the communities to cultivate environments that call forth missional life in, among, between and across the groups. This *communitas* is comprised of the various leadership types [poet, prophet, apostle, pastor, teacher, etc.]…working on behalf of the missio dei among the communities. They function as a *missional order* called to the task of leadership in that area. The Abbot or Abbess is not a denominational executive…[but serves to] oversee and guide the leadership *communitas* in its work. The *communitas* is a missional order composed of men and women committed to the rules of the order.
>
> Some of those rules would be:
> - A commitment to place – the geographic area/neighborhood rather than just the congregation, house church, or [church plant]
> - Keeping the daily office as a community…
> - Commitment to the oversight and authority of the team led by Abbot/Abbess
> - The order will be focused on discerning the forms of the missio dei in the various worshipping communities
> - Callings and gifts will be shared for the sake of the whole rather than any specific group within the overall community of believers.[10]

Such examples of church and church planting networks attempting to operate within a missional Order framework have encouraged me to "jump in" and experiment with cultivating an Order in southeast Portland, Oregon where I currently reside. Drawing on the inspiration of Michael Frost's church, "smallboatbigsea," in Sydney, Australia,

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[10] Roxburgh. *The Sky is Falling*, 182-183

three other missional leaders (from Imago Dei Church) and I have been experimenting with an accessible, simple-to-explain rhythm of life to which we hold each other accountable.[11] It is captured by the acronym, M.O.R.P.H., reflecting the change we hope to see in ourselves as a result of practicing a way of life together. For us, MORPH means on a weekly basis we covenant to be:

- **M**issional – I will involve myself in some activity that engages and/or enriches my neighborhood or community or city (or world if traveling). *God, what single step might I consciously take to meet you on mission this week?*

- **O**ther-centered – I choose to look beyond myself and bless 3 people in some conscious act of goodness or generosity (of the three, I will try to bless at least one person inside my home church). *Who are three people I might consciously serve or bless as an expression of Your self-sacrificial love?*

- **R**eplenishing – I will read at least 5 chapters of a NT book, two chapters of an OT book, and at least one chapter of a spiritually-edifying book or article. *What NT and OT well will I draw from, and what extra-biblical spring will I tap into?*

- **P**rayerful – I will quiet my soul and spend one uninterrupted hour with God in prayer. *When will I carve out one hour to sit with and minister to God?*

- **H**ospitable – I will extend or receive hospitality on three occasions (at least once with Imago Dei folks, and preferably at least once with non-Christian friends in a home or

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[11] On pages 150-151 of his book, *Exiles*, Michael Frost explains the rhythm of life his church in Sydney, Australia, smallboatbigsea, has developed. The rhythm goes by the acronym, "BELLS," which is explained in some detail in Appendix II.

Third Place). *With whom and when will I consciously gather around the table and enjoy the sweetness of unhurried leisure?*[12]

Upon gathering each week as a quad, each of us gave an account of how we answered the five MORPH questions as well as what we sensed God might be showing us through the outworking of the rhythm. Our initial enthusiasm with the MORPH framework, however, slowly gave way to skepticism about its workability for us. After two months of practicing the rhythm, our quad struggled to avoid defaulting to a checklist mode each week when we gathered to share our experience of the practices. We soon concluded that we probably started our missional Order without adequate attention to developing a good foundation. We have now re-focused our attention on building our friendships and a prayer life together, neither of which were deep enough from the outset. We are attempting to re-cast a basic framework, involving common vows, a commitment to practicing the Daily Office together, and meeting weekly to recount our individual journeys and pray for one another. A couple of us are proposing that we adopt the Northumbria Community vows of availability and vulnerability as a new starting point. We find the vows, as explained at the Northumbria website, more captivating and fitting for our journey together than those articulated by other missional Orders we have explored, such as TOM and The Order of the Mustard Seed.[13] In adopting such vows

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[12] The MORPH framework was "tried" for a short time by at least one home group in Imago Dei, which is an early indication that it may be replicable beyond a leadership community into a church. Certain members of a church plant in Kelowna, British Columbia have also adopted MORPH. These Canadians have added, however, an additional practice of "poetic," which they explain as follows: "I will seek simplicity and beauty in all that I do, understanding that God seeks to create in me the image of His son as a unique expression of His fathering. I will seek to love and rejoice in God's world as He loves and joys in it." Their acronym is, hence, MORPPH. See Len Hjalmarson's web blog post on Mar. 10, 2008 at: http://nextreformation.com, accessed on March 11, 2008.

[13] Members of the Northumbria Community, now some 3000 in number spread out across the UK, Europe and Northern Ireland., center on the two vows of availability and vulnerability. Andy Raine

together, via some agreed-upon commitment ritual, we would then take some period of time to individually determine the practices we each want to adopt to help aid fidelity to the vows. I believe such a situational application of our common vows would help each of us to be more consistent with our chosen rhythms. The vows would remain unchanging, while the practices would remain a more flexible cache to match the journeys of those covenanting with us. This is another way of saying that these practices are meant to serve us, and not the other way around.

In time as we process our experience of the vows of availability and vulnerability, I could see the four of us (and other leaders joining us) eventually developing a "customary" to explain what practices might be representative for a person covenanting with us to keep the vows.[14] We may even opt to join Allelon in its quest to form a missional Order, since they are considering adopting the Northumbria vows themselves. But for now, we intend to give ourselves to the necessary prayer, relational work, and listening within our Portland context to find a sustainable way of life together that could mature into a full-fledged missional Order. I am hopeful that our cultivation efforts will be valuable to CA as the organization explores what an Order-ed life on mission could mean for its own leadership community.

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describes these: "First of all, we are called to be available to God in the cell of our own heart where we can seek Him for His own sake, as the 'one thing necessary.' Then to be available to others in a call to exercise hospitality, recognizing that in welcoming others we honor and welcome Christ Himself. We are then called to be available to others through participation in God's care and concern for them by praying and interceding for their situations in the power of His Holy Spirit. We are also called to be available for mission of various kinds according to the leading and initiatives of the Spirit. Then as it is an ongoing exploration of 'How then shall we live?' it also involves an intentional Vulnerability expressed through being teachable in the discipline of prayer: through applying the wisdom of the Scriptures and a mutual accountability in the advocacy of soul friends." From the Northumbria website (www.northumbriacommunity.org [accessed October 16, 2007].

[14] As Pete Greig notes, some ancient monasteries set the precedent for this "customary," adding it to their Rule of Life as an explanation of how the values of their Order were worked out in practice. See Greig, *Punk Monk*, 109.

Concluding Reflections and Thoughts

With a number of popular books, web-blogs, and web communities, such as Allelon, exploring the virtues and relevance of missional Orders today, this covenant community form will likely gain more and more traction with church and para-church leaders across the West in the years ahead. There also appears to be re-emphasis among Christians on restoring ancient practices of the faith.[15] On a broader sociological level, this trend is corroborated by the findings of Princeton sociologist, Robert Wuthnow. In the late 1990s, Wuthnow made the assertion that American religion was undergoing a shift from seeker spirituality to practice-oriented spirituality.[16] "To say that spirituality is practiced," Wuthnow writes, "means that people engage intentionally in activities that deepen their relations to the sacred...In most cases, prayer and devotional reading are important; and in many cases, these activities are life-transforming, causing people to engage in service to others and to lead their lives in a worshipful manner."[17] I believe this trend toward adopting intentional practices, along with the rising emphasis today on the need to visibly demonstrate or "live-out" our faith through active social engagement, will make missional Orders an increasingly alluring option for church and para-church leaders.

For some church leaders locked in either performance zone or reactive zone perspectives and behaviors, missional Orders as structures may seem too experimental or emergent zone to pursue. Alan Roxburgh notes "our experience with the change model is

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[15] This is seen, for example, in such recent books as Brian McLaren's *Finding Our Way Again* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008); Earl Creps' *Off-Road Disciplines* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006); and David Augsburger's *Dissident Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2006).

[16] Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 168-198.

[17] Ibid., 169.

that when a church finds itself in the performance zone, the place to start is with some quiet experiments…[and these enable change-leery leaders] to see something at work that can't be imagined."[18] I suspect that more and more "quiet experiments" will be initiated, and these will help both leaders and churches of all sorts to explore the Order-ed life on mission themselves.

Not only will we see more leaders associated with some form of missional Order, but also I believe we will continue to see an increasing variety of missional Orders. This will happen as groups respond to site-specific contextual factors and as participative technology (computer software enabling unencumbered online relationships) reduces the challenge of proximity. I also foresee less intensive, more accessible versions of missional Orders emerging that are essentially covenant communities centered in common practices with accountability. As a byproduct of an increasing number of Christian leaders participating in such Orders, I am confident that the Church's proclamation and demonstration of the gospel will be enhanced across the West. More churches and leadership teams will inevitably experiment with the concept as the Church is further awakened to the dual drag of culture's vices and institutional Christendom.

The real test over time of any group wearing the label of a missional Order will, of course, be the quality of discipleship yielded. If a missional Order is "working," over time we should expect to see a quality of life transformation that is also centrifugal – pressing outward from love of God to love of one another to love of our world, and around and around, with the transformational living water spilling outward under the impetus of our missionary God.

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[18] Roxburgh and Romanuk,*The Missional Leader*, 168.

I close this dissertation with a brief reflection, using J. Robert Clinton's paraphrase of one of my favorite biblical texts on leadership, Hebrews 13:7-8 (Clinton actually labels it "the leadership mandate" of the Scriptures): "Remember your former leaders. Think back on how they lived and ministered. Imitate those excellent qualities you see in their lives. For Jesus Christ is the same today, as He was in the past and as He will be in the future. What He did for them He will do for you to inspire and enable your leadership."[19]

This brief exhortation underscores the importance of leaders leaning into their spiritual development, in order to be an inspiration to younger leaders who are running the race behind them. Character qualities are to be observed and imitated, but also the way these former leaders lived and served. But, ultimately, there is a reminder here that finishing well is mostly about learning over the long haul to draw upon Jesus Christ Himself for inspiration and sustenance. Though everything is changing around the leader, Christ remains consistent in his commitment to fuel our leadership and give us all we need to courageously endure to the end.

I have made a case in this dissertation that missional Orders provide a practical means whereby some leaders, depending on their calling, particular circumstances and unique place in the spiritual journey, can step into and stay engaged in this leadership mandate - for the glory of God, for the good of His people, and for the fruitful carrying out of His mission to the world He created and loves. May it be so, for as many who feel called to take the step.

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[19] Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 204-205.

How Mosaic Church of Glasgow, Scotland, is Seeking to Employ a Rule of Life

One Christian Associates church plant, Mosaic Church in Glasgow, Scotland (see: http://www.glasgowmosaic.com) is integrating many of the dynamics associated with missional Orders into its church identity and life. Its leaders are actually exploring the formation of a missional Order among the core leadership team. In February of 2008 I interviewed the leaders of Mosaic, Dr. Wesley White and Mike Kurtyka.[1] The following briefly summarizes what I derived from the interview.

The Mosaic community considers itself an "urban monastery." The community depicts its six practices as directly tied into its three core values of co-mission, community and commune, which it visually represents by three overlapping circles with the *missio Dei* vividly displayed in the shaded area of intersection. Mosaic has a total of six practices, with each value having two correlating practices springing from it. Commitment to individual and communal success in the practices is enhanced by both a decentralized weekly triad format and a church covenant known as "the Promise." Those exploring what following Jesus is about are invited to participate in the community practices, with the hope that they too may one day choose to journey under the Promise with Christ and the church's covenant core.

The experience of this community over the past few years would suggest that communal practices more effectively permeate a community or church when they can be shown to be directly linked to the values, mission and covenant (bounded set) core of that given group. People tend to "get it" when practices are not seen as disparate pieces of the

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[1] Wesley White and Mike Kurtyka, interviewed by Dan Steigerwald, at the Christian Associates Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, February 29, 2008.

bigger group's overall identity and vision statements/symbols, but as holistic, complementary elements.

 According to Mike Kurtyka, the verdict is still out as to whether the Mosaic community will succeed in substantially and effectively embracing the commitments needed to operate as an enduring covenant community.

The Smallboatbigsea Community Rule

BELLS means that on a weekly basis, smallboatbigsea members covenant to:

- "**Bless.** We will bless at least one other member of our community every day…
- **Eat.** We will eat with other members of our community at least three times each week. In our community we all eat together every Sunday night…Also, we are divided into groups of three that meet weekly for mutual accountability, discipleship, and nurture…
- **Listen.** We will commit ourselves weekly to listening to the promptings of God in our lives…We will ensure a weekly time of solitude to listen to God…
- **Learn.** We will read from the Gospels each week and remain diligent in learning more about Jesus.
- **Sent**. We will see our daily life as an expression of our sent-ness by God into this world…This will include acts of hospitality and the just stewardship of our resources, as well as working for justice and striving for global peace."[1]

Michael Frost notes that this BELLS pattern is repeated on both an individual and communal level. When the community comes together for its Sunday night "love feast," the BELLS rule is practiced in the form of a liturgy. People publicly bless one another, speaking words of affirmation and encouragement over one another. The meal is then shared, with lengthy fellowship time, followed by observing the Lord's Supper together. When the meal is over, the gathered community spends time listening and discerning what God may be saying to the community and to individuals in the community. This listening time is followed by a period of instruction from the Scriptures and other sources. Finally, people are invited to publicly share how God was revealed to them in their life outside the church among culture in the previous week.[2]

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[1] Frost, *Exiles*, 150-151.

[2] Ibid., 151-152.

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