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# Place Informs Posture: Developing a Model of Spatial Lectio Divina for Under-Resourced African Christian Leaders

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PLACE INFORMS POSTURE: DEVELOPING A MODEL OF SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA

FOR UNDER-RESOURCED AFRICAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY  
PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:  
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PROJECT FACULTY:  
DR. REBECCA (JENEY) PARK-HEARN  
PORTLAND, OREGON  
FEBRUARY 2023



## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Chris Kamalski

has been approved by  
the Evaluation Committee on March 16, 2023  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

### Evaluation Committee:

Primary Project Faculty: Rebecca Park-Hearn, PhD

Second Project Faculty: Holley Clough, DMin

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Evaluation Committee Referee: Clifford Berger, DMin



## DEDICATION

To My Whole Heart, My Family – Maxie, Mia, and Clara:

As South African females, you three are the stewards of the global Christian movement, both in this present moment and well into future generations to come. You bear the Image of God, our Friend, in fullness and power. I testify to this beautiful reality both inside your hearts, and externally embodied in how you inhabit our world with goodness and love.

As place informs posture, may our home deepen in mutual love, vulnerable honesty, and courageous sacrifice for one another, and all who gather with us at our table, for the rest of days.

I will happily spend my life lifting you up, empowering you three to carve a path forward in the world God is entrusting you to envision. I believe in you completely, and love you just for who you are, not for who you are not. Just be – Liefie, Mia Anne, and Clara May.



*"Until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19b),*

Chris/Daddy

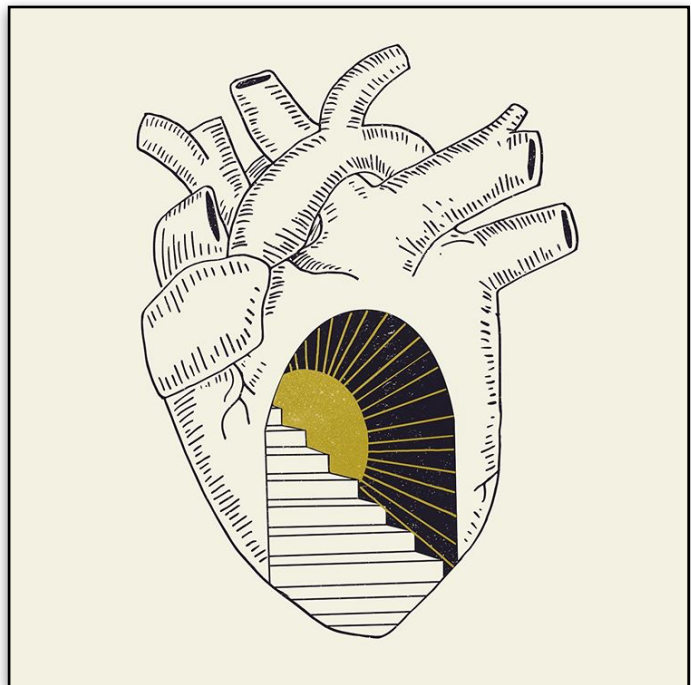
February 2023

Jeffreys Bay, South Africa

## EPIGRAPH

"All theology is socially located."  
- Esau McCaulley

"Apartheid was perfect racism.<sup>1</sup> Apartheid was a police state, a system of surveillance and laws designed to keep black people under total control. A full compendium of those laws would run more than three thousand pages and weigh approximately ten pounds, but the general thrust of it should be easy enough for any American to understand. In America you had the forced removal of the native onto reservations coupled with slavery followed by segregation. Imagine all three of those things happening to the same group of people at the same time. That was apartheid."  
- Trevor Noah



"To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you."  
- Theophan the Recluse

"In lectio divina what we seek is not information or motivation but communion and union. We seek nothing less than God."  
- David Benner

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<sup>1</sup> Images: (L): Cover of Time Magazine, May 13th, 2019 edition. © Johnny Miller at <http://unequalscenes.com>. (R): Via [@scottthepainter](https://www.instagram.com/scottthepainter) on Instagram. © Scott Erickson at <http://scottericksonartshop.com>.

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## PREFACE

Esau McCaulley powerfully synthesizes his recent book, Reading While Black, by concluding that “All theology is socially located” (McCaulley, p. 179).<sup>2</sup> What one believes is intrinsically, irrevocably linked to where one is. Place informs posture. One’s neighbor clarifies the necessity of one’s formational engagement within an increasingly globalized world.

Considering McCaulley’s perspective requires careful excavation of the systemic and structural challenges inherent for under-resourced Christian leaders who live and work amongst largely impoverished communities of survival. African Christian leaders are consistently under-resourced in the formational development of their own inner world. What do they need to mature and thrive within their social context?

My NPO project, entitled *“Place Informs Posture: Developing A Model of Spatial Lectio Divina for Under-Resourced African Christian Leaders,”* asks the following question in an effort to listen to and acknowledge this complex socio-cultural reality: How can a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders grow into the most transformative environment for a person to be formed and empowered holistically? As the question suggests, is a small formational leadership cohort both a prescient and powerful catalyst for the sustainable transformation of African Christian leaders? If so, *how so?*


Engaging a small ‘beta’ cohort of local African Christian leaders in my own home town of Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, the majority being young females ranging from the mid-20s to the mid-40s, we collectively explored the development of and formational potential found within a spatial model of lectio divina. This ancient spiritual practice harnesses a collective formational rhythm that welcomes all into a transparent and honest dialogue. The ‘beta’ Kouga Leadership Community gathered in our home for five months in late 2021. Together, we practiced the four historical steps of lectio divina in an embodied manner within the safety of our home, each cohort member bringing with them the particular distinctives of their own social location to our shared common space. We gathered around a common table of hospitality (*Lectio/Listen*), reflectively

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<sup>2</sup> Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 179.

dialogued within the safe confines of our family's living room (*Meditatio/Ponder*), playfully responded to the Spirit's voice in our girl's playroom downstairs (*Oratio/Respond in Prayer*), and rested on our deck as we considered God's vocational call on our future (*Contemplatio/Rest in Contemplation*). Even as I type this preface, I am remembering the simple profundity of this rhythm, practiced in the warm hospitality of our home.

My project wonders whether a new formational model that centers the importance of shared space in which honest listening dialogue can take place, without agenda, is truly possible for under-resourced leaders. If it is, how could this spatial model, reframed through the practice of the *Lectio Divina* formational rhythm that creates intentional space to listen to God and to one another, serve to mature and empower the inner world of African Christian leaders, for good?



“A beta formational cohort where African Christian leaders can flourish naturally in a practice-based community that shares a common rule of life, a commitment to growing healthy in their inner world, and group discernment of one's vocational calling rooted within a local place feels like the *"natural ecology of my life,"* as Parker Palmer defines the vocational environment in which a person flourishes most deeply. Palmer writes, “As I learn more about the seed of true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted – the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively, accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself.”” I am quietly hopeful that the formational practice of *lectio divina* in a spatially-oriented way within small, safe communities of African Christian leaders, will be an increasing focus of my vocational calling in this coming season.”

– Excerpt from my Doctoral Program Description, 2 of 2

KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

Image: “The Well Within,” © Scott Erickson | @scottthepainter

“Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*.



## RESEARCH METHOD

Editorial or research method: This Project utilized a blended methodology that draws upon bibliographic resources, data derived from stakeholder collaboration, and human-centered design and iteration processes to create a heuristic-based, application-oriented Project.

## ABSTRACT

### NPO DESCRIPTION:

How can a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders grow into the most transformative environment for a person to be formed and empowered holistically?

### KEY RESEARCH INSIGHTS:

1. *'Place informs posture.'* A Christian leader's socio-cultural position frames their perspective on – and opportunities to receive – ongoing spiritual formation and leadership development. To empower under-resourced Christian leaders ministering in an environment of survival, formation must grow from acknowledging this reality.
2. *'Leaders thrive deeply in safe cohort communities of their peers.'* A 'third' space where leaders can grow in community without fear of becoming spiritually unhealthy or burning out from overwork is critical for one's own health, let alone those they form in Christ.
3. *'Lectio divina practiced together in a spatially-aware, embodied rhythm within our homes grounds our identities in the love of God, our Friend.'* This formative prayer practice opens the heart to God and serves as a foundational spiritual practice of health for the leader.

### MY VOCATIONAL CONTEXT:

There is a noticeable hunger in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, for a mutually-supportive formational cohort for African Christian leaders ('ACLs'). ACLs who pour out their lives sacrificially are not sustainably supported, under-resourced in their own development. Available resources focus almost completely on physical survival alone. How can this project facilitate a safe space for ACLs to mature together in their own flourishing?

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

My project empowers leaders to mature their inner worlds through the formational practice of a new model of 'spatial lectio divina'<sup>3</sup> within the "Community of Creation."<sup>4</sup> Through facilitating environments where ACLs can grow healthy in their inner world, flourishing in practice-based cohort communities of love, my project will develop and empower under-resourced leaders as they mature into the "natural ecology of [their lives],"<sup>5</sup> rooted within a local place.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Spatial lectio divina' is a new model of an ancient formational practice that I have created as the core spiritual rhythm that Kouga Leadership Cohorts will practice on a weekly basis.

<sup>4</sup> This term is Dr. Randy Woodley's description of the Kingdom of God, from *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (2012), 107.

<sup>5</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 42.

## INTRODUCTION

*"To be human is to be placed."*<sup>6</sup> At some point in the process of compiling this project, I scribbled this quote by T.J. Gorringer on my notice board, moved by his connection between one's humanity and social location. Yet, until writing this introduction, I hadn't stopped to research the context of his sentence. While the full quotation is relegated to the footnotes,<sup>7</sup> Gorringer's initial observation about how subtly *place informs posture*, creating the very attitude we carry throughout life, informs the heart of my own work more deeply than I was initially aware. He writes: "These facts are banal, but they form the fabric of our everyday lives, structuring our memories, determining our attitudes. How, as Christians, should we think of them? Are they a proper subject for theological reflection?"<sup>8</sup>

How should we reflect upon our spatial location, the socio-cultural spaces that we inhabit on a daily basis? How do they form us, either towards healthy growth and full human flourishing, or towards a developmental maturity that is often derailed, frequently resulting in a humanity that withers on the vine? Is there room to interrogate whether this dichotomy of choice should even exist within the Kingdom of God, the space where God dwells in fullness, and the place created for humanity to flourish within as well? What about the lasting injustice that systems of apartheid, forced removal from native lands, or the doctrine of discovery (to name but a few devastating

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<sup>6</sup> T. J. Gorringer, *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>7</sup> My favorite rabbit-trails in books are found in the footnotes! Here is T.J. Gorringer's full quotation, which is even more profound to me as I seek to wrestle with how place actually does inform posture within the spiritual formation of under-resourced Christian leaders:

To be human is to be placed: to be born in this house, hospital, stable (according to Luke), or even, as in the floods in Mozambique in 2000, in a tree. It is to live in this council house, semi-detached, tower block, farmhouse, mansion. It is to go to school through these streets or lanes, to play in this alley, park, garden; to shop in this market, that mall; to work in this factory, mine, office, farm. These facts are banal, but they form the fabric of our everyday lives, structuring our memories, determining our attitudes. How, as Christians, should we think of them? Are they a proper subject for theological reflection?" (Gorringer, 1).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1.

examples) have enacted upon communities the world over that simply want to remain rooted within their homes?

*'Place Informs Posture: Developing a Model of Spatial Lectio Divina for Under-Resourced African Christian Leaders'* seeks to not only acknowledge the reality of these questions, but to press into the formative possibilities that emerge from them as well. What do Christian leaders who live in communities of survival actually need? How can they be resourced and empowered in a sustainable manner in their own transformational journeys inward with God and one another? Can a formational model exist that acknowledges socio-cultural location, while still opening the heart deeply to the reality that God, our Friend, is present in all places,<sup>9</sup> and is inviting us into a shared formational journey towards maturity in Christ?

These questions, among many, are the scaffolding upon which this project has grown.

## WRESTLING WITH THE DISCOVER-DESIGN-DELIVER FRAMEWORK

### *Discovery Phase*

Reflecting back now, it is wild how differently my thinking was regarding both my initial vocational context, as well as my NPO as I understood it after my Discovery Workshop. I facilitated my Discovery Workshop in November 2019 in Philippi Village, an entrepreneurial hub operating out of a large township in the Cape Flats, 20 minutes outside of Cape Town, South Africa. I knew every single one of my workshop participants and one-on-one interviews very well, as we had been living in Cape Town for 8 years at this point. Several were former students and community development workers I had mentored as a Chaplain for Bridges of Hope South Africa years earlier. My wife was also present, albeit primarily as a South African and as a community development professional. All this to say: I was convinced at the time that my NPO scope would be focused on the vocational development of university-aged students and young professionals in a cohort learning community. The majority of participants would be isiXhosa speaking,

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<sup>9</sup> Similar to Jacob awakening from his sleep at Bethel and thinking, *'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it'* (Genesis 28:16, NIV), I want to see with the eyes of my heart where and how God is at work in the places I inhabit, participating in the redemptive creative acts of goodness that are growing in our midst.

originally from the Eastern Cape, but now lived in Philippi or Masiphumele, two under-resourced but massive township communities in the Western Cape. I was hoping that these community leaders would help me facilitate the creation of a project focused on vocational discernment and calling in their spaces for a group of their peers.

Key discoveries that emerged from my Discovery Workshop that began to shift this included the following: Firstly, that the wisdom of older African elders recovering a voice to speak life and formation into the hearts of younger generations was a pervasive sentiment from the beginning, which greatly surprised me. I anticipated that young adults would primarily want vocational clarity and the solidification of a life calling on their own, but the exact opposite was fervently expressed to me as a Westerner. Secondly, there was a unified sense that young African leaders need to be 'de-Westernized' and decolonized, empowered to rediscover African ways of living, in particular regarding the recovery of a black African identity and vocational calling in the world. This insight surprised me less, and I was on board from the beginning with its further exploration, particularly interested in how my upcoming NPO Topic Expertise Essay could serve as a springboard for research on the nature of identity and vocational calling as an Image Bearer of God *who is ethnically African*. My one-on-one interviews echoed these sentiments, solidifying my shifting perspective, with the addition of this fascinating third insight, a thread of which has woven itself throughout my entire project as I honed in on creating a new model of spatial lectio divina for under-resourced African Christian leaders: "There are few physical spaces, developmental processes, or formational methodologies that exist for African generations to interact and discover their sense of self together. This wisdom is buried and must be rediscovered" (Discovery Session Report, December 2019).

However, and this is key – I didn't initially see the value of my NPO project primarily to be about creating a spiritual practice that centered the experience of African leaders in their own formation, let alone within the safety of a home many of them had never been in before. I also wasn't living in the Eastern Cape, as we hadn't moved to Jeffreys Bay yet. Thus, as I concluded my Discovery Phase, my NPO read as follows: "How do maturing African leaders living out their

vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?"

### *Design Phase*

Fast forward through the severely disruptive year that was 2020, including not only the global COVID-19 pandemic and a strict lockdown of over 100 days that all South Africans were subject to, but also my core responsibility in my own family of having to teach my young children at home for months on end. As one can imagine, my Design Phase was delayed significantly as a result, both in research focus and overall approach. However, while this did prove to be true, the greatest change that our family was still settling into this whole season was the reality that we had moved 8-hours across the country to Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, in January 2020, two months prior to the pandemic itself! Paying attention to *what was shifting, and for whom*, would prove to be key as I began to design possible project prototypes.

My Design Workshop was held in person at the Victory4All Skills Centre in Humansdorp, South Africa, a rural town in the Kouga Municipality of the Eastern Cape province. This was no small feat in November 2020, given stringent COVID-19 gathering restrictions, which had loosened only weeks prior in South Africa. The social location of this workshop alone was significant, as it began to reflect my ultimate NPO focus (a covenanted, safe community for under-resourced Christian leaders across Kouga) and my available Stakeholders (a mixture of mid-level leaders within the Leadership Experience (LXP) and Victory4All NGOs, a small core of whom would ultimately help develop my MVP prototype, a 'beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort). Equally critical, I began to focus increasingly on the implications of social location of in our formation-based practices.

As I researched my NPO Topic Expertise essay throughout much of 2020, I was deeply struck by a short phrase I read in Esau McCaulley's book Reading While Black, which the reader will encounter several times throughout various components of this project portfolio. McCaulley

writes, “All theology is socially located,”<sup>10</sup> in reference to the theological influence of Black liberation scholar James Cone. I simply couldn’t get this provocative phrase out of my head, and knew that the Spirit of God was directing me towards a small, locally-focused NPO project that paid attention to the implications of a particular place. Thus, I was deeply curious to see if creative reflection from my Design Workshop would align with this growing conviction.

A key design insight to emerge from the workshop itself, and the initial prototyping processes that followed, was the realization that in-person dialogue and learning is critical for under-resourced African Christian leaders, particularly in a COVID-wrecked world. Virtual learning remained a distant second option at best, with many leaders simply not having reliable Wifi access, nor the necessary electronic equipment, let alone margin within their daily lives, to learn virtually. I distinctly remember realizing at the end of the workshop itself that *slow, deep dialogue was better*, even if it meant not completing the brainstorming tasks at hand. Non-white Africans in particular are used to Westerners speaking for and over them, and need time to practice finding their own voice once again, particularly in spaces that are facilitated by white Westerners such as myself. The innate need and deep desire *to listen well* as a core spiritual practice emerged from this workshop, and influenced the creative breakthrough of integrating the historic discipline of *lectio divina* into our beta Kouga Leadership Cohort.

Three Concept Pitch ideas were developed from this workshop, with various time-frames attached to them. Regarding a longterm prototype, workshop participants agreed that there was real potential in developing a retreat center and/or curriculum that embodied the Image of God and resulting vocational discernment process for African leaders, but in a contextually appropriate, culturally relevant manner that reflected the African voice itself. This idea, although fascinating, was shelved temporarily because of the short developmental runway remaining in this project itself. A medium term idea was floated to host a series of educational experiences throughout 2021 that focused on creating a series of honest, safe leadership dialogues for local churches, NGOs, and Christian ministry organizations, encouraging deep listening and

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<sup>10</sup> Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 179.



transparent dialogue by local Christian leaders across these organizations in Kouga. Ultimately, while also intriguing, this idea was shelved as well due to the lingering uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the inherent health risks in gathering larger groups of leaders from at-risk populations.<sup>11</sup> Thus, my most valuable prototype (MVP) emerged fairly easily, and with a settled certainty, and by default became the *only* prototype I developed throughout 2021: to pilot a beta Kouga Leadership Cohort of 12 local leaders across the Kouga region of the Eastern Cape.

The cohort's formational approach would center around a small group of African Christian leaders committing to weekly participation in a cross-organizational developmental community, for the purpose of holistic spiritual formation and leadership empowerment. Committing up to 8 months of growth together, we would hone in on my narrowing NPO, which now asked, "How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God rediscover their uniquely African voice within a safe, transparent, formational cohort?" We would test the hypothesis of whether a small, safe community of African Christian leaders from different organizations was actually the most transformative vehicle for a leader to be formed holistically, and honestly empowered to engage in their vocational calling more sustainably. Even then, I was unsure about how to benchmark and then assess such a human-centered developmental process, but I knew that I needed to give it a shot. And so, we pressed forward into the Delivery Phase of this project, knowing a small cohort group would gather.

### *Delivery Phase*

As I began the Delivery Phase of my project, my most valuable prototype (MVP) began to shift once again, primarily due to a burst of inspiration and creativity in February 2021 as I sat on a call with our Peer Group. During the call, I found myself suddenly sketching out what the Kouga Leadership Cohort would look like as an experiential Lectio Divina formative experience that

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<sup>11</sup> Regardless of your conviction regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, as of my Design Workshop in November 2020, no COVID-19 vaccinations were available on the African continent for anyone who wanted or needed one. As a result, we felt a high sense of community responsibility to steward the facilitation of larger gatherings even more carefully in that cultural moment, particularly given the high percentage of comorbidity present in vulnerable communities across the Kouga Municipality.

reflected on the inner world of a leader's holistic formation unto maturity in Christ, within the hospitable warmth of our home. I was trying to capture in a picture something that Dr. Rebecca (Jeney) Park-Hearn, my Project Faculty, was encouraging us to experiment with, namely the reality that any doctoral project was a mixture of form and content. Building off this dichotomy, my project scope began to take shape. As our beta Kouga Leadership Cohort gathered together in my home (My project's primary form), we would practice the historic spiritual practice of *lectio divina* as a foundational rhythm (My project's primary content) intended to create a safe space for honest dialogue to take place among local leaders.

The initial rhythm I sketched out that evening looked like a process whereby several leadership triads would move through four 'spatial environments' (actual rooms in my home) designed to draw the heart out of hiding, and into the light of a safe, honest community of love. These rooms would mirror metaphorically the four steps found in the practice of *lectio divina*.

My project scope thus took on this spiritual rhythm in its weekly content:

1. Listen (*Lectio*) to one another's stories at our dining table, sharing a meal together.
2. Ponder in meditative dialogue (*Meditatio*) a central concept for the evening in our living room.
3. Descend downstairs to our girls' playroom, where the cohort would respond in playful prayer and worship to God (*Oratio*).
4. Ascend upstairs to our deck, where we would reflectively rest (*Contemplatio*) in the love of God, our Friend, listening for the invitation of God to move forward.

Suddenly, the vision for my overall project had fallen into place, somewhat miraculously. I would facilitate a safe, honest cohort space within my own home for under-resourced African Christian leaders, paying attention to the realities of their own struggles with development, seeking to create an environment whereby the hearts of these leaders could find freedom to grow together. The historical practice of *lectio divina*, practiced with particular emphasis on spatial awareness and socio-cultural sensitivity, would form the foundation of our developmental efforts. We experimented with this practice in late March 2021 to well-received feedback and an

enthusiastic desire to continue in this cohort experiment. 6 to 8 local leaders committed initially to continue in a beta version of this cohort during the later portion of the year, ultimately about 5 months more in length.

Finally, I thought, my prototype was simple enough<sup>12</sup> in concept, and somehow also profound in practice. I was excited.

## EVALUATING AN IMPERFECT PERSON WITHIN A TEDIOUS PROCESS

### *Challenges, Gaps, and Shortcomings I Encountered – Mostly of My Own Making*

However, from about mid-year on in 2021, the past few years caught up to me, and in a big way. On a personal level, I was exhausted from years of financial strain in our family, endlessly scraping by from one month to another, often with no margin for error. The weight of accumulated stress in protecting our daughters during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic was coming to bear. I could tell that I was entering into another cycle of more acute personal depression, which wasn't surprising given the nature by which mental health struggles have affected my biological family. However, it seemed as if the medicine I had taken in small doses for years was beginning to be less effective over time.

On a more existential level, I among my family members remained unmoored, almost adrift at sea in a sense. Our family had moved across the country to a beautiful place just prior to the pandemic, out of a mixture of personal desire, necessity, and vocational calling, particularly for my wife. My wife had found deep meaning in her work in the community development sector almost immediately, and was instrumental in hundreds of families surviving the initial lockdowns in Kouga through coordinating the distribution of emergency food parcel deliveries across the region. My children were thriving in a local Christian primary school that had remained safe and

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<sup>12</sup> Please note that I am aware that further delineation of my project scope and corresponding benchmarks, how I would gather, assess, and evaluate feedback from cohort participants, and the resulting long-term objectives for my project itself are all items that need to be reflected upon in this section. However, I have chosen to include them in the evaluation section below, as this portion of the doctoral project is what has tripped me up repeatedly for the past 18 months, and ultimately resulted in me requiring another full year to submit this project to an even minor level of satisfaction. Personally, as I land this plane, I still struggle somewhat with whether I have done well.

stable throughout COVID. Even our family rhythms were healthier, as we began to meet weekly with several families for dinner on Friday evenings, an anchor that continues in our lives to this day years later. However, under the surface this entire time, deep questions about my own vocational calling, self-worth, identity as a provider for our family, and the like continued festering.

Throughout much of the Fall 2021 semester, I repeatedly wrestled with my project's scope and evaluative benchmarks, *even while I was facilitating my project prototype itself*. As you can see annotated in the appendix materials, I dialogued back and forth so much with my Project Faculty that I ended up having four versions of my project scope and benchmarks alone during that final prototyping semester in late 2021. Primarily what I was wrestling with academically was a deep uncertainty of exactly how to set benchmarks, assess success and quality, and then evaluate how to refine this beta cohort 'to future scale' when I fundamentally was unsure that human development could be quantified in such a measurable manner. I was deeply uncertain whether this project would ever be something that I could build into a future vocational pathway that was sustainable in providing for my family. I kept iterating, but it felt like I was spinning my wheels.

About 2 weeks before my project was due, in mid January 2022, I had another burst of inspiration, and in a flourish of creativity, conceived, wrote, filmed, and edited the 81-minute, five part video facilitation series that comprises the core of my project's actual content. I realized that I needed to *show* what had taken place as this beta cohort had gathered together over the months, even while I was struggling personally. I knew that the creation of a resource that could be contextualized for other cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders would have value, and could be measured more sustainably over time. It would necessitate more research, with a longer term strategic plan in place to figure out how to capture and assess said information (a challenge I was interested in). Just as I was regaining the momentum that I had lost several times, and could see a potential submission deadline, I injured my shoulder severely while bodyboarding, and was unable to submit on time. I literally couldn't type without crying from the physical pain.

There is a lot more that could be said about this journey, and my own shortcomings, but suffice to say, the year delay was a good thing for me as I reflect back. I needed to stop – to sort

out my own physical and mental health, to look for and begin more sustainable work, and to gain some distance from this project as a whole. I was too immersed in it, and was swallowed by its minutiae. And so, this is what I did throughout much of 2022. I began to become healthy once again – holistically in body, mind, heart, and soul. I ran a half-marathon. I slowly was able to adjust my medicine levels through the help of a new psychologist. I began a healthy spiritual rhythm again, seeking silence and solitude each morning with the help of a spiritual director. Perhaps most helpful for my own mental health: I was hired as the Editorial Director for Missio Alliance, a wonderful organization that creates space for Christian leaders to have challenging dialogue around issues of formation, justice, and mission. Kind of on the nose, isn't it?

It's been challenging to return to this project after some time away. Its genesis and initial inspiration feels removed and distant, but simultaneously a warm ember that I want to stoke into a fire once again. Much of the last portion of compiling this portfolio has felt tedious and repetitive, requiring deep resiliency and focused discipline, both adaptive skills I am realizing I sorely need deep maturation in as I approach my mid-40s. As one will read in my project itself, and corresponding project launch plan, there are some new shoots of growth emerging after a year underground. This is particularly true in the desire of two of my most committed cohort members, Blessings L. and Beatrice M., to be mentored, trained, and empowered by myself to facilitate similar formational spaces for leaders like they themselves experienced. I am deeply humbled and increasingly excited about the formative possibilities with them. They are quality leaders who are open to the heart of God working through their lives. It only seems natural to *begin this journey once again* with them.

#### A SUMMATIVE REFLECTION: MY VOCATIONAL JOURNEY OVERALL

How has my vocational context shifted overall in the last four years? *It has changed both fundamentally and completely.* My life is totally different in almost every single aspect! Simultaneously however, in equally profound ways, *I am more myself than I have ever been*, and I am growing in the natural ecology of my life as it was always meant to be. Perhaps, given the

paradoxical nature of spiritual formation in Christ itself, both are deeply true. Consider this example: In June 2019, as part of my initial application to the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership & Spiritual Formation program, I was asked to describe my sense of an emerging vision for my life. I wrote the paragraph included in full as a footnote below. At the time, I was simply describing why I wanted to be accepted into the LSF5 cohort. Little did I know how deeply this vision would begin to come true over the coming few years. Here's an edited version of this paragraph that is relevant today, in February 2023, still remarkably prescient in terms of the longterm vision I have to partner with God in co-creating:

I have an emerging vision for a holistic care and development center, situated in Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa. My desire is to create a space of formation, holistic development, healing, community engagement, and discernment of one's vocational calling, primarily for under-resourced African Christian leaders. This space will be birthed within a beautiful place of rest, nestled within a South African province (the Eastern Cape) that is deeply under-served and ill-resourced to transform the nation, let alone address its own systemic problems of poverty, unemployment, and lack of sustainable educational systems. These systemic issues continue to suppress African leaders from finding their voice with courage and dignity.<sup>13</sup>

As I first wrote this in June 2019, our family was living in Muizenberg, South Africa, about 25-minutes outside of Cape Town. My wife and I were deep in the chaos of young parenthood, with two daughters, 5 and 2 years-old, respectively. My Dad had passed away two months prior, on April 7th, 2019, at the young age of 70, from complications due to a fairly rapid decline in his Alzheimers' diagnosis over the previous few years. I had been laid off without warning from a role

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<sup>13</sup> Chris Kamalski, "*Purpose for Pursuing the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership & Spiritual Formation*," originally written June 14th, 2019 as a part of my application to the LSF DMin program. The full original paragraph is below:

My family has an emerging vision for a holistic care and development center, situated in Jeffrey's Bay, a South African town on the Indian Ocean known primarily for its famous right-hand point break surfing wave, as well as being a holiday destination for South African nationals each December. Our desire is to birth a space of formation, holistic development, healing, community engagement, and discernment of one's vocational calling, primarily for African leaders and the cross-cultural workers who resource them. This space would be birthed within a beautiful place of rest, nestled within a South African province (the Eastern Cape) that is deeply under-served and ill-resourced to transform the nation, let alone address its own systemic problems of poverty, unemployment, and lack of sustainable educational systems. These issues continue to suppress African leaders from finding their voice with courage and dignity.

I loved deeply as the Cape Town Director of Azusa Pacific University's study abroad program, as our entire semester-abroad campus was closed due to severe budget cuts at Azusa. Initially, it felt like I had experienced a 'work miscarriage'<sup>14</sup> of sorts. As a family, there was a pervasive sense that our life was simply not working. A change seemed necessary.

Several things then took place over the next year that shifted the entire course of our life. Firstly, I applied for this program in complete faith, unclear whether I would get in, let alone if we could find the necessary funding to be able to afford the LSF program at all. Secondly, my wife began seriously discerning a job offer from Victory4All, the largest Christian NGO organization in Jeffreys Bay, that she felt like she ultimately couldn't turn down. Jeffreys Bay, this deep place of rest and family connection for us, a place we had always desired to call home, was suddenly on the table as a viable option for our family to take root within – not at some distant point in the future, but now. Thirdly, as with so many people throughout the world, in early 2020, two months after we had moved across South Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic exploded, and our entire world became deeply localized in a completely new space we now called home. Our lives fundamentally changed, and much of the past few years have felt like an emotional, mental, psychological, socio-cultural, and spiritual settling into this new season.

But there is also a gift that I am receiving from God as I finish this doctoral season, four years later, even given the deep challenges and consistent setbacks I have experienced. *It is the gift of now.* I don't mean this in some weirdly metaphysical sense, as if I am a pseudo-doctor on a daytime talk show in the 1980s. Here is the clarity, and settled conviction that I mean by *now*:

*Now* is the time to co-create with God, my friend. *Now* is the time to facilitate a new expression of missional-monastic community within Jeffreys Bay. *Now* is the time for me to write, to develop curriculum, and to mentor, coach, and facilitate spiritual direction space for under-

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<sup>14</sup> I am aware of how it sounds for a man to use such an emotionally loaded, grief-filled word like miscarriage to describe the loss of a beloved job. I hesitate to use this phrase, but its emotive depth is descriptive of how I felt like a vocational pathway had suddenly died in me, just as it was preparing to be born. Ironically, I had been in this new role for only 9 months.

resourced African Christian leaders. *Now* is the time to sharpen the vision I have for practicing lectio divina in a spatially oriented way, as a core spiritual rhythm for leaders who are seeking to find their vocational voice once again. *Now* is the time to become myself more fully, living out the natural ecology of my life – in this place, Jeffreys Bay, that I *now* call home.

I will always have a lot of ideas about what I should be doing with the vocational calling of my life. *Now*, more than ever, I am willing and open to do the hard work necessary to see these ideas become actualized. *I am finally ready.*



## MILESTONE 5: PROJECT

Sometime in early June 2019, our family's subscription to the international edition of TIME Magazine arrived in our postbox in Muizenberg, South Africa, with a jaw-dropping image shot by local South African drone photographer [Johnny Miller](#).<sup>15</sup> The [cover](#)<sup>16</sup> declared South Africa to be [the world's most unequal country](#).<sup>17</sup> I stared at Miller's picture of two diametrically distinct neighborhoods in Johannesburg, intersected by a road I had surely driven, and I wondered what needed to change. This project, *"Place Informs Posture,"* seeks to tell this story.



*Image 1: The cultural context of my project's social location in Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa, my hometown.*

<sup>15</sup> Johnny Miller's drone photography is found at <https://unequalscenes.com>, to great international acclaim.

<sup>16</sup> Katherine Pomerantz, "The Story Behind Time's Cover on Inequality in South Africa." (Johannesburg, South Africa: TIME International, May 13th, 2019). Accessed via <https://time.com/5581483/time-cover-south-africa/>.

<sup>17</sup> Aryn Baker, "What South African Can Teach Us as Worldwide Inequality Grows." (Johannesburg, South Africa: TIME International, May 13th, 2019). Accessed via <https://time.com/longform/south-africa-unequal-country/>.

## NPO STATEMENT:

How can a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders grow into the most transformative environment for a person to be formed and empowered holistically?

## INTRODUCTORY PARAMETERS OF MY PROJECT PRESENTATION:

The first iteration of my project is primarily centered around the creation and practice of a model of 'spatial lectio divina' within the context of a small cohort of under-resourced African Christian leaders, to mature their inner worlds. I define spatial lectio divina as *"the formational practice of reflectively listening to and actively responding to God, our friend, as a diverse 'Community of Creation'<sup>18</sup> that is rooted in a particular place, for a specific moment."*<sup>19</sup> While the project description follows in greater detail below, as a means of brief introduction, my project presentation comprises three components: (1) the creation of a written spatial lectio divina model, (2) an overview of a five-part video series shot to capture the experience of our cohort's transformation together, and (3) an example of the facilitated curriculum we engaged with weekly. Additional aspects of this project are found within Appendix E: Milestone 5 - Supplemental Project Documentation.

## DOCTORAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

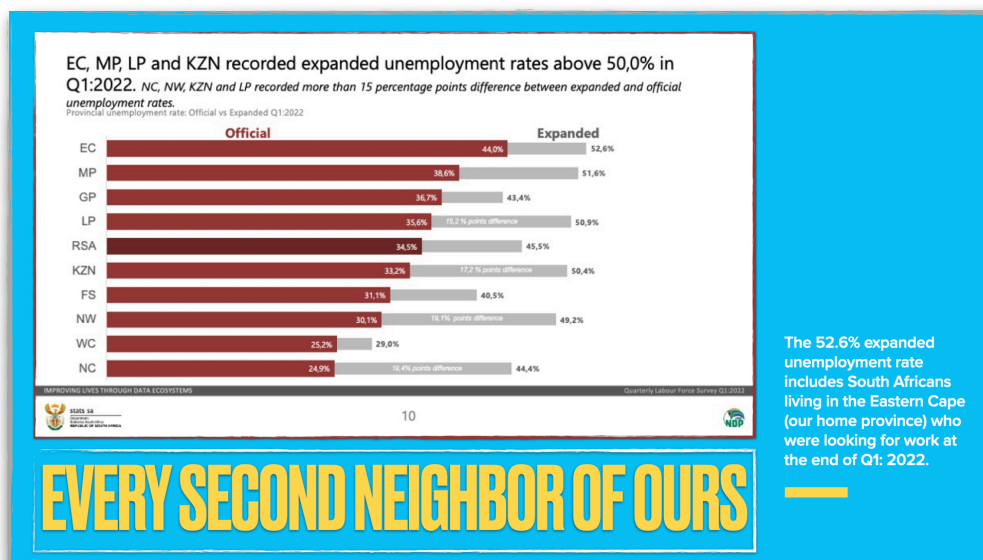
There is a noticeable hunger and growing desire in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, for a safe, vulnerable, honest, mutually-supportive formational cohort for African Christian leaders (Henceforth known as 'ACLs'). With rare exceptions, ACLs who pour out their lives sacrificially for others are not taken care of or sustainably supported. ACLs are frequently under-resourced in the formational development of their own inner world, thrust into adulthood with the developmental maturity of a younger child. If they are adequately resourced, it is typically focused on survival

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<sup>18</sup> The 'Community of Creation' is Randy Woodley's beautifully descriptive term for the Kingdom of God.

<sup>19</sup> This definition is my own.

necessities (food, shelter, bare-bones education, and skill development) or a largely disembodied Christian theology. There is a significant disconnect between the spiritual practices of most ACLs and their daily realities within the places they inhabit. How can this project facilitate a safe space for ACLs to mature together towards their own flourishing?



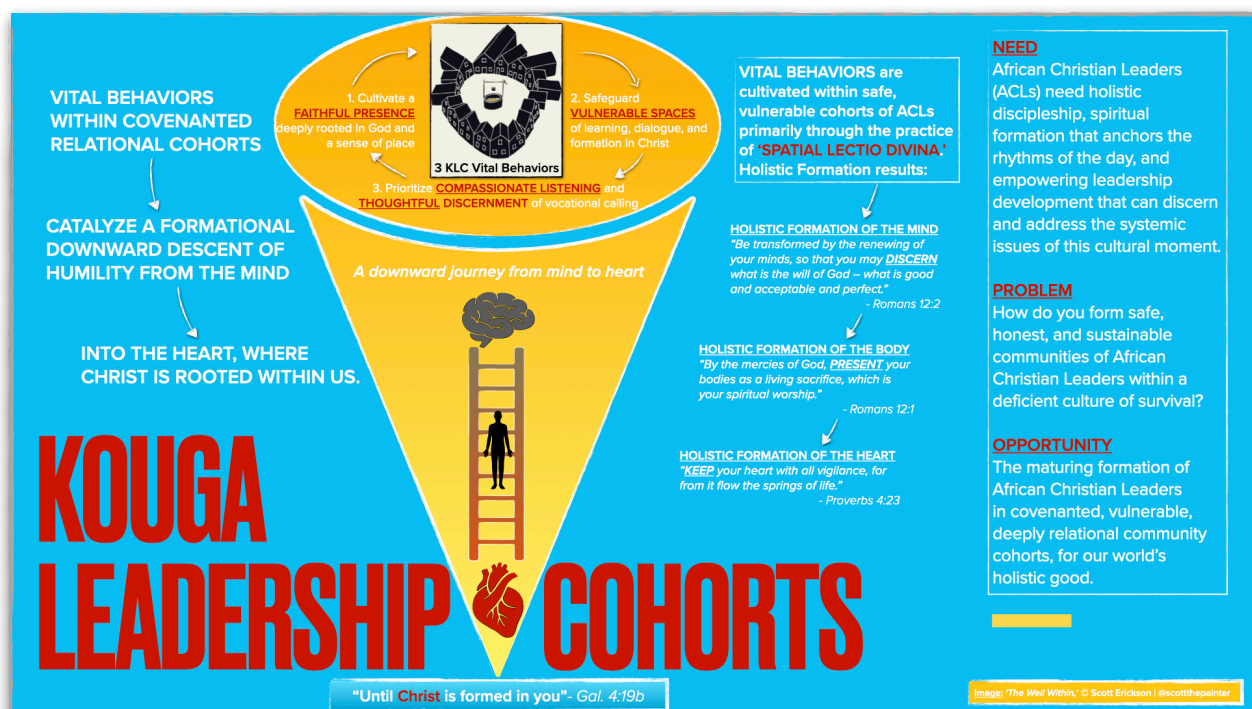
*Image 2: The Eastern Cape, our home, has the highest unemployment rate nationally. Formation must address this.*

My project will help bridge this gap by empowering leaders to develop and mature their inner worlds through the formational practice of a new model of 'spatial lectio divina'<sup>20</sup> within the "Community of Creation"<sup>21</sup> that is unfolding within my hometown. Through facilitating learning cohorts where African Christian leaders can flourish naturally in a practice-based communities that share a common rule of life, a commitment to growing healthy in their inner world, and group discernment of one's vocational calling rooted within a local place, I will walk alongside under-resourced leaders as they step into the "natural ecology of [their lives]."<sup>22</sup> The formational value of practicing lectio divina in a spatially-oriented way within our own homes will unearth and help heal the systemic inequalities present within the lives of my dear friends.

<sup>20</sup> 'Spatial lectio divina' is a new model of an ancient formational practice that I have created as the core spiritual rhythm that Kouga Leadership Cohorts will practice on a weekly basis. Much more on this practice later.

<sup>21</sup> This term is Dr. Randy Woodley's description of the Kingdom of God, from *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (2012), p. 107.

<sup>22</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (1999), p. 42.



*Image 3: The vision of Kouga Leadership Cohorts, where ACLs practice 'spatial lectio divina' together.*

#### DOCTORAL PROJECT SCOPE:

Using the twin pillars of form and content as 'parameters in dialogical tension' with one another, my project scope is as follows:

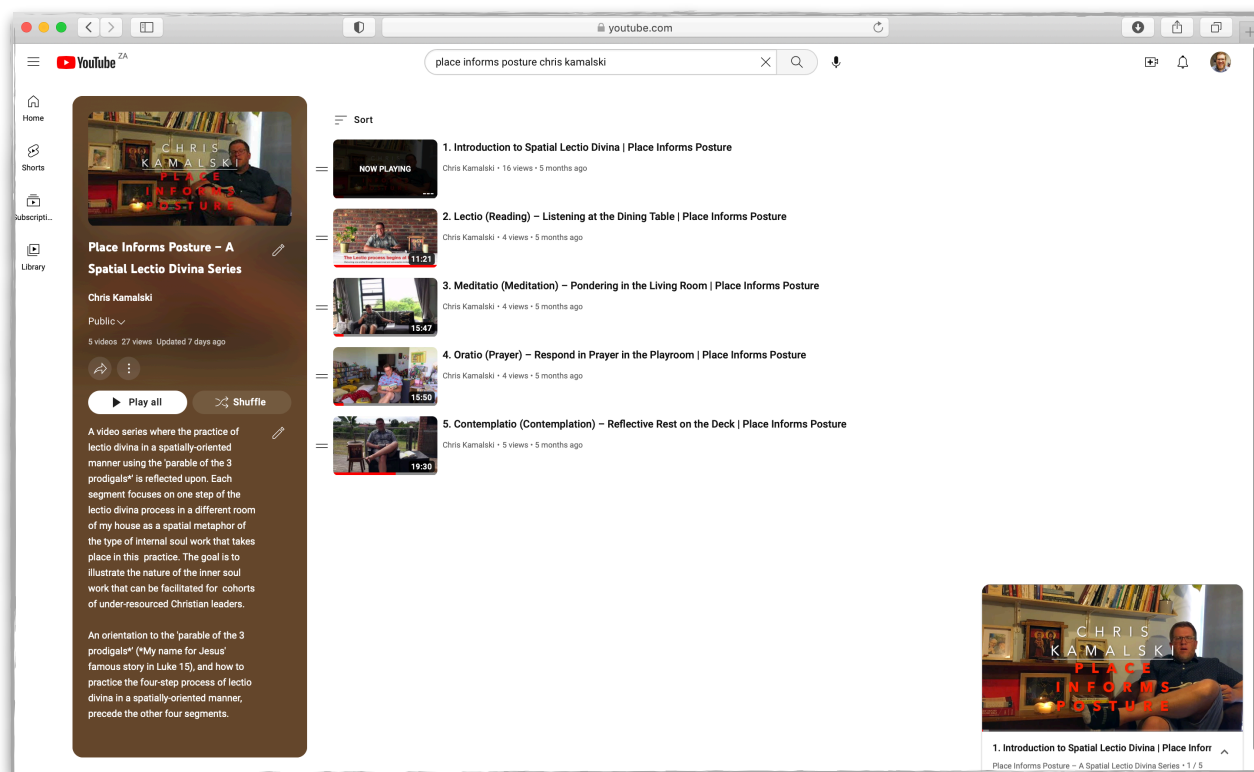
#### *Project Form*

The 'beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort gathered weekly<sup>23</sup> on Monday nights for 5 months, from September 6th, 2021 through January 17th, 2022. During September and October, we built community in our homes, listened to one another's stories, and began to familiarize ourselves with the formational rhythm of lectio divina practiced in a small community that shares a common physical space. Throughout November, the cohort followed the four-step rhythm of Lectio Divina (1. Lectio/Listen, 2. Meditatio/Ponder, 3. Oratio/Respond, and 4. Contemplatio/Rest), in order to

<sup>23</sup> Although a weekly gathering remains the ultimate goal, realistically in this 'beta' cohort iteration, we gathered 9 evenings in total, roughly two to three times each month, which was as much as we could manage given the ongoing challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and related sickness among cohort members.







*Image 5: My YouTube channel playlist for "Place Informs Posture - A Spatial Lectio Divina Series."*

2. The second component comprises an 81 minute, five-part video facilitation series entitled "[Place Informs Posture: A Spatial Lectio Divina Series](#),"<sup>25</sup> where the practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner using the parable of the 3 prodigals<sup>26</sup> is reflected upon at length. An orientation to the parable itself, and how to practice the four-step process of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner, preceded the other four segments. Each video facilitation focused on a step of the lectio divina process in a different room of my house as a spatial metaphor of the type of internal soul work that takes place in this portion of the lectio practice. The goal was to illustrate the

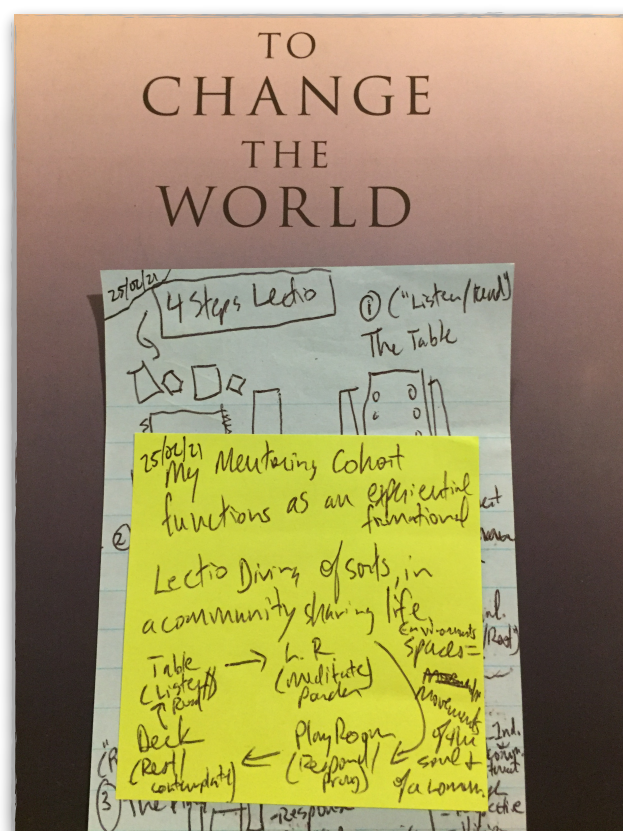
<sup>25</sup> This series will exist in perpetuity on <http://youtube.com/@chriskamalski> or via copying this full playlist link into your browser: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4gFm\\_KfoxNh0-iEyn4bhmCQXUuuBtnEE](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4gFm_KfoxNh0-iEyn4bhmCQXUuuBtnEE). You can also search "Place Informs Posture Chris Kamalski" within YouTube itself.

<sup>26</sup> The parable of the 3 prodigals is my attempt to reframe Luke 15:11-32, commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son, in a more contextually accurate hermeneutical light, through the framework of the lectio divina spiritual practice. I do this by playing with a common definition of the word prodigal itself, which can be defined as being "wastefully extravagant" (2019 MacBook Air Dictionary).

nature of the inner soul work that I facilitated for this beta cohort of African Christian leaders, and to [create a multimedia template](#) that could be contextually facilitated for future cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders in different spatial locations.

3. The third component of my project contains a sample facilitation lesson plan we actually used to practice spatial lectio divina on the parable of the 3 prodigals in Luke 15, including examples of reflective exercises, formational prayer practices, group liturgies, and the 'spatial lectio divina' process itself. The scope and sequence of the entire spatial lectio divina process that was developed throughout the five months that the beta cohort met in person is found within Appendix E: Milestone 5 - Supplemental Project Documentation.

*Image 6: Note my realization after I created this first model for spatial lectio divina within my own home that the cohort community that I was mentoring could function as an experiential lectio divina within the same shared space!*



A surprising and critical learning that arose throughout the development of this project is found in the first subsection of Appendix E: Milestone 5 - Project Appendix Documentation, and will deepen as a component of my Project Launch Plan. Potential future benchmarks that will require careful assessment have been initially developed as well within the Project Launch Plan. This subsection introduces a future research focus that has arisen with growing personal

conviction: The felt needs within the leadership developmental journey of African Christian female leaders, in particular those who come from under-resourced communities where trauma is rampant and survival is paramount. Specifically, I seek to acknowledge the systemic and structural challenges inherent within the inner world of under-developed leaders within communities of survival by dialoguing with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In this section, I will briefly introduce critical underlying reasons 'why' female African Christian leaders are often under-formed in particular, especially within their inner-world.



*Image 7: Our first gathering using the practice of lectio divina, exploring Mark 4, a parable I entitled "Fertile Soil." The majority of committed cohort participants were African Christian female leaders.*

A second important subsection of this project is also located within Appendix E: Milestone 5 – Supplemental Project Documentation, and serves to visually illustrate the core components of this model of 'spatial lectio divina' in a graphically-rich, clearly-communicated Keynote slide deck. This Keynote serves several main purposes: Firstly, to delineate visually how 'spatial lectio divina' is distinct from the typical practice of lectio divina by being rooted in a particular social location and cultural context, namely that of my hometown of Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, and secondly, as an easily accessible front door to the entire concept of my project's formative model itself. This



second purpose in particular begs further research, deep-level thinking, and reflective listening among future cohort groups that I facilitate. I anticipate that it will serve as a helpful visual tool for me to introduce this model to other groups of under-resourced Christian leaders. Lastly, I plan to use this Keynote slide deck as a fundraising tool to secure needed finances to empower these leaders in a sustainable manner.

I am both increasingly curious and deeply convinced that this model of *lectio divina*, practiced in a spatially-oriented, 'place-specific' location, while simple in nature, is potentially revolutionary in Christian formational practice. If under-resourced leaders rooted in distinct social locations around the globe are introduced to the practice of spatial *lectio divina* through clearly communicated resources, and then given an opportunity to engage in this practice together, what sort of holistic, sustainable transformation is actually possible within their own homes? How can privileged, Western Christians such as myself truly come alongside these leaders in a helpful, listening manner that avoids the colonial elitism of previous missional eras? Could this new model, in this specific social location, approximate what true, deep-level empowerment for under-resourced leaders within the Kingdom of God will look like in the decades to come?

#### BENCHMARKS:

##### *Benchmarks Measuring "Success"*

1. As evidenced by their participation in at least 2 of 3 Monday gatherings throughout November 2021, 75% of initial 8 'beta' cohort members practice the full 4-step 'spatial *lectio divina*' model together in my home at least twice as a community. An initial dialogue begins whereby the value of an honest, safe 'third place' for African Christian leaders to belong to one another is discerned for lasting promise.
2. A four-step 'spatial *lectio divina*' model of praxis is developed, written, visualized, and filmed for YouTube throughout Fall 2021 that can serve as a potential template for future cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders to practice in their own particular social location. This model's initial promise of success will be evident by at least 3

'beta' cohort members giving annotated exit interviews in January 2022, in their shared articulation of the value of practicing lectio divina in a safe space.

### *Benchmarks Measuring 'Quality'*

1. Identify 1 to 2 key leaders within the initial 8 'beta' cohort members that vocalize a desire to deepen their spiritual transformation, and invite them to pursue ongoing personal mentoring and leadership development with me. This openness will be identified through annotated exit interview conversations with at least 3 'beta' cohort members in early 2022, and re-confirmed by these leaders committing to weekly mentoring dialogues with me throughout 2023.

*How do these benchmarks measure objective behavior change and actual transformation? Do they even do so in an easily measurable, objective manner – or are these benchmarks hinting at subtle, discerned, more subjective change?* As evidenced by the innumerable iterations of my benchmarking process as documented in Appendix E, plus my auditory interview attempts at listening for real-world transformational change present in the lives of key leaders, there is still significant work to be done in my benchmarking itself – particularly concerning the nature by which objective behavior change takes place through the shared practice of spatial lectio divina. I am noting late in this revision process, mere days before my project's final completion, for one thing.

I have begun to conceptualize a plan to develop two methodologies towards this end in my project launch plan, but as I continue to assess my project in hindsight, I am increasingly realizing that I simply did not consider nor choose to value objective, tangible behavioral change through this model's practice, and this beta cohort's gathering together. I take responsibility for this, although methodologically, I remain somewhat skeptical of the value of laying overly Western modalities of measuring growth, often external in nature, on something that is both non-Western, and internal. *How do you measure inner-heart transformational maturity in the Spirit?* It feels like a

bit of a cop out, albeit a truthful admission, to acknowledge that I'm not entirely sure, nor do I know if that is ultimately my end goal. Yet, more work is to be done in this regard, and more listening needs to take place. I'm sure my perspective will shift in this regard. It should.

## PRESENTATION OF PROJECT

1. A Spatial Lectio Divina Model

*Image 8: Title slide to introductory Keynote presentation of my spatial lectio divina model.*

*All Theology is Socially Located*

Dr. James Cone was a professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York and a seminal voice in the creation of Black Liberation theology throughout the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In a 1974 essay for the academic journal *Interpretation*, entitled "Biblical Revelation and Social Existence," Cone argued that "Thought is not pure and autonomous; it is an expression of life. Accordingly, the consideration of any system of ideas is not complete without an investigation of the social context in which the system arose" (Cone, p. 422).<sup>27</sup> If Cone is correct, and theological thought is in fact born from a life lived rooted in a particular place, within a larger social context, then transformation of a community's life

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<sup>27</sup> James H. Cone. "Biblical Revelation and Social Existence." *Interpretation* 28, no. 4 (1974), 422-440.

necessitates deep and careful excavation of the soil in which one is planted. We must trace an idea's origin downward to its root system if we are to both properly understand it, and then be able to shift the trajectory of action towards liberation in Christ as a response to toxic systemic injustice found within the land.



*Image 9: Key theological quotation that grounds my project in a particular place – Jeffreys Bay, South Africa. If you zoom in on this image shot from space, you'll notice densely packed informal settlements, called townships in South Africa, surrounding the wealthier, 'nicer' plots of land. This housing system is a remnant of apartheid to this day.*

Dr. Esau McCaulley builds on Cone's argument in the conclusion of his recent work, *Reading While Black*, focusing on the challenge of formational work with under-resourced and under-developed African American communities in particular. McCaulley agrees with Cone, writing "Cone rightly argues that all theology is socially located. According to Cone, this is a good thing because acknowledging social location affirms the goodness of the creation in which God has placed his people" (McCaulley, p. 179).<sup>28</sup> Given that a community's theological framework is inescapably tied to its social location, paying attention to shared formational practices within a

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<sup>28</sup> Esau McCaulley. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 179.

particular social context creates space for a community to simultaneously mature in friendship with God, vulnerable, safe connection with one another, and a discerned conviction as to how the needs of a place should be met. While McCaulley's words ring true with a prophetic urgency that commands attention in this cultural moment, on a personal level, the Quaker author Parker Palmer describes this communal approach to vocational discernment using an organically ecological metaphor that I find deeply inspiring. Palmer writes, "As I learn more about the seed of the true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted – the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively, accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself" (Palmer, p. 17).<sup>29</sup>

The creation of a beta Kouga Leadership cohort, and the shared practice of *lectio divina* in a spatially oriented way, are my community's initial engagement with the words of Cone, McCaulley, and Palmer within our particular social location in South Africa. The Kouga Municipality is a small network of rural towns in the most under-resourced province of South Africa, the Eastern Cape. My family's home is in Jeffreys Bay, the largest town within the Kouga Municipality, and has served as the communal gathering place for this beta leadership cohort. As I am only beginning to realize as the first iteration of this project wraps up, the larger ecosystem of similarly under-resourced communities throughout sub-Saharan Africa face similar questions of thought and social context, theology and social location, and seed and ecosystem. Given the reality that place informs posture, how could shared practice of a new model of spatial *lectio divina* as a covenanted cohort community of African Christian leaders inform the posture one takes in responding to the needs of a particular place? This is the core question that Kouga Leadership Cohorts sought to reflectively answer in an initial form throughout my project's life.

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<sup>29</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let My Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 17.






*Image 10: The final form that my NPO statement took during my project’s beta cohort of African Christian leaders. The core formational rhythm that emerged as an answer was to practice lectio divina in a spatially-aware manner.*

### *Introducing Kouga Leadership Cohorts*

The beta Kouga Leadership Cohort project functioned as a communal praxis experience of lectio divina that reflected on the inner world of a leader’s holistic formation unto maturity in Christ. We chose to meet in the safe warmth of our home as a means of demonstrating a hospitable welcome to African leaders that far too infrequently are invited into white spaces. This leadership group practiced the discipline of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner through four ‘spatial environments’ (actual rooms within my house) designed to intentionally draw the heart out of hiding, and into the light of a safe, honest community of formational love.

Our cohort of eight under-resourced African Christian leaders were a mixture of several African countries, including isiXhosa, Coloured, and Afrikaans South Africans, as well as key African leaders from Zimbabwe and Zambia respectively. The vast majority of consistent cohort participants were young female leaders between the ages of 25 and 40. Most of these leaders



“There is a noticeable hunger and growing desire in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, for a **safe, vulnerable, honest, mutually-supportive formational cohort for African Christian leaders** (Henceforth known as ‘ACLs’). With rare exceptions, ACLs who pour out their lives sacrificially for others are not taken care of or sustainably supported. ACLs are frequently under-resourced in the formational development of their own inner world, thrust into adulthood with the developmental maturity of a younger child. If they are adequately resourced, it is typically focused on survival necessities (food, shelter, bare-bones education and skill development) or a largely disembodied Christian theology. There is a significant disconnect between the spiritual practices of most ACLs and the honest realities of their actual lives within the places they inhabit. I desire to help bridge this gap by **empowering leaders to develop and mature their inner worlds through the formational practice of a new model of ‘spatial lectio divina’ within the ‘Community of Creation’**” that is unfolding within my hometown. ”

— Excerpt from my Doctoral Program Description, 1 of 2

# KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

Image: ‘Togetherness Lights the Way.’ © Scott Erickson / @scottheartist  
 “Randy Woodberry’s descriptive term for the Kingdom of God in Shalom and the ‘Community of Creation.’”

*Image 11: My project’s response to the growing desire for transformation within under-resourced African Christian leaders in town: To create a ‘harbor lighthouse’ – a safe space of light and rest where leaders can dock ‘for awhile.’*

worked in full-time vocational ministry with the [Leadership Experience \(LXP\) South Africa](https://www.thelxp.org),<sup>30</sup> a Christian non-governmental organization (NGO) that developed children and youth throughout several impoverished neighborhoods within the wider Kouga region. All were Christ-followers who were actively engaged in missional service. Our cohort was fortunate to welcome the perspective of a middle-aged Coloured woman who was raised Muslim, but had converted to Christianity almost a decade prior, as well as the wisdom of my wife, an Afrikaans woman with deep apostolic leadership gifting, who works for [Victory4All](https://victory4all.com),<sup>31</sup> a large Christian NGO in Kouga.

Most fascinating within our cohort’s makeup was the reality that consistent attendance by male African Christian leaders of any level was spotty at best, if not almost completely non-existent. The faithful, mature, and open core of this beta Kouga Leadership cohort were all young African Christian females in middle levels of ministry leadership. I’ll begin to address the systemic

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.thelxp.org>.

<sup>31</sup> <https://victory4all.com>.



implications of this reality in detail in the conclusion to this project's presentation, and set some future steps in motion through my Project Launch Plan.

*A Historic Christian Formational Practice: Lectio Divina*

As a cohort community, our gatherings were intentionally centered around the core formational practice of lectio divina. Adele Calhoun defines lectio divina as the "hearing of Scripture, requiring an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information about God" (Calhoun, p. 280).<sup>32</sup> This form of communal reading is slow, thoughtful, and reflective in nature, more for the purpose of deeper formation in Christ, as opposed to greater understanding of the nature of God. In Calhoun's brief introduction to the practice of Lectio Divina, she reminds the reader that "the first 1,500 years of church history were characterized by the practice of lectio divina. Since many people were illiterate and many that could read didn't have Bibles, lectio divina offered a way of attending to Scripture as it was read in church, with an ear to hearing a word from God" (Calhoun, p. 282).<sup>33</sup> Foundational throughout the first three quarters of church history is this reality: Scripture was read out loud, slowly, as a community. It was read multiple times for the purpose of encountering the living, active presence of God within the Scriptural narrative itself. More than understanding information, the purpose of lectio divina was to open the heart to deeper formation in Christ as one encountered the presence of God within a community of people.

Church historians see traces of lectio divina within the early church and desert father movements, and find the beginnings of the reflective practice of lectio divina within the early Benedictine monastic movement in multiple places. However, it wasn't until the writing of Guigo II, an Italian monk serving as a prior for a 12th century Carthusian monastery, that the familiar four-

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<sup>32</sup> Adele Calhoun. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 280.

<sup>33</sup> Calhoun, p. 282.

step practice of *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation) of Scripture was actually defined. In The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life, written in the 1170s to a fellow monastic prior, Guigo II reflects on a revelation he has recently had about the formational rhythm of engaging God within the words of Scripture. Guigo II writes "One day when I was busy working with my hands I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual exercise came into my mind: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. These make up a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven" (Guigo II, pp. 67-68).<sup>34</sup>

Having unintentionally named the stages of the spiritual journey, Guigo II described this progression with the simple clarity that keeps *lectio divina* as a central practice within Christian spiritual formation to this day, almost 1,100 years later. He defines the four steps with the stark simplicity of a monastic prior focused on the application of this formational practice within a local monastic community:

Reading is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrating all one's power's on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness (Guigo II, 68).<sup>35</sup>

As only a teacher can, Guigo II then immediately defines the four steps more deeply in *three additional ways*, using metaphorical imagery common to the Medieval liturgical period:

Reading seeks for the sweetness of a blessed life, meditation perceives it, prayer asks for it, contemplation tastes it. Reading, as it were, puts food whole into the mouth, meditation chews it and breaks it up, prayer extracts its flavor, contemplation is the sweetness itself which gladdens and refreshes. Reading works on the outside, meditation on the pith:

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<sup>34</sup> Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life*. Translated, with an introduction, by Edmund Colledge, OSA and James Walsh, SJ. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 67-68.

<sup>35</sup> Guigo II, p. 68.

prayer asks for what we long for, contemplation gives us delight in the sweetness which we have found (Guigo II, 68-69).<sup>36</sup>

While noting the risk of citing Guigo II's work too comprehensively in this short introduction to lectio divina, his words, written over a millennium ago, still ring true today. *Lectio Divina is a reflective process of listening to the words of Scripture while looking for the presence of God within and beneath the Scripture itself.* As God meets our hearts as we listen to Scripture (*Reading*), we enter into a reflective process of pondering deeply (*Meditation*), responding communally (*Prayer*), and resting ultimately in God (*Contemplation*). This process is both personal and deeply communal, mirroring the formational journey of millions of God's children throughout the ages.

However, a critical question lingers: If this central spiritual practice remains largely unchanged today, over a millennia later, how does one's social location shape one's openness in lectio divina with God? Said another way, how does place inform posture in the practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented way?

#### *A Model Refined by Place: 'Spatial Lectio Divina' in the South African Context*

The model of spatial lectio divina that I am developing is the practice of lectio divina in a particular social location, with all the accompanying systemic injustices and historical struggles that accompany ethnic groups struggling to co-exist, let alone thrive, within a particular space. From a South African perspective, this means a few things in particular. We must recognize that South African land has always been inhabited,<sup>37</sup> first by the Khoisan tribe thousands of years ago, and then more recently, by a number of Black and Coloured (mixed race) South African ethnic groups that are descendants in part from these original 'southern Africans,' as well as from

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<sup>36</sup> Guigo II, pp. 68-69.

<sup>37</sup> As Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah conclude in the very first sentence of their powerfully prophetic lament, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, "You cannot discover lands already inhabited" (Charles and Rah, 13).

Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 13.

“FAMILIES SHOULD NOT HAVE TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES TO EARN A LIVING. THEY MUST BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD THEIR LIVES, RAISE THEIR FAMILIES AND **PUT DOWN DEEP ROOTS** IN THE PROVINCE OF THEIR BIRTH.”

BOBBY STEVENSON, DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MUNICIPAL PROVINCE LEADER FOR EASTERN CAPE

*Image 12: I read this quotation in the Port Elizabeth Herald, the provincial newspaper in town, in January 2020, buried within a story about the terrible economic conditions in the Eastern Cape. My vision deepened as a result.*

enslaved peoples forcibly relocated from India and Malaysia. The British and Dutch in particular, and several other Western European colonial empires to a lesser degree, sought to control by military might and brute force these first peoples who lived in South Africa. As a result, the history of colonialism in South Africa throughout the 17th to 20th centuries played itself out in a violently similar manner to the ‘doctrine of discovery’<sup>38</sup> narrative taking root in the Americas.

Later on in the 20th century, the destructive legacy of systemic apartheid laws enacted primarily by the Afrikaans people (violently oppressed themselves by the British in the Anglo-Boer War of the early 1900s) created an entire government ruled by unjust systemic laws. These laws were intentionally designed to stigmatize, oppress, and force the removal of entire communities from their neighborhoods and into impoverished townships, all while the world watched. My wife spent her childhood a few miles from the Union Buildings in Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa, and the nexus of much of the violent uprising and chaos of the late 1980s and early 1990s

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<sup>38</sup> IBID, Charles and Rah.

period. South Africa was a place that was defined by forced separation, with millions of people told which spaces they could legally enter, and for what purpose. Often these spaces were defined by those in power (primarily white Afrikaaners, a small minority) forcing the rest of the population (primarily black and coloured South Africans, the vast majority of the country) into leaving their homes for less desirable areas where they were out of sight, but close enough to work. As one can imagine, the need to work for the survival of one's family, regardless of *where* that was, and *what* that did to one's family, became paramount. The South African comedian and former host of *The Daily Show*, Trevor Noah, describes the legacy of apartheid in a brutally honest manner that Westerners would implicitly understand, writing:

Apartheid was perfect racism. Apartheid was a police state, a system of surveillance and laws designed to keep black people under control. A full compendium of those laws would run more than three thousand pages and weigh approximately ten pounds, but the general thrust of it should be easy enough for any American to understand. In America you had the forced removal of the native onto reservations coupled with slavery followed by segregation. Imagine all three of those things happening to the same group of people at the same time. That was apartheid (Noah, 22).<sup>39</sup>

Given the violent history of colonial empire and systemic apartheid present within South Africa for much of its history, one can quite easily recognize how this national trauma would take generations to unwind and heal, even given the courageous leadership of President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, both leading public efforts to reimagine a new future for this nation. Less than 30 years after the fall of apartheid in the early 1990s, much has changed on a structural, governmental, even national level. However, internal habits die a slow, painful death, and must be re-learned in safe, empathetic, honest spaces. This challenging contextual work of reimagining a new posture toward God and one's neighbor is the slow redemptive work that the practice of spatial *lectio divina* by a cohort of African Christian leaders attempts to address in part, rooted in one's own home.

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<sup>39</sup> Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2016), 22.

*Spatial Lectio Divina Defined: Prayer Rooted in a Particular Place*

In light of this challenging South African contextual reality, we practice lectio divina through the particular place we are postured within in this cultural moment - the Kouga Municipality in the Eastern Cape province, specifically our hometown of Jeffreys Bay. As such, the formational practice of lectio divina that I find most helpful in our particular place is found in the work of David Benner, who defines lectio divina as a reflective, listening approach to God and neighbor. Benner's empathetic approach naturally facilitates a safe space for under-resourced Christian leaders across South Africa, the majority of whom have never practiced lectio divina on their own, let alone in a vulnerable, shared community recovering from a history of forced separation. A longtime psychologist, spiritual director, and teacher, Benner paints a vision of lectio divina as the core human response of prayer to the Divine, as we open our selves deeply to the love of God and one another in community. Benner's vision is worth quoting in full:

Although it is often treated as a technique, lectio divina is not really a procedure or even a method - at least not a single method. It is more an approach and an expectation. It arises out of a desire to not simply hear the words of Scriptures but also to encounter the Word behind the words. At other times and in other ways of engaging with Scriptures we may seek insights, eternal truths and precepts for living. *But in lectio divina what we seek is not information or motivation but communion and union. We seek nothing less than God.* We attend to the Word as a way of opening ourselves to God and listen for God's living word to us. Lectio divina treats Scriptures not as a text to be studied or a set of truths to be grasped, but as the living Word - always alive and active, always fresh and new.

It is, therefore, not so much a way of reading as a way of listening. The listening posture that it encourages is more passive than active. Reading Scriptures in this way is reading (and listening) with heart and spirit open. Don't try to find something or make anything out of the passage. Wait for the gift that God has for you in it. Read slowly and reverentially, savoring what you hear and gently listening for the still, small voice of God that says, 'This is my word for you today.' *It is listening for the voice of God, communicated through Scriptures and revealed by the Spirit. It is, therefore, prayer because it is an opening of self to God*" (Benner, 48-49, italicized sentences my own).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> David Benner, *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 48-49.

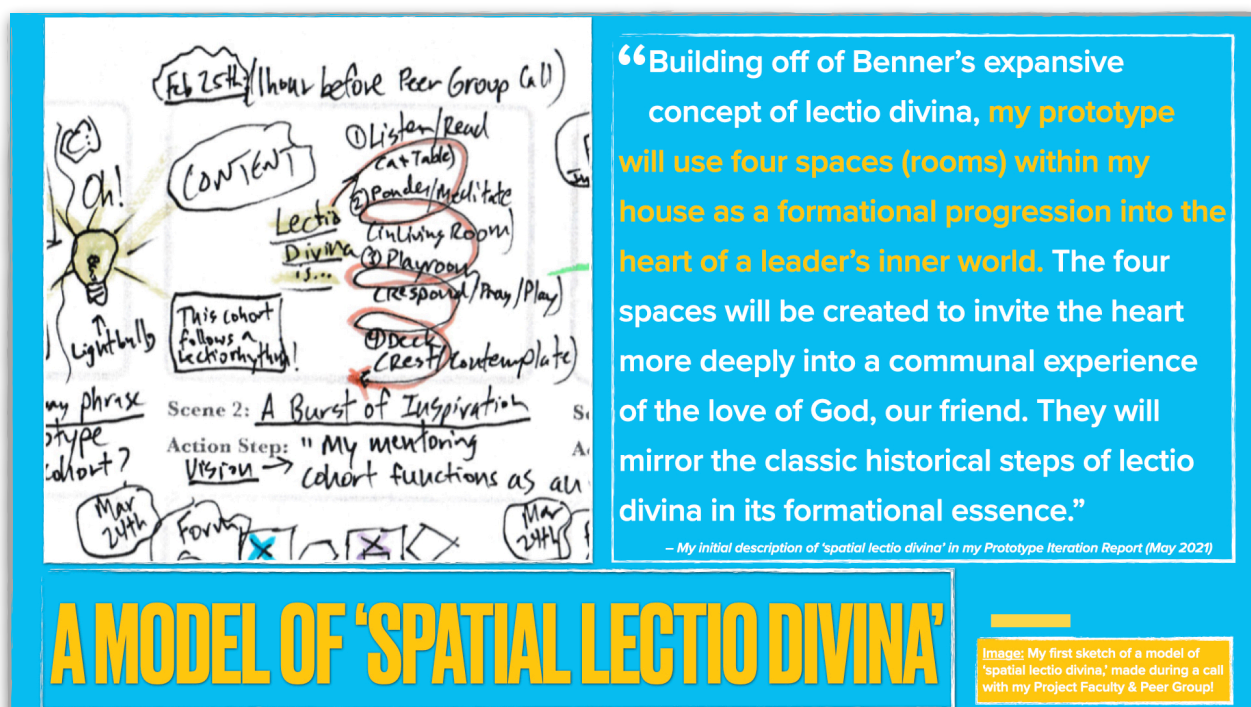


Image 13: My new formational model, embodied in a particular social location: Introducing 'spatial lectio divina.'

Building off Benner's expansive concept of lectio divina, my NPO project used four spaces (actual rooms) within my house as a formational progression into the heart of a leader's inner world. The four spaces were created to invite the heart more deeply into a communal experience of the love of God, our friend (See Jn 15:13, among other texts). They mirrored the classic historical steps of lectio divina in its formational essence, but made particular in both space and time that is relevant to the South African cultural reality of today.

My model of spatial lectio divina began in welcome to our (1) *dining table*, where our cohort *listened attentively* (Lectio Step 1: Reading) to each other's stories in an informal narrative process of shared dialogue as we gathered together. We welcomed one another to be present to God, to each other, and to our own souls, around a common table. Food and drink were shared as we gathered together as one community for dinner, after a long day of work and ministry. As we broke bread, we became human once again, listening for the voice of God present within our own stories.



*Image 14: Attentive listening to each other’s stories at a common table begins the process.*

After dinner, we sat down in our (2) living room, for the purpose of a more focused period of meditating upon the presence of God, and the Triune Community of Love’s active work within our midst in this current moment. We created a safe, vulnerable space to ponder deeply (Lectio Step 2: Meditation) a guiding, formational concept that framed our shared space for that particular evening. Most evenings that we gathered together, the conversation that began naturally at the dining table continued deepening as we transitioned to the living room, gradually aware of the presence of God at work in our midst.

Next, we literally descended down our stairs to our girls’ (3) *playroom* (doubling as our *family room*), as an embodied metaphor for the formational journey downward and inward within our souls, from the mind to the heart. This descent is a core inward movement within the contemplative inner world of a leader. Once settled, with a unified childlike spirit, we *responded in shared worship, prayer, confession, and play* (Lectio Step 3: Prayer), as we dialogued more deeply with the Spirit of God, our inner hearts, and one another in vulnerable honesty. Henri Nouwen quotes the Russian Orthodox mystic Theophan the Recluse in describing this inward



journey of descent from mind to heart as the journey of prayer within the space of our souls, writing "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you" (Nouwen, p. 59).<sup>41</sup> Together as a cohort community, we practice standing before God, our Friend, in naked honesty, opening to the love of God within us.

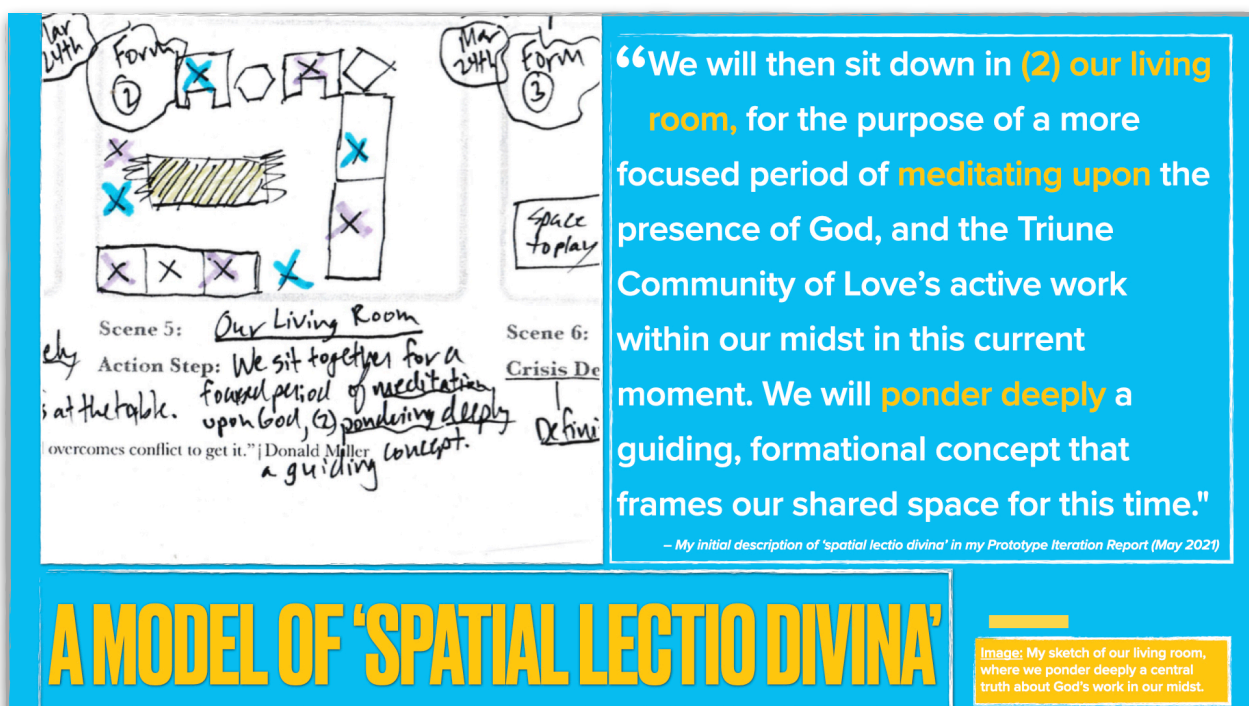


Image 15: As we listen, the dialogue deepens in wonder as we ponder in our living room.

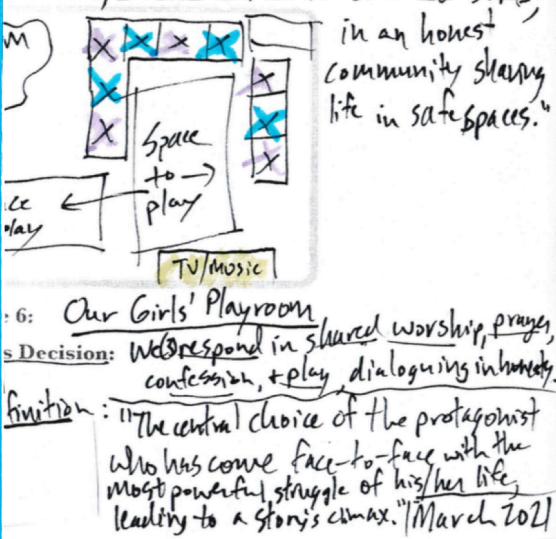
Lastly, we ascended our stairs and walked outside to our (4) *outside deck*, which provides a beautifully expansive view of the Indian Ocean less than a kilometer away from our house. As our cohort gazed upward and outward at the darkening hue of evening’s last light on the ocean water, we *rested in contemplation* (*Lectio Step 4: Contemplation*) of the formational invitations that Christ, our Friend, has opened our hearts to throughout this short experience. We sought to “gain a balcony perspective on our lives,”<sup>42</sup> to borrow a critical leadership phrase from Ronald

<sup>41</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 59.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 252-263.

Heifetz. Together, we committed to an accountable pathway forward to walk as a community, as we mature in Christ. Our aim was simple: to open fully to God and one another in love.

*Image 16: A communal response of worship, prayer, and play bursts forth in our playroom.*



6: Our Girls' Playroom

Decision: We respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, + play, dialoguing in honesty.

Function: The central choice of the protagonist who has come face-to-face with the most powerful struggle of his/her life, leading to a story's climax." (March 2021)

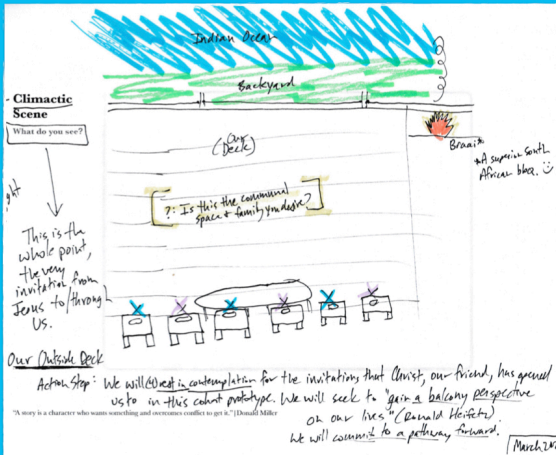
“Next, we will literally descend down our stairs to (3) our girls' playroom, (doubling as our family room), as a metaphor for the formational journey downward and inward, from the mind to the heart, which is a core inward movement within the contemplative inner world of a leader. Once there, with a unified childlike spirit, we will respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, and play, as we dialogue more deeply with the Spirit of God, our inner hearts, and each other in honesty.”

— My initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: My sketch of our girls' playroom, where we respond to God in communal worship, prayer, and play.

*Image 17: The 'spatial lectio divina' process ends in contemplative rest on our deck.*



Climactic Scene: What do you see?

This is the whole point, the very invitation from Jesus to throw us.

Our Outside Deck

Action Step: We will rest in contemplation for the invitation that Christ, our friend, has given us to in this calm prototype. We will seek to 'gain a balcony perspective' on our lives." (Ronald Heifetz) We will commit to a pathway forward." (March 2021)

“Lastly, we will ascend outside to (4) our outside deck, which provides a beautifully expansive view of the Indian Ocean less than a kilometer away. As our gaze lifts upwards and outward, we will rest in contemplation of the formational invitations that Christ, our friend, has opened our hearts to throughout this short experience. We will seek to 'gain a balcony perspective on our lives,' to borrow a critical leadership practice from Ronald Heifetz. Together, we will commit to an accountable pathway forward to walk in community, as we mature unto Christ.”

— My initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: My sketch of our outside deck, where we rest in contemplative silence at the invitation of God in our lives.

This is the simple, yet profound rhythm of lectio divina practiced together as a cohort community in a spatially-oriented way. We listen attentively to God and one another, ponder deeply the truths that surface within our souls, respond playfully in prayerful worship as children of God, and rest quietly in the loving invitations of Christ, our Friend, ever deeper in the journey. This is spatial lectio divina, which I define as *"the formational practice of reflectively listening to and actively responding to God, our friend, as a diverse 'Community of Creation'<sup>43</sup> that is rooted in a particular place, for a specific moment."*<sup>44</sup>

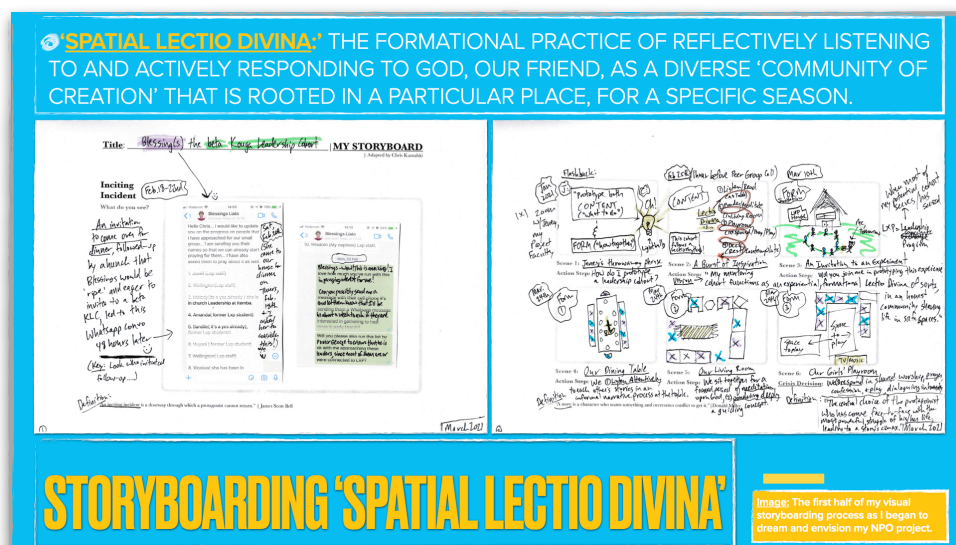
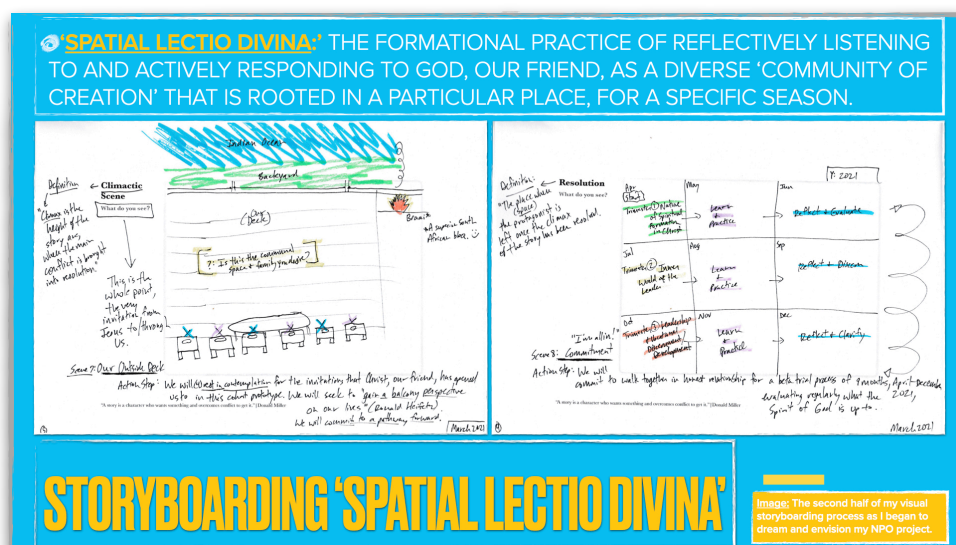


Image 18 (top) and Image 19 (bottom): A new holistic model of spiritual formation, 'spatial lectio divina' in storyboard form.



<sup>43</sup> The 'Community of Creation' is Randy Woodley's beautifully descriptive term for the Kingdom of God.

<sup>44</sup> This definition of spatial lectio divina is my own creation.



## *A Maturing Vision for this Model*

What does a maturing vision of this model look like within the reality of Kouga Leadership Cohorts in the future, outside of this far too short beta version? To summarize my emerging vision in brief, Kouga Leadership Cohorts holistic formational approach will seek to cultivate a faithful presence deeply rooted in God and a sense of place – our home in the Kouga Municipality. This resilient incarnational presence will seek to catalyze the love of God and neighbor as one's own self. The telos of this integrative transformation is profoundly simple, found within Paul's description of his love for the Galatian church. Paul writes of his friends, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal 4:19, NIV). This is the deepest motivation for our gathering – that Christ matures and grows in fullness within our souls as a community of friends.

### THE FORMATIONAL APPROACH OF

# KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

- KLC's holistic formational approach:
  - cultivates a faithful presence deeply rooted in God and a sense of place. This resilient incarnational presence catalyzes the love of God and neighbor as one's own self.
  - The telos of this integrative change is profoundly simple: "Until **Christ** is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19b).

Figure 1. Whole person Christian formation model (Chandler, 2014).

**IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**

1. Dallas Willard's model for Christian spiritual formation of the whole human self (*Renovation of the Heart*, p. 38).

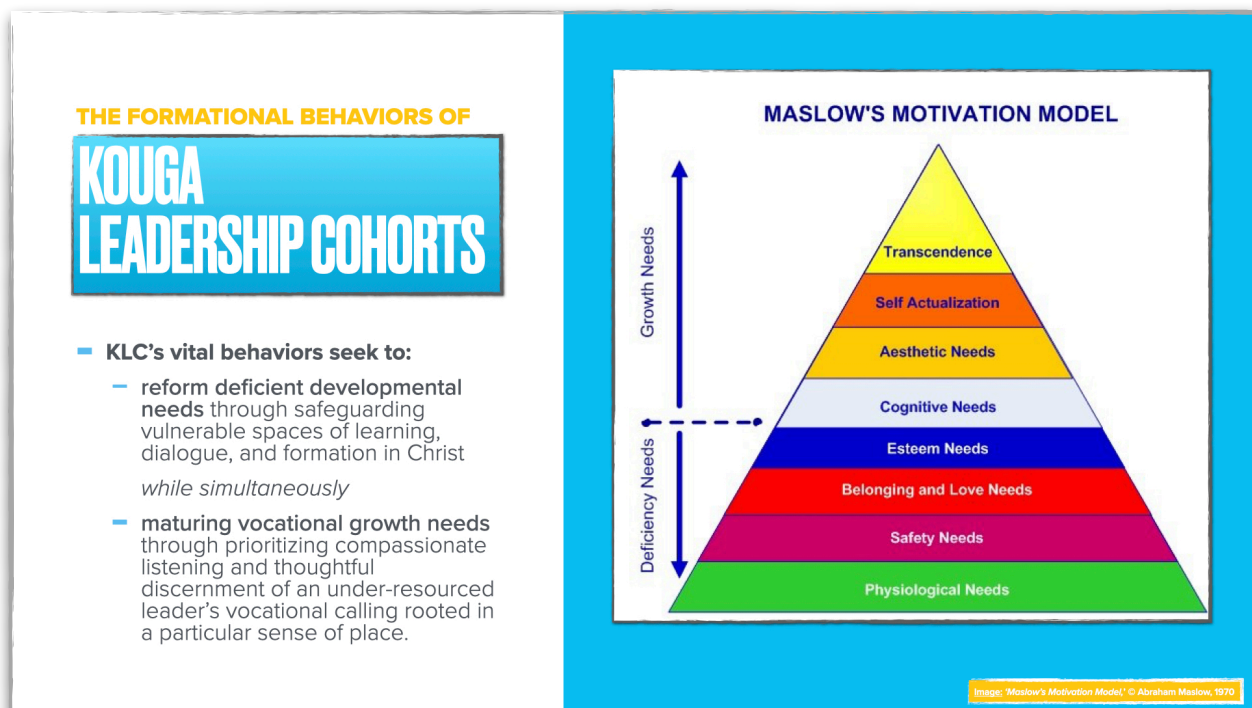
2. *Trinity (New Icon)*, © Scott Erickson | @scottthepainter

3. Diane Chandler's model of Christian spiritual formation of the whole-person (*Christian Spiritual Formation*, p. 18).

*Image 20: The holistic formational approach of Kouga Leadership Cohorts.*

How do we seek to foster an environment where this ambitious transformation can flourish? Kouga Leadership Cohorts will have a narrow focus in the practice of our vital behaviors, seeking to reform deficient developmental needs through safeguarding vulnerable spaces of

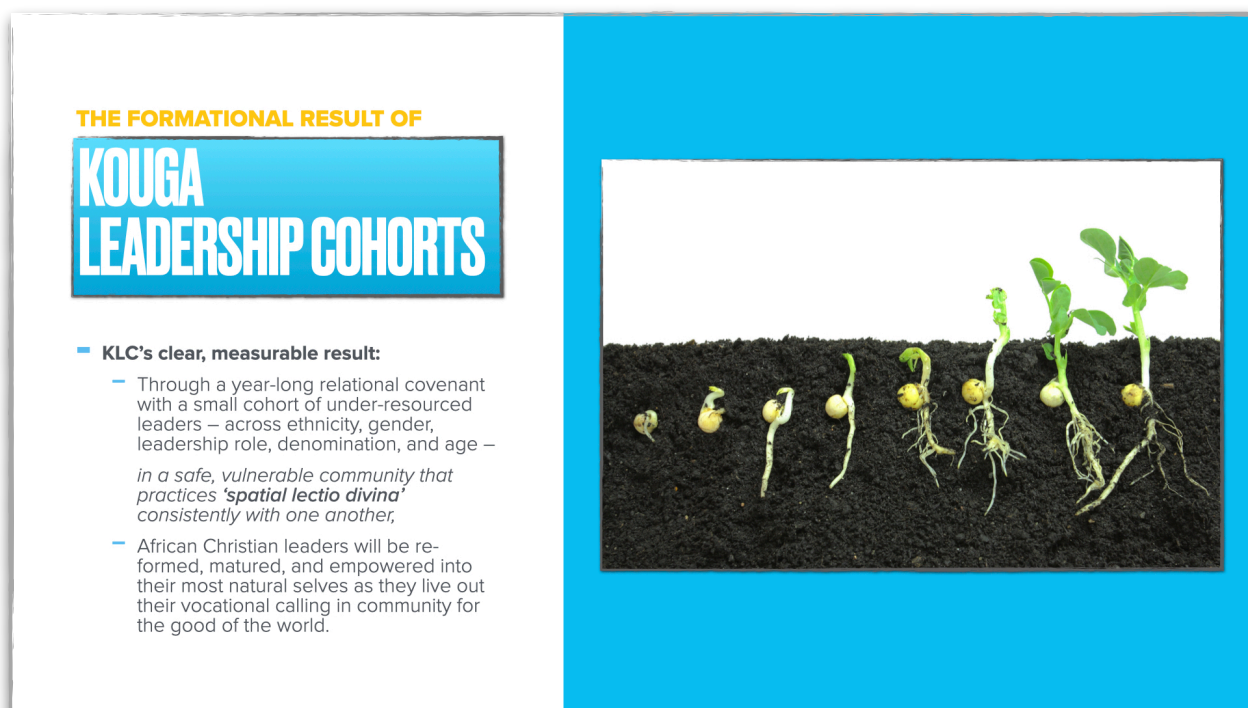
learning, dialogue, and formation in Christ. *Simultaneously*, we will identify and mature vocational growth needs through prioritizing compassionate listening and thoughtful discernment of an under-resourced leader's vocational calling rooted in a particular sense of place. This 'both/and' approach will speak to the contextual realities of life within communities of survival in South Africa, addressing the dual needs of deficiency and growth that Maslow describes in his motivational pyramid model.



*Image 21: The reasoning behind the vital behaviors that define Kouga Leadership Cohorts.*

Far too frequently in under-resourced contexts, deficiency needs are the sole focus of Christian community development work. Higher-level leadership empowerment needs (i.e. the actual developmental maturity necessary to thrive in a place, not simply to tread water in an endless cycle of survival) fall by the wayside, or are ignored from the jump. The slow practice of *lectio divina* in a spatially-oriented way seeks to re-orient this approach from a cohort's inception.

What is the clear, desired, and over time, measured<sup>45</sup> result? Through a year-long relational covenant with a small cohort of under-resourced leaders – across ethnicity, gender, leadership roles, denomination, and age – a safe, vulnerable community that practices spatial lectio divina consistently with one another will slowly take root. African Christian leaders will be re-formed, matured, and empowered into their most natural selves as they live out their vocational calling in community for the good of the world.



*Image 22: The clear, measurable result of a year spent in Kouga Leadership Cohorts.*

Seed and ecosystem will be healed by God in a holistic manner that all benefit from. This vision is ambitious and idealistic, facing numerous challenges already. And yet, perhaps the mustard seed has already been sown, and a flourishing garden tended by Christ has already begun to grow in our midst.

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<sup>45</sup> To my knowledge, little to no empirical data and statistical evidence exists that will speak to the viability of this vision, at least within an African context. This, quite obviously, is both a significant challenge that must be addressed, and a hurdle that must be consistently overcome. To be frank, this is *the challenge* before us as we mature in this vision. Figuring out how to measure the holistic developmental growth we desire to see in under-resourced African Christian leaders, and then how to fund this growth in a sustainable manner, are the dual foci we need to give our attention to moving forward.



*Image 23: A maturing vision for this model, emphasizing communal prayer of the heart.*



*Image 24: My friends in our first beta Kouga Leadership Cohort, gathered around our table, pretending that they frequently eat spaghetti for dinner (Ha!), as our family does. Having these local leaders feel welcome as they practiced lectio divina in our home is a first fruit I will cherish the rest of my days.*



## 2. Place Informs Posture – A Spatial Lectio Divina Video Series

### *Transcript Notes and High-Level Summary Video Screenshots*



*Image 25: The title card (and my favorite screenshot!) from my video series, "Place Informs Posture."*

"Place Informs Posture – A Spatial Lectio Divina Series"<sup>46</sup> is a five-movement, 81-minute video series where the practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner using the 'parable of the 3 prodigals'<sup>47</sup> is reflected upon. Each segment focuses on one step of the lectio divina process in a different room of my house as a spatial metaphor of the type of internal soul work that takes place in this practice. The goal in filming this series was to illustrate the nature of the inner soul work that can be facilitated for cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders, as well as to create a resource that can be used in other contexts. An orientation to the 'parable of the 3 prodigals,' and how to practice the four-step process of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner within my own home, precede the other for segments.

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<sup>46</sup> See Footnote 11 for full YouTube playlist details, but the link to this series can be found here: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4gFm\\_KfoxNh0-iEyn4bhmCQXUuuBtNEE](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4gFm_KfoxNh0-iEyn4bhmCQXUuuBtNEE). You can also search "Place Informs Posture Chris Kamalski" within YouTube itself.

<sup>47</sup> The 'parable of the 3 prodigals' is my creative re-naming of Jesus' well-known 'parable of the lost (younger) son,' found in Luke 15:11-32. I find this title more contextually accurate, as well as a play on the definition of prodigal itself as being "wastefully extravagant" (2019 MacBook Air Dictionary). If this is the meaning of prodigal, who is the prodigal of this story? How many prodigals are found within this text? I'd argue for 3.



This video series is structured and titled in the following manner, following lectio divina:

<u>LECTIO DIVINA STEP</u>	<u>MOVEMENT TITLE / ROOM LOCATION</u>	<u>RUN TIME</u>
1. Introduction	"Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina"	18:51
2. Lectio ( <i>Reading</i> )	"Listening at the Dining Table"	11:21
3. Meditatio ( <i>Meditation</i> )	"Pondering in the Living Room"	15:47
4. Oratio ( <i>Prayer</i> )	"Respond in Prayer in the Playroom"	15:50
5. Contemplatio ( <i>Contemplation</i> )	"Reflective Rest on the Deck"	19:30

The following section is a curated selection of each of these five movements using key transcript notes with multiple curated slides of video screenshots that communicate teaching about each step in the spatial lectio divina process. Within the transcript notes are main points, reflection questions, quotations from various resources, the parable itself read from a specific translation in a lectio divina format, and teaching facilitation for each movement of the spatial lectio divina process, as recorded throughout the various rooms of my house. If there is a core insight on spatial lectio divina, I have bolded the section to highlight this. These transcript notes are not intended to serve as a word-for-word, verbatim transcript of each movement of this video series, nor to be an exhaustive description of what spatial lectio divina actually could be in its mature form. Instead, they function as a guide of sorts, a sampling of each movement's facilitation, for the purpose of providing a glimpse into the overall sweep of the spatial lectio divina process, as practiced by the Kouga Leadership Cohort over five months from August through December 2021. Taken as a whole with the other elements of this project, the hope is that they approximate the warm, inviting, and transformative spirit that characterized our cohort gatherings each week as we experimented in the formational rhythm of spatial lectio divina together as a cohort community.

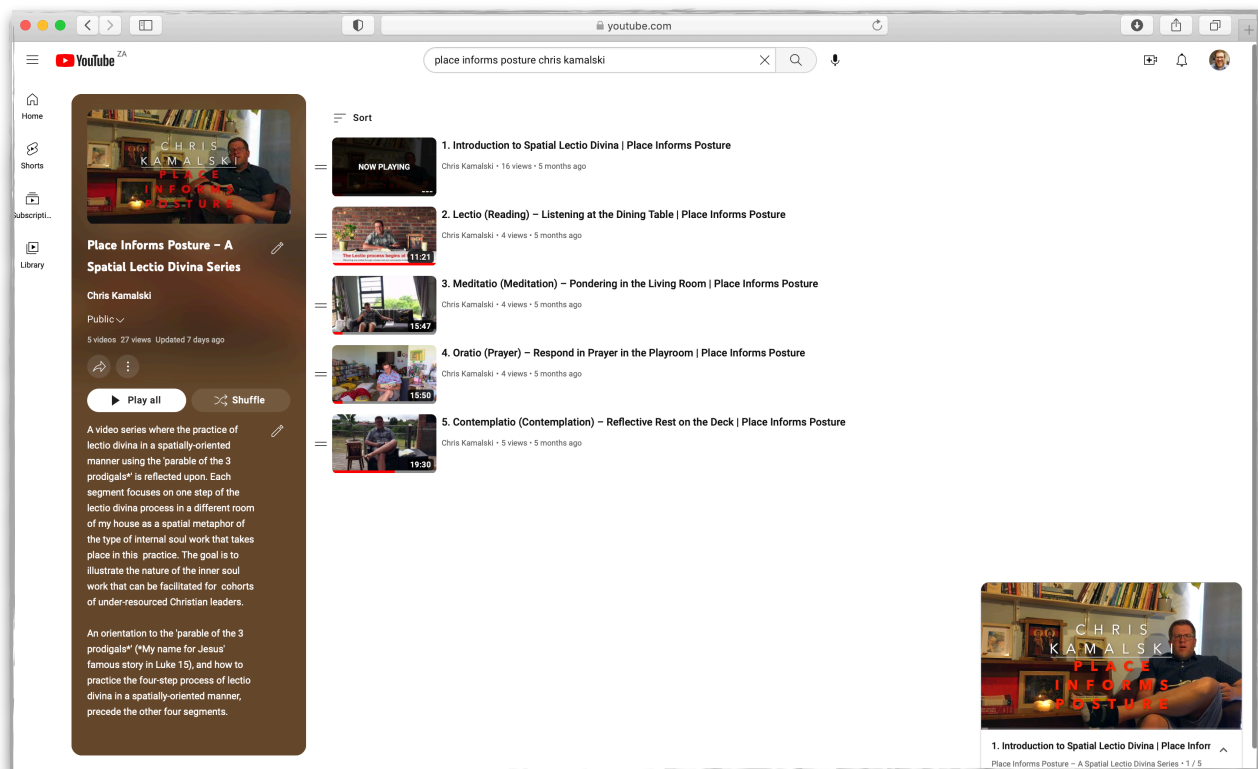


Image 26: The YouTube playlist for my video series, found at <http://youtube.com/@chriskamalski>.

*Movement 1 - Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina: Learning in the Office*



- 0:32:<sup>48</sup> "Parables can be defined as alongside stories that have a point."
- 1:19: "We think of parables in a modern sense as a story with a moral, or a story with a fable. An example of this is how the 1980's children's cartoon "GI Joe" would moralize the end of each episode, regardless of how it fit within a children's cartoon about the United States military might."
- 2:26: "Parables do have a point. They have a point that is to be thought about and meditated upon, wrestled with, debated, discussed, gone away with and come back to. **The formational practice of Lectio Divina invites a rhythm of listening, wrestling, dialoguing, and resting.**"
- 2:44: "When you marry the practice of lectio divina in a spatially oriented way, what you often get is a profound experience with the God of the Scriptures, the Living Word." This is the natural result of practicing lectio divina in a spatially oriented way."

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<sup>48</sup> Please note that the time stamps for each movement are rough approximations of where the concept highlighted is facilitated.

- 3:39: "You will see me move around the normal confines of our house to illustrate how *lectio divina* has a spatial component to it that mirrors the movement downward with the Spirit of God down into the center of our heart, meeting God there, in the sense of the 'place' where God really dwells within us as our friend."
- 4:37: "Quoted excerpt from Kenneth E. Bailey's Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels, regarding the needed retitling of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) to something more accurate to its actual meaning:

This parable has long been called the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Such a title assumes that the workers are the focus of the parable. The same confusion reigns with the parable in Luke 15:11-32, which has traditionally been called the parable the prodigal son, as if the wayward younger son were the central figure in the parable rather than the father.<sup>49</sup>

- 5:57: "Extensive quoted excerpt from N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird's recent masterwork, The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians, on the common misinterpretation of the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) due to a lack of cultural understanding of Jesus' first century Jewish context:

Among the dozens of things people regularly and often rightly say about the 'prodigal son,' one thing is missed by most, though it would be blindingly obvious to most first-century Jewish listeners. A story about a scoundrel young son who goes off into a faraway pagan country and is then astonishingly welcomed back home is—of course!—the story of exile and restoration. It was the story Jesus' contemporaries wanted to hear. And Jesus told the story to make the point that *the return from exile was happening in and through his own work*.<sup>50</sup> The parable was not a general illustration of the timeless truth of God's forgiveness for the sinner, though of course it can be translated into that. It was a sharp-edged, context-specific message about what was happening in Jesus' ministry. More specifically, as Luke insists in his framing of it (Lk 15:1), it was about what was happening through Jesus' welcome of outcasts, his eating with sinners. It was an explanation of why the party was thoroughly appropriate. The 'party'—Jesus' apparently scandalous habit of dining with people regarded as 'sinners'—was a central characteristic of Jesus' public career. Wherever he went, there seemed

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<sup>49</sup> As Bailey suggests, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 is similarly misnamed, focusing attention on an important character (the younger son) while diminishing the other central characters of the parable, namely the elder son and the father himself.

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 355.

<sup>50</sup> Wright and Bird italicize this phrase to highlight their core understanding of this text from a Jewish cultural perspective.

to be a celebration; the accounts of festive meals, at which Jesus welcomed all and sundry, is one of the most securely established features of almost all recent scholarly portraits of his work. This naturally provoked those who had very different visions of what it would look like if God's kingdom were to break in.<sup>51</sup>

- 8:57: "Another, shorter excerpt from Wright and Bird on this parable:"

Through his actions, Jesus gained the reputation for being 'a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax-collectors and sinners' (Mt. 11:19, Lk 7:34). How could this Jesus fellow, a clever rabbi, a mighty healer, and even a prophet by all accounts, stoop to the level of keeping company with folk who were morally wretched and ceremonially impure? Wasn't Jesus concerned about his reputation with his own personal purity, which Israel's worship demanded? Ought not a prophet to be rebuking and admonishing people like these? Jesus' answer was that it wasn't the healthy who needed a physician, but the sick. God had always been in the business of welcoming prodigal children home.<sup>52</sup>

- 10:05: "That parable is (ultimately) about the disobedience of the people of God, and how God is still welcoming them home."
- 10:40: **"Remember that Lectio Divina is one of the most ancient spiritual formation practices found within the Church, writ large, across the world, across culture, or across denomination, or the way that you practice your faith within community. It was initially developed in some sense to create space for people who were largely illiterate or impoverished to hear the word of God, because the printing press wasn't [invented] yet let alone access to scripture that you could hold in your hand."**
- 11:17: "How did you receive the word of God? You heard it. You heard it read."
- 11:24: **"Lectio Divina is a four-step process. Step 1 is 'Lectio (Reading),' or 'Listening' as I like to refer to it, as you are listening to something being read. Step 2 is 'Meditatio (Meditation),' where you are reflecting upon, digging into, and asking some cultural questions of [the text], pondering deeply what you are reading. Meditation means to chew or to ponder deeply, like you are chewing a really good piece of steak. Step 3 is where you move into response yourself. The Latin translation for Step 3 is "Oratio (Prayer)," where you are literally**

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<sup>51</sup> N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 204-205.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 204-205.

responding to God out of your listening - what you have heard and has stood out to you, your meditation and what you are chewing upon. Now, you are responding to God, back to the Living Word of God. The final step in the four-step process is called 'Contemplatio (Contemplation).' I like to translate that word into a different context, calling it reflective rest - the idea that we come back to a place where God is present with us, dwelling inside of us, incarnating us through the Spirit. We are dwelling with God, the 'Triune Community of Love.' We are resting in what we have heard, and resolving our self to step into what we are being called to do."

- 13:14: "Will you listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you? Will you allow an overly familiar story to startle you? Will you pay attention to what word or phrase leaps out to you, and what perhaps the Spirit of God, the Living Word, might be saying to you for this day and moment you find yourself in?"
- 13:39: Lectio # 1 (A 'Plain Reading from the Text') - Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)<sup>53</sup>:  
 11 Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13 Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. 25 Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years

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<sup>53</sup> Luke 15:11-32, NIV.

I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

- 17:00: Reflective Questions: "May the hearing of the word of the Lord settle deeply and simply in the mind, and ultimately in the heart, of all who hear or watch this short reading. What do you hear? What do you see? What do you imagine? What is the Spirit of God, who lives in you, inviting you to do with this word? A question for you to ponder as I end this short meditation and introduction: What should this story actually be entitled? Moreover, how many prodigals are actually present in the story itself? One definition of the word prodigal can be defined as something like being 'wastefully extravagant.'<sup>54</sup> If that is the conception of what prodigal is in this context, then who is the prodigal? And ultimately, if the father is the prodigal, who is being prodigious? Who is being 'wastefully extravagant' in love? So, how many prodigals are in this story? How are you a prodigal? How is the Spirit of God inviting you to lovingly act in a prodigal way to your neighbors around you?"
- 18:41: Benediction: "Let those who have ears to hear, hear. Let those who have eyes to see, see. May it be so. Amen."

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<sup>54</sup> This definition of 'prodigal' comes from the Dictionary application on my 2019 MacBook Air.



*Movement 2 – Lectio (Reading): Listening at the Dining Table*



- 0:08: "Welcome to our Dining Table. This is a place in our family where we want everyone to feel like they belong, for everyone to feel like they can just pitch up and sit down at the table. Obviously, we do have a head of the table, but it's really informal. This is a space where we want to practice listening to one another. My wife and I do our best whenever we have dinners with our kids, or guests over, to try and not have there be phones at the table. We don't watch TV while we are here. This is a space where we listen. This is a space where we talk, where we share, where we connect, where we come together after a long day. It's a space where we laugh, where we eat. There's something about food, and food that is shared among fellow people that sort of humanizes us, and brings us all onto the same page."
- 1:03: "In the Lectio Divina process, welcoming, and beginning the Lectio process at the table, is critical in a spatial Lectio Divina. We literally come here first. When I invite guests into this Lectio process, friends within this cohort that I have been experimenting with, we start here. We start here with a warm meal, with everybody taking a seat, and with conversation that is



not overly guided or forced. There is a warmth to it, an invitational sense to it. We want this to be a space where people belong.”

- 2:35: “Interestingly, Lectio Divina historically has always been a practice that has emphasized the public reading of Scripture, and the listening process, the auditory nature, of [that reading]. The Dining Table is the perfect space for this process to begin. Before you even enter into real dialogue, or combative sorts of things, or wrestle with hard issues (which to me in the Lectio framework, takes place more in the Living Room, and more in a meditative space), first we listen. First we hear. First, we are present to God and to one another. We do that through a simple and plain reading of the Scriptural text.”
- 3:22: “The table is where the father wants to invite his two sons (Lk 15:11-32). He doesn’t really care what the younger son has done. He doesn’t care how the older son ultimately responds. He wants them to come and sit down, and be [present] in the party. I wonder if the father feels that all will be made well, that there will be a sense of justice and reconciliation within all the familial relationships [at the table]. I wonder if the father intuitively senses ‘If I can just get my sons to the table, we can sort all of this out. Let’s have some good food with some good wine, and let’s talk. Let’s listen, let’s hear each other, let’s see each other.’”
- 4:48: Lectio # 2 (A Second ‘Plain Reading from the Text’) – Luke 15:11-32 (MSG)<sup>55</sup>:  
 11-12a Then he said, ‘There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’ 12b-16 So the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn-cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. 17-20a That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll say to him, Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called

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<sup>55</sup> Luke 15:11-32, MSG.

I acknowledge that there is a variety of theological perspective as to whether Eugene Peterson’s translation of the Scriptures, The Message, is considered a literal translation, or more of a Scriptural paraphrase. Regardless of conviction, innumerable communities have found Peterson’s work to be a fresh, straightforward account of the Scriptural text, especially powerful when read aloud in an auditory manner.

your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father. 20b-21 When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.' 22-24 But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time. 25-27 All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.' 28-30 The older brother stomped off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!' 31-32 His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'

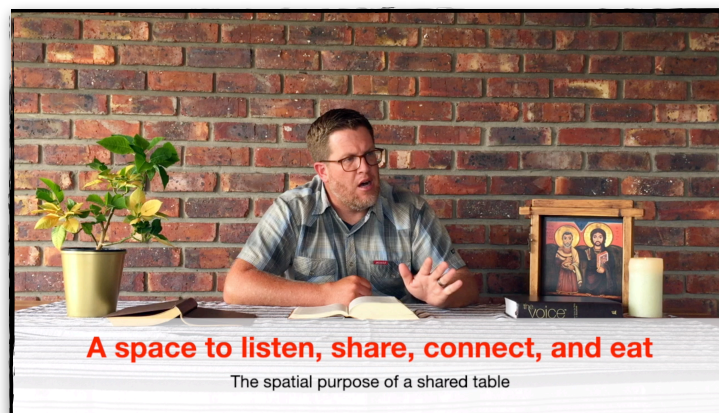
- 7:54: Quoted excerpt from Shauna Niequist's Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table, with Recipes, about hospitality as a spiritual practice, and the power that comes from a shared table:

I want you to invest yourself wholly and deeply in friendship, God's greatest evidence of himself here on earth. More than anything, I want you to come to the table. In all sorts of ways, both literals and metaphorically, come to the table. We don't come to the table to fight or to defend. We don't come to prove or to conquer, to draw lines in the sand or to stir up trouble. We come to the table because our hunger brings us there. We come with a need, with fragility, with an admission of our humanity. The table is the great equalizer, the level playing field many of us have been looking everywhere for. The table is the place where the doing stops, the trying stops, the masks are removed, and we allow ourselves to be nourished, like children. We allow someone else to meet our need. In a world that prides people on not having needs, on going longer and faster, on going without, on powering through, the table is a place of safety and rest and humanity, where we are allowed to be as fragile as we feel. If the home is a body, the table is the heart, the beating center, the sustainer of life and health. Come to the table.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Shauna Niequist, *Bread & Wine: A Love Letter to Life Around the Table, with Recipes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 258.

- 9:19: “I love that the parable of the prodigal son, or sons, is actually a story about a family, two children. Or is it much more than that?”<sup>57</sup>
- 10:17: Reflection: “As both the father’s invitation to his sons, and God’s invitation to us – the invitation we find throughout the Lectio Divina process, throughout the whole of the Scriptural narrative, throughout all of life, and all of the created order – the Father is saying to us, ‘Come.’ The ‘Community of Love’ is saying to us, ‘Come.’ Jesus is echoing, ‘Come.’ The Holy Spirit inside of us is groaning on behalf of our hunger, and saying ‘Will you come? Will you just come to the table, pull up a chair, and have something to eat? That is my invitation to you.’
- 11:02: Benediction: “Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear. Let those who have eyes to see, let them see. Let those who are hungry, come join us at the big table. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.”




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<sup>57</sup> This is a short parenthetical comment I make while reading from Shauna Niequist’s Bread and Wine.

*Movement 3 – Meditatio (Meditation): Pondering in Dialogue in the Living Room*



- 0:11: “Welcome to our living room. This is a small space actually, and you’ll see as we move around my house in this spatial lectio divina process that my dining room table is literally just over there, and our deck is a few steps [outside] that way. I am over our girls’ playroom, and my office is right around the corner. And so, this space that we are practicing lectio divina in with a group of under-resourced African leaders is relatively a small space. Now, relative to homes within South Africa, that is a different and more complex question than this moment allows. **I will say however that this living room, this little informal space, has become such a joy for our family. We sit here. This is [the space] where we invite people in. There is no tv or central thing that everyone is forced to stare passively at. If you are sitting in our living room, you are talking to somebody, or you are reading with someone else. Or you are dialoguing, or listening. The chairs and the couch face one another in a roughly circle space. This is a welcoming space where dialogue happens, where long conversations until late at night take place. And so, this is the space that is perfect for us to practice the second step in the lectio divina process.**”

- 1:41: "Step 1 is [called] **Lectio**, which if you remember, is listening or reading [to the scriptural text]. Step 2 is **Meditatio**, where you meditate, chew, or ponder upon [this text]. Literally, you discuss, study, think deeply about, or reflect upon a word or phrase that the Holy Spirit has given you within a text or a larger dialogue that you are having. [Perhaps] you are looking at a piece of art or some sort of visual media, or listening to the lyrics of a song. With the scripture, **Meditatio** refers to the small passage that was just read to you in the first step, **Lectio** (Listening). You've listen to that passage, and now you are thinking about it deeply. **Meditation in a Christian sense is about something. It's about the person and presence of God ultimately, but [also] how God is at work within a particular scriptural text.**"
- 2:36: "A room like this where there is no one who is the head is perfect for a deep and honest dialogue to happen. This is where we practice this portion of lectio divina in our house."
- 3:00: "When I think about the character of the elder brother in our parable, if I were to think about where he would feel most comfortable, or perhaps most self-righteous, I think he would sit in my living room. The reason for this is because this is a space where he would go to argue with his father, or to try to talk his younger brother out of going to his father to ask for his inheritance. This is a space where the elder brother would feel justified. Thus, it is a perfect space to think deeply about the character and role of the elder brother."
- 4:23: "Quoted excerpts (which are designated as indented bullet points below in this section of the transcript) from Craig Keener's The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, which is a biblical commentary on the cultural world of the Ancient Near East during the period of time the New Testament was first written: "Ancient writers sometimes bracketed off a section of their work by repeating a particular line; this bracketing off is called an *inclusio*. So far this parable has followed the course of the two that preceded it (Lk 15:3-10), but 15:24-32 are bracketed off to address the climactic issue: the elder brother represents Jesus' religious accusers (15:2)."<sup>58</sup> Both of the structures of those preceding parables are repeated in this third larger parable, until verse 24, which is the section where the elder brother comes into play

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<sup>58</sup> Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 233.

most specifically. What is the climactic issue at play? Well, how the elder brother responds, and how the elder brother represents Jesus' religious accusers, which in this context, was the Pharisees.

The elder brother here is a transparent metaphor for the Pharisees, and the younger brother for the sinners with whom Jesus was eating (15:1-2). Because the inheritance had already been divided, the elder brother was already assured of his share, effective on the father's death (15:12); he had nothing to lose by his brother's return. The final response of the elder brother is never stated, providing the Pharisees with the opportunity to repent if they are willing.<sup>59</sup>

Meaning, Jesus ends this long story, but really this collection of three parables, with a cliffhanger ending. Jesus doesn't resolve the parable, which he often did not, but this was especially pointed and deliberate. I actually wonder how Jesus' face looked when he was teaching this – who he was looking at, what level of intensity his stare was."

- **7:41: "These are the kind of thorny questions we wrestle with in a space like our living room, and in the rhythm of the lectio process. After we hear the scripture, we think deeply upon it. This is both an internal process, and within a group setting, something that happens together. In lectio, you often share a word or phrase that has stood out to you initially from a first or second reading of the text. Depending on how you are practicing the lectio, you might even dialogue about why that stood out to you. Thus, it would be totally appropriate in the context of this chapter to say, 'Who does the elder brother represent? How does this speak to the Pharisees? Or even more contemporary, how am I Pharisaical? How am I ungrateful towards those whom God extends mercy to, when I think [as the elder brother likely did], that I have been doing all the work?' This step is where we begin to grapple with how the scripture is living and active, and speaks to me. Remember – the step after this one is to respond – to actually have your words be vocalized in prayer, in play, or in worship. We are working through our thoughts in this step of the lectio process. We do so together – not in an authoritative way where one person is the head teacher. You'll notice that this room is not set**

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 234.

**up as a classroom, or with a pulpit. There is not one authority. This deep pondering happens communally. We all are co-equals. This is important within a spatial lectio divina process."**

- 10:31: Lectio # 3 (A Third, Literal, Reading from the Text') - Luke 15:11-32 (NRSV)<sup>60</sup>:

11 Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

- 12:15: (Note: The following is a parenthetical comment I make while doing the Lectio reading focusing on the elder brother). "This is the familiar piece of this parable. And yet the parable is not done. There is a good chunk of it left over, 8 verses left. This is where the parable gets really interesting and really personal. Listen for a word or phrase. In particular, ask the Holy Spirit, 'In what way does the character of the elder brother [resemble how my own] character is towards God; how my heart is towards God; how my emotions are directed towards God?"

25 Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But

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<sup>60</sup> Luke 15:11-32, NRSV.



we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'

- 14:20: Reflection: "There is something profound about the elder brother refusing, stopped in his tracks after a long day of work, unable to engage the rest of the family and the community who was partying at this lost brother's return. I find it profound that the text describes the elder brother as calling his brother not by [his own] name, but rather 'This son of yours!' It's like he disowns him in a similar way to how the younger brother disowned the father when he asked for his inheritance. In a way, I wonder, prayerfully, if the elder brother was responding in his own version as a prodigal. Meditate and think about that. Ponder that. Is that true? If it is, in what sense is it true of you?"
- 15:29: Benediction: "Let he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Let he who has eyes to see, let him see. May we respond to you in kindness, Jesus, as you respond to us. In the name of Christ, amen. May it be so."





*Movement 4 - Oratio (Prayer): Responding in Prayer in the Playroom*



- 0:43: “[Our girls’ playroom] is a space of play, creativity, and freedom, where they can be themselves. That means being messy, leaving paint supplies out, and making beds to watch tv on the weekends. In other words, it is the perfect space to explore the third step in our spatial lectio divina process, ‘Oratio’ (Prayer), which is [better understood] as ‘Responding to God in Prayer.’ It’s a space that indicates a descent. Literally, if you could see behind this wall there is a staircase from the upper level of our little house, all of the ‘adult spaces’ if you will. This [playroom] is the space we have given over to our kids. It’s where we encourage creativity, making messes. This is the place of childhood, of imagination and play, and is the perfect space to explore what it is like to respond to God. Normally, when we conceive of prayer, particularly prayer in a more contemplative way, we either think of listening to God, or more frequently, about the words we say to God. Prayer is much deeper and more holistic than that. And so, with regards to this spatial lectio divina metaphor, we need a place where we can respond to God in prayer as we are.”

- 2:34: “[The playroom] is also a space that is indicative of the space we want to create in our own hearts, where we can be ourselves in our deepest places, and know that God loves us. As Anthony de Mello says, *‘Behold God, beholding you, and smiling.’* This is not what I expect, nor how I conceive of God in the day-to-day. I don’t think of the Community of Love as being a God who primarily sees me and smiles. I think of God as being upset or indifferent, away or angry, ashamed of me, or a thousand other types of condemnation. God looks at His children, in their mess, and says *‘I love you, just as you are.’* My wife and I have a saying that we practice with our girls just before they go to bed, where we tell them just before they close their eyes, *‘I love you just for who you are, not for who you’re not, just be Mia and Clara (their names).’* **This is the mindset or ‘heartset’ that we give ourselves to as we enter into prayer in the [spatial] lectio divina process. As we respond to the listening of scripture that we have allowed to descend into our hearts; as we respond out of a place of meditation and dialogue, conversation and study, we respond [to God] from a place of knowing that no matter what, we are loved. There is space that is needed for this. We need to create space in our gatherings and in our formational practices to do this. I love that in the lectio divina process, there is space to respond to God in prayer.”**
- 5:21: Quoted excerpts (again, which are designated as indented bullet points below in this section of the transcript) from Henri Nouwen’s The Way of the Heart, which is about the contemplative spirituality and formational practices of the 4th century Desert Fathers and Mothers, in particular those of solitude, silence, and prayer:

Hesychastic prayer, which leads to that rest where the soul can dwell with God, is prayer of the heart. For us who are so mind-oriented it is of special importance to learn to pray with and from the heart...We find the best formulation of the prayer of the heart in the words of the Russian mystic Theophan the Recluse: ‘To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you.’<sup>61</sup>

“Theophan the Recluse talks about prayer as being a prayer of descent, from this disembodied, cognitively aware, logical place, to a deeper place within us. I love this idea of a

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<sup>61</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 59.

metaphorical staircase within my soul. I [descend downwards] into my truest self, shedding the layers of who I am not, or who I am pretending to be. Spiritual writers call this formational practice 'taking off the false self.' There I find God, and God is present, incarnated in the Spirit of Christ, dwelling within me, seeing all – and yet [remaining] present. It makes me think of Anthony de Mello!"

Prayer is standing in the presence of God with the mind in the heart; that is, at that point in our being where there are no divisions or distinctions and where we are totally one. There God's Spirit dwells and there the great encounter takes place. There heart speaks to heart, because there we stand before the face of the Lord, all-seeing, within us. We have to realize that here the word heart is used in its full biblical meaning. In our milieu the word heart has become a soft word. It refers to the seat of the sentimental life. Expressions such as 'heartbroken' and 'heartfelt' show that we often think of the heart as the warm place where the emotions are located in contrast to the cool intellect where our thoughts find their home. But the word heart in the Jewish-Christian tradition refers to the source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies. From the heart arise unknowable impulses as well as conscious feelings, moods, and wishes. The heart, too, has its reasons and is the center of perception and understanding. Finally, the heart is the seat of the will: it makes plans and comes to good decisions. Thus the heart is the central and unifying organ of our personal life. Our heart determines our personality, and is therefore not only the place where God dwells but also the place to which Satan directs his fiercest attacks. It is this heart that is the place of prayer. The prayer of the heart is a prayer that directs itself to God from the center of the person and thus affects the whole of our humanness.<sup>62</sup>

- 9:58: Lectio #4 (A Fourth Reading, A Children's Narrative Re-Telling of the Parable, Entitled 'Running Away: The Story of the Lost Son, from Luke 15'<sup>63</sup>):

Jesus told this story about a boy who ran away: Once upon a time, there was a boy and his dad. Now, one day, the boy gets to thinking: *Maybe if I didn't have my dad around telling me what is good for me all the time, I'd be happier. He's spoiling my fun,*

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 59-60.

<sup>63</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*. (Johannesburg, South Africa: Christian Art Kids, 2013), 272-279.

he thinks. *Does my dad really want me to be happy? Does my dad really love me?* The son never thought of that before. But suddenly he doesn't know anymore.<sup>64</sup>

So the son goes to his father and says, 'Dad, I'm better off without you. I can look after myself. Just give me my share of your money.'

His father is sad but he won't force his boy to stay. So he gives his son what he wants. The son takes the money and goes on a long, long journey to a far off country. And everything's wonderful and perfect - for a while. He can go wherever he wants, do whatever he wants, be whoever he wants. He is the boss, he is free! Sometimes he gets a strange, hungry, homesick feeling inside his heart, but then he just eats more, or drinks more, or buys more clothes, or goes to more parties until it goes away.

But soon his money runs out - and so do his friends. He ends up getting the only job he can find: feeding pigs. One day, he is so hungry and so desperate he even tries some piggy food - 'What am I doing?' he says suddenly, as if he has woken from a nightmare. He spits - YUCK! - all of it - ICK! - out of his mouth. 'My father is rich, and here I am - in a pig sty, eating piggy food!'

He wipes his mouth and dusts himself off. 'I'm going home!'

As he starts for home though, he begins to worry, *Dad won't love me anymore. I've been too bad. He won't want me for his son anymore.* So he practices his I'm-Sorry-Speech.

All this time, what he doesn't know is that, day after day, his dad has been standing on his porch, straining his eyes, looking into the distance, waiting for his son to come home. He just can't stop loving him. He longs for the sound of his boy's voice. He can't be happy until he gets him back.

The son is still a long way off, but his dad sees him coming. What will the dad do? Fold his arms and frown? Shout, 'That'll teach you!' And, 'Just you wait, young man!' No. That's not how this story goes. The dad leaps off the porch, races down the hill, through the gap in the hedge, up the road. Before his son can even begin his I'm-Sorry-Speech, his dad runs up to him, throws his arms around him, and can't stop kissing him.

'Let's have a party!' his dad shouts. 'My boy's home. He ran away. I lost him - but now I have him back!'

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<sup>64</sup> In The Jesus Storybook Bible, please note that a character's thoughts are italicized in the text to show internal dialogue. In addition, central characters are omitted (This parable's telling doesn't contain anything about the elder son, for example) to emphasize the central storyline of the entire scriptural narrative. As the subtitle of the Bible suggests, "Every story whispers his name." Additionally, children's narrative elements (Sentence paragraphs, silly wording that is meant to be read aloud by parents to their kids) feature prominently throughout. What is deeply refreshing about this paraphrase of a children's Bible is how accurate the tenor and overall theological thrust of the stories actually are. Anecdotally, I have been amazed at how impactful reading these stories are to groups of adults.

Jesus told them, 'God is like the dad who couldn't stop loving his boy. And people are like the son who said, 'Does my dad really want me to be happy?'"<sup>65</sup> Jesus told people this story to show them what God is like. And to show people what they are like. So they could know, however far they ran, however well they hid, however lost they were - it wouldn't matter. Because God's children could never run too far, or be too lost, for God to find them.<sup>66</sup>



- 14:31: Reflection: "In the words of Anthony de Mello, 'Behold God, beholding you, and smiling.' This is the place [within our heart] that we respond to - out of the mess of our lives, out of the chaos and junk of our selves. In a spirit of play, as a child would - vulnerable and honest, without any pretension - we come home. So, how is the Father inviting you to come home? How is the 'Community of Love' inviting you to join them at the table for a party? What

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<sup>65</sup> As mentioned in the previous footnote, the narrative arc of this telling of Luke 15:11-32 omits the entire section of the parable that builds to the elder son, Luke 15:24-32. Notice in this short paragraph how the author attempts to have Jesus's final words in this story address both sons as a whole, around the provocative question of whether the father wants us to be happy. While I understand the emphasis on the father's embrace of his younger son, especially to younger children, I wish there could be a followup story featuring the elder brother's reaction, which would speak to the envious dynamic present in many sibling relationships. Still, this re-telling is profound!

<sup>66</sup> Lastly, each story within this Bible ends with a focus on Jesus and the central point of the story clearly spelled out. Again, I find this a helpful narrative technique for my own girls.



is the Spirit of the Lord, dwelling within you, in your deep, calling out to you about? How do you need to respond? This is 'Oratio' – Responding to God in a playful space of prayer."

- 15:36: Benediction: "Let those who have ears to hear, hear. Let those who have eyes to see, see. May it be so, in the name of Jesus. Amen."



*Movement 5 – Contemplatio (Contemplation): Resting Reflectively Outside on the Deck*



## CONTEMPLATIO (CONTEMPLATIVE REST)

### MOVEMENT 5 – REFLECTIVELY RESTING OUTSIDE ON THE DECK

- 1:25: “The [Deck] is a real space of life for our family, and for our friends when they come over. It’s a space we seem to end up at more often than not, even when the weather is bad, even when the wind is pumping, we are outside for a bit. I wonder what it is about a deck, or a place with a view, particularly if it is raised a little bit? What is it about those kinds of spaces that draws the human soul? For me, it has to do with (1) [a natural] beauty, (2) a sense of quiet, where I sense that I am in a larger created world than I had previously been aware of as I’ve been sitting behind my desk typing away at my computer for hours upon end. (3) There is a stillness out here, an expansiveness, and a reflectiveness. I know that God dwells everywhere, but [our Deck] feels like a place where God would love to speak to us in.”
- 2:36: “Characters all throughout the Scriptures would come up on mountainsides to reflect, or go [out] to quiet spaces to get away and listen for the voice of God. Jesus himself [practiced this], all throughout the gospels, but particularly as recorded in the gospel of Mark. Right in the beginning of Mark, you first see this thread that appears all throughout Mark’s gospel. In Mark 1:35, after an incredibly intense day of ministry for Jesus, we read this: “Very early in the

morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mk. 1:35).<sup>67</sup> This seemed to be a spiritual practice that Jesus was methodical about. I cannot tell you how many miracles, or miraculous conversations and events that took place throughout the gospels, you find a verse like this either before or directly after Jesus' movement. It's as if Jesus had to get away to regain perspective."

- **4:14: "The Deck is the perfect space for the spatial lectio divina process to end. The fourth step of the Lectio Divina process is Contemplatio ("Contemplation"). My favorite translation for that is 'to come to rest, or to come to quiet.' Where do I come to quiet best? A space like this, even when there is an airplane flying overhead, and the neighborhood is starting to wake-up. Contemplation is a space where we are stop talking again, where we are still, where we reflect and take stock of how the living word of God has spoken to us, inviting us forward, deeper, into a place of true dwelling in our heart. We figure out the next step, if you will. So, the Deck is a place that allows us to look forward, to get perspective, to purpose in our hearts what the Holy Spirit is inviting us to do."**
- **6:01:** "Quoted excerpts (once again, which are designated as indented bullet points below in this section of the transcript) from Ronald Heifetz's Leadership Without Easy Answers, about the reflective practice of 'getting up on the balcony' to gain perspective on a particular adaptive challenge that you are facing as a leader:

Leadership is both active and reflective. One has to alternate between participating and observing. Walt Whitman described it as being 'both in and out of the game.'... Although the principle may be easy to grasp, the practice is not. Rather than maintain perspective on the events that surround and involve us, we often get swept up by them. Consider the experience of dancing on a dance floor in contrast with standing on a balcony and watching other people dance. Engaged in the dance, it is nearly impossible to get a sense of the patterns made by everyone on the floor. Motion makes observation difficult.<sup>68</sup>

(Brief teaching comment): **"Motion makes observation difficult." Those four words could describe both the Contemplatio step in the lectio divina process, and this whole spiritual**

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<sup>67</sup> Mark 1:35, NIV.

<sup>68</sup> Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 252-253.



**practice, and why it has value to practice in a spatial context.** 'Motion makes observation difficult.' Doesn't that make sense of our lives? We live such chaotic, busy, filled, urgent, 'responding to the latest thing' lifestyles. There's such a frenetic-ness to our pace, regardless of where we are, what role we have, and what's on our plate. The idea that we are concurrently observing what we are doing in our life, discerning whether it is the right thing to do, and in the right spirit, is impossible if we don't ever stop.

Motion makes observation difficult. Indeed, we often get carried away by the dance. Our attention is captured by the music, our partner, and the need to sense the dancing space of others nearby to stay off their toes. To discern the larger patterns on the dance floor – to see who is dancing with whom, in what groups, in what location, and who is sitting out which kind of dance – we have to stop moving and get to the balcony...How can one get to the balcony, particularly in an unfamiliar situation, when fast music is sweeping everyone up in the dance?...The right questions can help one get far enough above the fray to see the key patterns. The following diagnostic framework summarizes the reasoning behind the strategic principles of leadership we have explored:

1. Identifying the adaptive challenge,
2. Regulating distress,
3. Directing disciplined attention to the issues, and
4. Giving the work back to the people.

These various diagnostic principles can be distilled into a set of basic questions for gaining a balcony perspective:

1. What's causing the distress?
  2. What internal contradictions does the distress represent?
  3. What are the histories of these contradictions?
  4. What perspectives and interests have I and others come to represent to various segments of the community that are now in conflict?
  5. In what ways are we in the organization or working group mirroring the problem dynamics in the community?<sup>69</sup>
- 11:59: "Final excerpt from Ronald Heifetz's Leadership Without Easy Answers: "Without undertaking an analysis from the balcony, one becomes all too quickly a subject of the dance floor. Yet, however important the balcony may be, it is not a place to retreat. Diagnosis is meant to enable action."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 253-254, 258 .

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 263 .

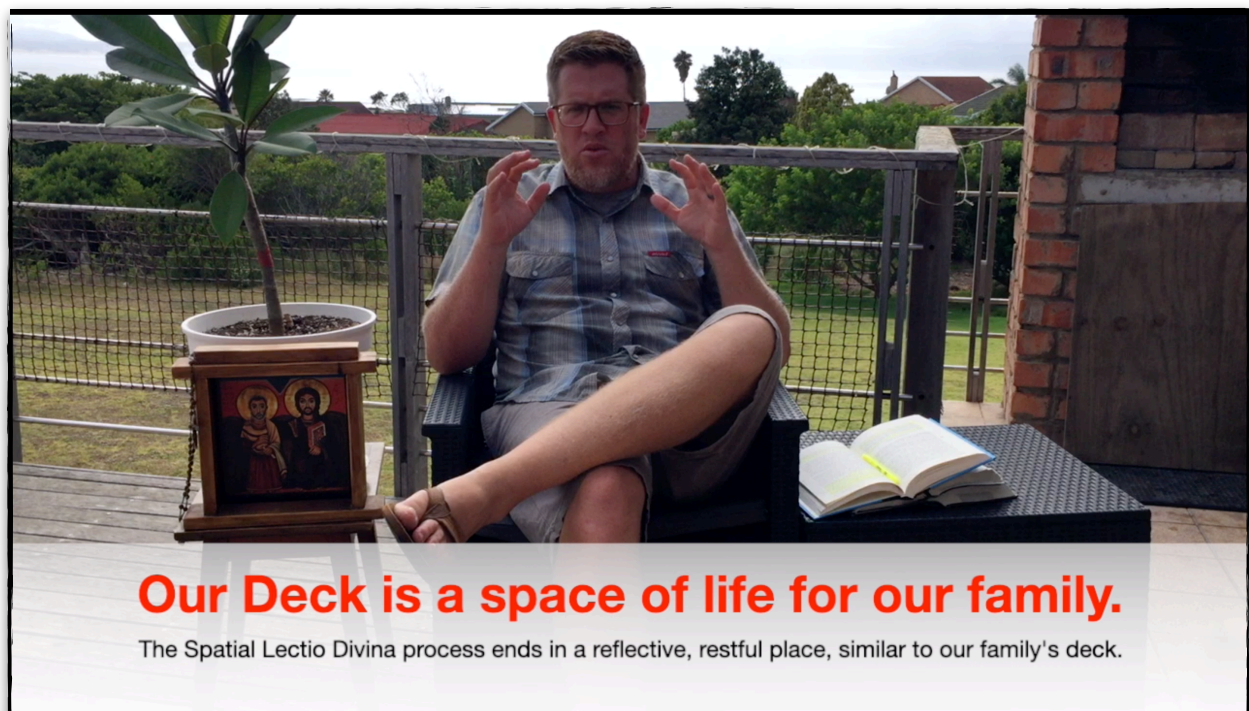
- 12:30: "Final Reflection, Part 1: "That's what the [spatial] lectio divina process, and Heifetz's leadership examen of getting up on the balcony do: We get perspective. We get quiet. We go to a solitary place. We listen. We reflect. We meditate. We ponder. We ask questions. We respond to God in prayer. Ultimately, we come back to a place where we know where we are, and what God is up to, and therefore, how we need to respond. 'Diagnosis is meant to enable action.'"
- 13:36: "Final Reflection, Part 2: "Now, even though we are not on my balcony, I want you the listener, you the reader, you the [viewer] of this short clip, to diagnose with the Spirit what you need to do. What is the Spirit of God inviting you to do in response to what you have seen, heard, meditated upon, and responded to God in prayer about? What's next, basically?"
- 14:13: "Lectio # 2 (A Fifth 'Personal Reading from the Text') – Luke 15:11-32 (NLT)<sup>71</sup>:  
 11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: 'A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. 13 A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. 17 When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'" 20 So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' 22 But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began. 25 Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, 26 and he asked one of the servants what was going on. 27 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.' 28 The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet

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<sup>71</sup> Luke 15:11-32, NLT.

when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ 31 His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32 We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’

- 18:05: Final Reflection, Part 3: “Prayerfully rest in that phrase of the father’s, ultimately of God – ‘Everything I have is yours’ (Lk. 15: 31). Everything ‘I’ – who is before all things, and who will outlast the created existence of all things, ‘I’ have given you everything. Everything that I own, well all of that is yours. What would it look like to rest in that place? To trust from that place? To begin to move as the Spirit of God directs, and calls you forth into deep waters? What would it look like to move out into action, with a clear mind/heart, knowing that ‘Everything God has, is yours?’
- 19:02: Final Benediction: “Let those who have ears to hear, let them hear. Let those who have eyes to see, get up to a space on a balcony – whether actual or metaphorical. May they see clearly what the Spirit of God is doing, and may they have the courage to step forth into action, back into the dance. In the name of Jesus, may this be so. Amen.”



### 3. Curriculum Example – “The Parable of the Three Prodigals (Pt. 1): The Younger Brother”

In particular the first time around, it was challenging both to follow the material that I had prepared for that evening’s spatial lectio divina, while being responsive and flexible to what our cohort members carried with them into our evening gathering. I found myself constantly preparing way too much material, only to realize that we would end up covering 25-50% of what I had ready on paper. Our focus on the younger brother during our November 15th lectio is a prime example. Below you will see over 6 pages of notes, and a process of facilitation through all four stages of the lectio divina process within my home. In reality, we ‘made it’ somewhere into the second or third step, which ironically is how lectio divina frequently functions, as a spiritual practice that isn't about finishing a study, as much as it is about opening the heart to God, ready to respond. I trust that this scope and sequence of an actual night of practicing lectio divina in the same space gives a sense of what was possible as we gathered together.

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#### The Parable of the Three Prodigals (Pt. 1): The Younger Brother Spatial Lectio Divina

##### *Exploring the Younger Brother in Luke 15 using a Model of “Spatial Lectio Divina”*

#### Overview of Spatial Lectio Divina #1: The Younger Brother

- Details: Monday, November 15th, 2021, 18:00pm – 20:30pm (Location: Kamalski home)
- Focus Questions:
  1. What should this story be entitled?
  2. How many prodigals are present within its narrative?
  3. How do you relate to the younger brother’s prodigal journey?
- Scripture: Luke 15:11-32 (Version: *Jesus Storybook Bible* – a ‘child-centered’ reading)
- Formational Practice: A “spatial model of lectio divina”
  - Working NPO project description: The KLC project functions as an experiential ‘*Lectio Divina*’ experience that reflects on the inner world of a leader’s holistic formation unto maturity in Christ, in the hospitable warmth of our home, as several leadership triads move through four ‘spatial environments’ (rooms) designed to draw the heart out of hiding, and into the light of a safe, honest community of formational love.

- Working definition of “Spatial Lectio Divina:” The practice of reflectively listening to and actively responding to God, our friend, as a diverse ‘community of creation’ that is rooted in a particular place, for a specific season.
- Unpacking the spatial metaphor within lectio divina: *“Building off Benner’s expansive concept of lectio divina, my prototype will use four spaces (rooms) within my house as a formational progression into the heart of a leader’s inner world. The four spaces will be created to invite the heart more deeply into a communal experience of the love of God, our friend. They will mirror the classic historical steps of lectio divina in its formational essence”* (My initial description of ‘spatial lectio divina’ in my Prototype Iteration Report)

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### Outline of Spatial Lectio Divina #1: The Younger Brother

#### 1. Listening at Our Table: Dinner and Reflective Listening Conversation

- Purpose of dining table lectio space: *“We will begin at (1) our dining table, as we listen attentively to each other’s stories, in an informal narrative process of shared dialogue as we welcome one another to be present to God, each other, and our own souls, around a common table. Food and drink will be shared together as we gather together as one community.”* (Initial description of ‘spatial lectio divina’ in my Prototype Iteration Report in May 2021)
- Relational Connection: Open conversation since we last gathered, sharing:
  1. *Highs and Lows from the past month of life and ministry*

#### 2. Dialogue in the Living Room: Pondering Deeply the Parable of the 3 Prodigals

- Purpose of living room lectio space: *“We will then sit down (2) in our living room, for the purpose of a more focused period of meditating upon the presence of God, and the Triune Community of Love’s active work within our midst in this current moment. We will ponder deeply a guiding, formational concept that frames our shared space for this time.”* (Initial description of ‘spatial lectio divina’ in my Prototype Iteration Report in May 2021)
- Centering Examen: Two phrases, shared aloud:
  1. *“What I am happy about?”*
  2. *“What is causing anxiety in my heart?”*
- Brief Review: Why we gather as a cohort 3 weeks before December holidays:
  1. *Academically speaking: For Chris’ Doctor of Ministry Project Portfolio with Portland Seminary, as a beta group affectionately called “Kouga Leadership Community”*

2. For our own sake as African Christian leaders in the Kouga Municipality, to discern: *"How to form safe, honest, and sustainable communities of ACLs within a deficient culture of survival"* (a version of my NPO's main problem)
3. To walk through a thorough, formational dive into Luke 15, exploring *"The Parable of the Three Prodigals"* (my creative retitling of the parable of the prodigal son) using a model of *'spatial lectio divina'* over the next 3 weeks until December 2021:
  - a. Lectio #1 Practice: Ignatian Contemplation/Imaginative Prayer  
Focus: Younger Son as prodigal
  - b. Lectio #2 Practice: Inductive Study with Hermeneutic tools  
Focus: Elder Brother as prodigal
  - c. Lectio #3 Practice: Visio Divina (The Role of Art)  
Focus: Father as prodigal
- An excerpt on Lectio Divina: Chris will slowly read aloud; then all discuss:

Dr. David Benner, a psychologist, spiritual director, retreat leader, and prolific author of spiritual formation, defines *'lectio divina'* (Latin, originally meaning 'Divine/spiritual reading') as a prayer of opening the self to God. In his book Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer, he writes:

*"Although it is often treated as a technique, lectio divina is not really a procedure or even a method – at least not a single method. It is more an approach and an expectation. It arises out of a desire to not simply hear the words of Scriptures but also encounter the Word behind the words. At other times and in other ways of engaging with Scriptures we may seek insights, eternal truths and precepts for living. But in lectio divina what we seek is not information or motivation but communion and union. We seek nothing less than God. We attend to the Word as a way of opening ourselves to God and listen for God's living word to us. Lectio divina treats Scriptures not as a text to be studied or a set of truths to be grasped, but as the living Word – always alive and active, always fresh and new.*

*It is, therefore, not so much a way of reading as a way of listening. The listening posture that it encourages is more passive than active. Reading Scriptures in this way is reading (and listening) with heart and spirit open. Don't try to find something or make anything out of the passage. Wait for the gift that God has for you in it. Read slowly and reverentially, savoring what you hear and gently listening for the still, small voice of God that says, 'This is my word for you today.' It is listening for the voice of God, communicated through Scriptures and revealed by the Spirit. It is, therefore, prayer because it is an opening of self to God."*

(David Benner, Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer, p. 40)

- Reflective Discussion Questions:

1. What leaps off the page in your heart and mind as you reflect on how Benner describes the approach and expectation of lectio divina?
2. How is this approach and expectation grounded by our practicing it
  - a. together as a cohort community, and
  - b. gathering in a particular social location, i.e. our home?

3. Prayer in the Playroom: Responsive Prayer as We Consider Our Prodigal Nature

- Purpose of playroom lectio space: *"Next, we will literally descend down our stairs to (3) our girls' playroom (doubling as our family room), as a metaphor for the formational journey downward and inward, from the mind to the heart, which is a core inward movement within the contemplative inner world of a leader. Once there, with a unified childlike spirit, we will respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, and play, as we dialogue more deeply with the Spirit of God, our inner hearts, and each other in honesty."* (Initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report in May 2021)
- Lectio through Ignatian Contemplation (Imaginative Prayer):
  - Principle: Using sanctified imagination to respond to God in prayer.
  - Process:
    1. Quiet yourself in the conscious awareness of God's loving presence.
    2. Ask the Lord for what you desire from this time of contemplation.
    3. Read the selected gospel text, first noticing all the details.
    4. Compose or place yourself in the scene.
    5. Enter into the event:
      - a. Application of the 5 senses (*Hear, Smell, Touch, Taste, See*)
      - b. Play the role of one of the characters
      - c. Be an observer on the scene
      - d. Be a companion one of the persons in the story
    6. Keep yourself engaged in the action listening for God's 'rhema' (*personal word*) for you.
    7. Respond from your heart to the Lord through your contemplation.
- Luke 15:11-32: Lectio read four times from *Jesus Storybook Bible*<sup>72</sup>. In this children's story bible, this parable is entitled *"Running Away."*
  - Note: Please see transcript notes for video series in my project, where this story is annotated in its entirety.
    1. "Plain Reading" – Listen for a phrase
    2. "Phrase Quickens in Me" – Settle on a phrase

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<sup>72</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name*, 272-279.



3. "Wondering Question" - Write a wondering question to God about what you heard; pray from that question.
4. "Prayer phrase" - Write aloud a sentence prayer to God.

- Responsive Prayer:
  - Draw your own picture with crayons of the father running to his son.



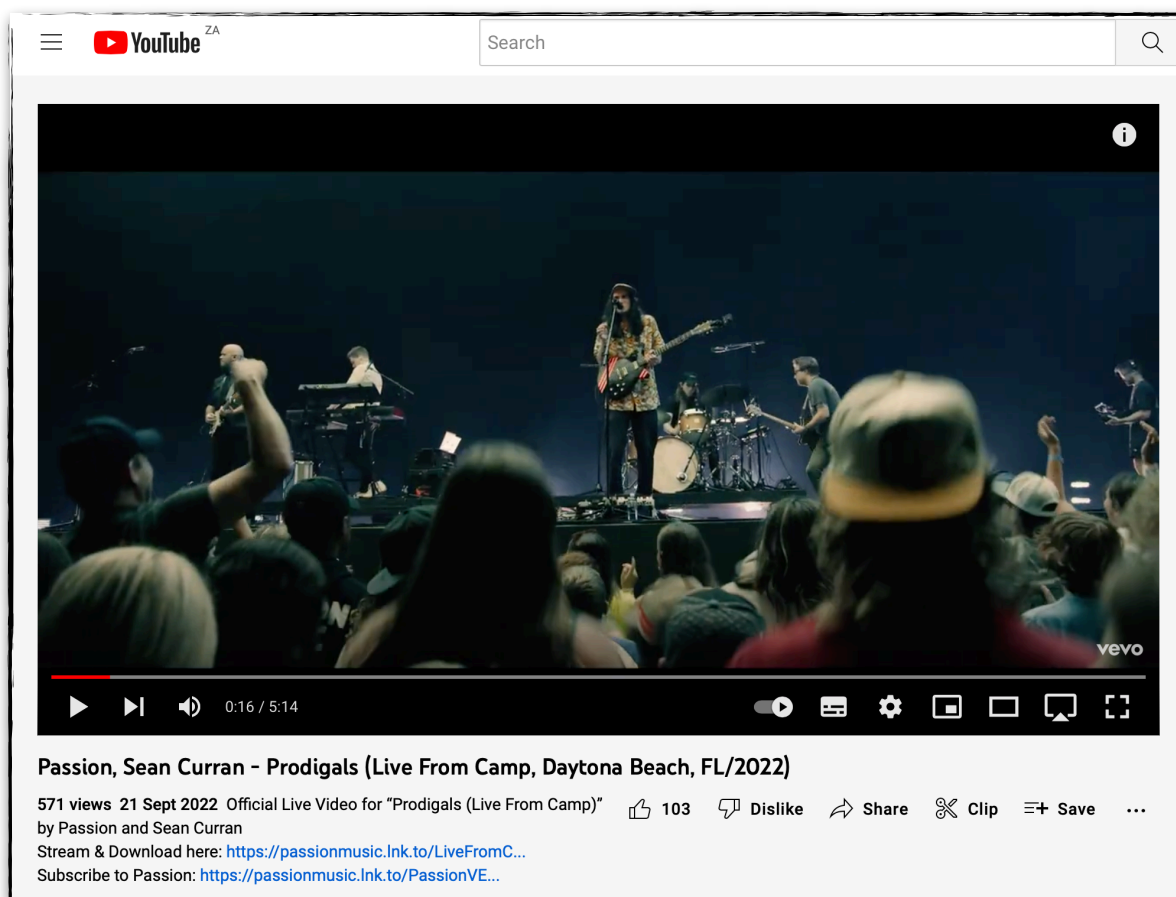
#### 4. Rest on the Deck: Reflective Contemplation as We Listen for Our Next Steps

- Purpose of outside deck lectio space: "Lastly, we will ascend outside to (4) our outside deck, which provides a beautifully expansive view of the Indian Ocean less than a kilometer away. As our gaze lifts upward and outward, we will rest in contemplation of the formational invitations that Christ, our friend, has opened our hearts to throughout this short experience. We will seek to 'gain a balcony perspective on our lives,' to borrow a critical leadership practice from Ronald Heifetz. Together, we will commit to an accountable pathway forward to walk in community, as we mature unto Christ." (Initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report in May 2021)
- Tonight, we'll do this through quiet journaling outside on the deck, as we listen to "Prodigals (Live from Camp)" by Passion Music and Sean Curran<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> "Prodigals (Live from Camp)" video by Passion Music and Sean Curran. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBWDYa7Jks8>.





### *Verse 1*

You know I had my doubts  
 I thought the fire went out  
 But the old winds are blowing, blowing again  
 You know I lost my way  
 And I'm sure I will again someday  
 But there's a whisper calling, calling again

### *Chorus*

This is the sound of a child coming home  
 Hallelujah  
 This is the song of a welcome prodigal  
 Hallelujah  
 I thought I was too far gone  
 But You always leave the light on  
 Praise God, Praise God, Praise God  
 I'm coming home (Yes, I'm coming home)

### *Verse 2*

Thought I was miles away  
 Somehow my vision changed  
 You've been with me, with me all along

Took me a long, long time  
 To finally realize  
 That You never, ever, ever, ever shut the door  
 No, You never, ever, ever, ever shut the door

### *Bridge*

For those who are afraid to come  
 There is no fear in perfect love  
 For those who don't know where to start  
 He always meets us where we are  
 For those with just a little faith  
 A little faith is all it takes  
 He's calling, He's calling  
 If you got caught up in religion's game  
 Then let Him show you the real thing  
 For the skeptic still in search of truth  
 He'll bring that child out of you  
 What are you waiting for  
 He's standing at an open door  
 And He's calling, yes He's calling  
 He's calling, yes I know, yes I know  
 We're comin' home, Yes I'm comin' home

## ASSESSMENT

In Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking, David Bayles and Ted Orland describe the inception of the creative process in a manner I resonate deeply with as I reflect upon and attempt to assess this project. They write, "Imagination is in control when you begin making an object. The artwork's potential is never higher than in that magic moment when the first brushstroke is applied, the first chord struck. But as the piece grows, technique and craft take over, and imagination becomes a less useful tool. A piece grows by becoming specific" (Bayles and Orland, p. 15).<sup>74</sup> I have struggled deeply throughout this NPO process with the specificity required to narrow my project's focus<sup>75</sup>, and ultimately to arrive at the development of a model of spatial lectio divina that was practiced by our beta Kouga Leadership Cohort. My 'work' felt too small and narrow, as if it didn't matter. While I realize this is a false dichotomy, the depth to which my mind cycles through thoughts like this *when all I need to do is keep shaping my piece's specificity until it is complete* still deeply frustrates me on the verge of my project's completion.

Related to this is the resistance I feel within my heart towards measuring benchmarks of success and quality *at all* in the formational development of people. How do you quantify, let alone qualify, how and why a leader is successful? How do you measure accurately the quality of a leader, particularly a leader that develops other people themselves? In some real way, I reject the very premise of this sort of assessment, particularly within the parameters of human development and spiritual formation. There are simply too many nuanced, contextual factors to consider as people seek measurable growth, holistic health, and sustained transformation in their lives. With this said, having noted my principled objection, I now face my benchmarks head-on.

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<sup>74</sup> David Bayles and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* (Santa Cruz, CA: The Image Continuum Press (2001), 15.

<sup>75</sup> If you are questioning whether this is true, please see the final section of the Appendix, where I have catalogued the numerous iterations of my NPO, Project Scope, and Benchmarks (in particular the later!).

### *Benchmarks Measuring 'Success'*

1. *As evidenced by their participation in at least 2 of 3 Monday gatherings throughout November 2021, 75% of initial 8 'beta' cohort members practice the full 4-step 'spatial lectio divina' model together in my home at least twice as a cohort community. An initial dialogue<sup>76</sup> is begun whereby the value of an honest, safe 'third place' for African Christian leaders to belong to one another is interrogated for lasting promise.*

Of my two benchmarks that measure 'success,' this one was a wild victory. Throughout the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort, the 8 cohort members struggled with attendance and engagement of various degrees, often for cultural reasons rooted in an under-resourced system of survival. Cell phones were frequently out of data and so a cohort member was unable to let us know they needed a ride. Other last minute commitments took precedence, even though a verbal covenant to weekly participation in our cohort had been agreed to well in advance. In fact, these sort of tangible struggles – transportation to and from our house, the need to provide dinner for our group after a full work day, the safety inherent in travel to and from neighborhoods that are unsafe at night are all relevant factors that affected my cohort's fully engaged participation. My 8 beta cohort members were all very excited about the spatial lectio divina process and the honest

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<sup>76</sup> By 'an initial dialogue' I am referring to at least two things: (1) the general discernment I had overall throughout the duration of this beta leadership cohort, particularly my sense of whether our cohort was engaging with the process of spatial lectio divina, and (2) the three assessment interviews I completed in January 2022, which feature heavily into my other benchmarks as well. As mentioned in an earlier footnote, and also briefly referenced in my conclusion section, this heavy reliance on dialogical assessment feedback was primarily a byproduct of necessity, as the majority of African cultures are primarily auditory, verbal learners. Written assessment, feedback surveys, or even recorded video interviews would have forced non-English first language speakers into an uncomfortable situation. Most African cultures score high in the honor and shame scale, so ultimately, those I was speaking to would seek to honor my intention, even if they had a different opinion. A deep level of safety, honesty, and trust would have to be present for realistic feedback to be given. Thus, I had to rely on intuition, discernment, and cultural wisdom accumulated over the 13-plus years I have lived in South Africa to help me assess these benchmarks honestly. I'm hoping that I have done so in a sufficient manner at this stage.

I will freely acknowledge, however, that *researching how to properly assess auditory, verbal, non-English first language cultures that are largely under-resourced is a major realization I have come to, and will form a critical portion of my Project Launch Plan for the foreseeable future.*

safety they were experiencing in this group – and still these basic issues of survival and resource were constantly present underneath the surface.

However, upon tallying attendance at the end of November 2021, not only did 6 of 8 (75%) cohort members engage in 2 of 3 'spatial lectio divina' gatherings, but 5 of 6 (83%) had perfect attendance at all 3 gatherings! This means that a three-quarters majority of my cohort practiced spatial lectio divina three times in full together as a community throughout November. In spiritual formation, repetition of practice breeds familiarity, and familiarity opens the heart to transparent honesty, deeper intimacy, and responsive growth in the shared life of a community as they pursue God and one another. In other words – the simple attendance data I kept shows that during the month of November, our 3rd full month as a beta cohort, a majority of our cohort began to truly trust one another deeply enough to *show up* to our gatherings every single time we had one. This is massively encouraging.

Of this majority with perfect attendance, it is notable that *neither of my two male cohort participants were among this majority*. From the beginning, both male participants were spotty. They seemed to engage in dialogue and conversation when present, but their attendance was hit or miss at best, and their communication via Whatsapp was non-existent. Frequently, our cohort was essentially ghosted. One of these two males worked as a Quantum (large taxi bus) driver for LXP, and so there were times where he had other driving responsibilities for work. However, I don't know why he didn't prioritize this time more regularly, given his seeming interest in our group. I will note that this man was dating one of the members of my cohort at the time, and the other male participant was the brother of another female cohort member, so both men had interpersonal pulls to the group that perhaps masked their own personal engagement. By contrast, my female participants were faithful, consistent, engaged, and passionate about growing in this formational practice with one another. The men? Absent with excuse at best, but much more likely to be disengaged and/or disinterested. I need to research why this was the case more deeply, as I have run into this problem with other formational groups I have facilitated before.

I also freely acknowledge that I didn't capture or seek enough ongoing feedback, particularly in a dialogical manner that I could record in some sense, from cohort participants themselves. It was simply too challenging to do so in the midst of trying to facilitate this experience so close to the end of the year. In the assessment of my benchmark measuring quality, I will quote excerpts of *some of the feedback that I received* from three of the core cohort participants during final assessment interviews. However, this in some sense was preaching to the committed. I knew these three leaders were already open and willing to grow in this practice in a communal experience. What I am missing at this point is better qualitative data – even anecdotal statements without much followup or context given – particularly from those who are less committed to the practice of formation within a cohort community. In a sense, this shows me the pathway forward, particularly within the dynamics of my Project Launch Plan.

2. *A four-step 'spatial lectio divina' model of praxis is developed, written, visualized, and filmed for YouTube throughout Fall 2021 that can serve as a potential template for future cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders to practice in their own particular social location. This model's initial promise of success will be made evident by at least 3 'beta' cohort members that participate in January 2022 annotated exit interviews, through the unified, shared articulation of the value of practicing lectio divina in a safe space.*

I'm convinced that the success of this benchmark is self-evident given the entirety of my project submission itself. While many aspects of the spatial lectio divina model of praxis are in their first iteration, and need both refinement and greater specificity to them, as a working model, the simple idea of practicing lectio divina communally with a group of under-resourced African Christian leaders welcomed into my home was deeply impacting. Even though South African apartheid laws have been unwound for almost 30 years, the reality remains that people rarely go into homes of those of a different ethnic, cultural, or social class, unless it is to work. Generally, homogeneity remains the socio-cultural norm. Thus, to simply invite under-resourced, non-white

African Christian leaders into my home to sit at my table as co-equals, sharing dinner together, is radical enough. To intentionally create a shared space of listening, thoughtful dialogue, and communal prayer, is fairly revolutionary.

Additionally, and this is not a small thing, the ultimate quality of this model for under-resourced leaders lies in its simplicity, historicity, and auditory focus. Lectio divina can be practiced without expensive Bibles or other hermeneutical resources. Scripture can be read in your own native tongue, or listened to, and then emerges, taking shape as a conversation is held. For Africans, this is *both revolutionary*, as the Evangelical ethos of a complementarian, patriarchal system is largely normative, *and natural*, as the African cultural perspective, broadly speaking, is communal, other-centered, and focused on the story-centric tools of an oral culture. Lectio divina feels almost immediately natural in this context, even though it is rarely practiced outside of liturgical spaces, which are a minority of the African Christian expression.

Regarding the personal goals of developing this model, a solid first iteration of this model now exists, in both written and image-based formats. Unexpectedly at the time of recording in January 2022, inspiration struck me late in the prototyping process to film myself facilitating an imaginary lectio divina reflection in each of the four rooms in my house that served as a particular metaphorical step in the lectio process. The result is an 81-minute, five-movement facilitated teaching series entitled "[Place Informs Posture – A Spatial Lectio Divina Series](#)," filmed, edited, transcripts annotated, all available on YouTube for free. In other words, version 1.0 of this resource is ready to be distributed and tested for its value in other under-resourced socio-cultural locations. I'm proud of what I have created, and I think there is something simple, and simply revolutionary, in this model. Lectio divina practiced in a particular social location is transformative!

Lastly, I love that lectio divina is a simple practice that centers a slow, out-loud reading of Scripture within a group, inviting a listening posture and corresponding response of vulnerability within a group setting. Relatively little resources are needed, even for those who have comparatively little resources themselves. Possessing a Bible translation, even on one's phone, is more than enough to begin this practice. Again, for auditory, communal, tribal cultures like the

majority of African Christians, the practice of communal listening and shared dialogue is inherent within cultural framework itself. Thus, I remain hopefully optimistic about both the refinement necessary, and the initial promise inherent within, this model's long-term viability as a communal praxis for under-resourced African Christians to engage in themselves.

### *Benchmarks Measuring 'Quality'*

1. *Identify 1 to 2 key leaders within the initial 8 'beta' cohort members that vocalize a desire to deepen their spiritual transformation, and invite them to pursue ongoing personal mentoring and leadership development with me. This openness will be identified through annotated exit interview conversations with at least 3 'beta' cohort members in early 2022, and re-confirmed by these leaders committing to weekly mentoring dialogues with me throughout 2023.*

To properly assess the quality of this benchmark, I thought it best to let the voices and perspective of the three most committed leaders within our cohort reflect on their experience within this project, and whether they saw value in it continuing. The Appendix contains full annotated interviews with each of these three individuals, but for the purpose of this assessment, I have collated several excerpts from each interview, grouped together in like-minded categories. The categories are three in number: (1) the value of gathering together in a safe cohort community, (2) the transformative potential they found within the practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner, and (3) the growth that took place in their lives as a result of being pastored, shepherded, and developed intentionally by an experienced, mature Christian leader (myself). I'm well aware of how pretentious this final category sounds, but the comments in general were too instructive of the value of intentional mentorship of promising, open-hearted young leaders, that I thought it prudent to include in humility.

Firstly, quotations speaking about the value of gathering together in a safe cohort community:



- “This is a group of people sharing life together. It was a place where I received encouragement from others sharing openly. I could be vulnerable and share freely...I was not alone. There was something about [us all realizing together] that we could share our brokenness together. It is powerful when leaders can share in vulnerability and freedom.” (*Blessings L.*)
- “The space and place [we gathered together] matters, as every environment has its own cultural norms. Whether spoken out loud or not, they are here. There are expectations of what to do, and what not to do. For example, at the Leadership Experience (LXP), one value is transparency<sup>77</sup> – your life is an open book and everybody should be able to answer where you are. [With this cohort], we were not going into an existing structure, but instead were part of creating what we wanted this space to be. Like clay without form, we were able to shape it and make it what we want it to be. I can contribute to making it what I want it to be – safe, open, and free.” (*Beatrice M.*)
- “A church environment is very different – for one thing, the entire congregation is there with you. It is a big space. Here, we are no more than ten people, in one small room. This little space is far better than in a big church facility. We are not speaking to a crowd, but seeing personally what is happening to one another. There is more deliberate intimacy in being in the same [shared] space. I can read someone's facial expression, see their engagement, and know a person is with you. This spatial third place creates intimacy within relationship with one another.” (*Zaida M.*)

Secondly, excerpts about the transformative potential they found within the practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner:

- “I loved [spatial] lectio divina – it taught me how to read the Scriptures slowly, to meditate on them in a specific manner, and to pray through a specific text.

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<sup>77</sup> By transparency here, Beatrice M. means availability.

To see Scripture in a different light was transformational...It made me realize that we need to spend more time [within the Scriptures]. Being able to hear Scripture over and over helped me to listen better, creating a pathway in my brain to create a picture of what was actually happening. Practicing lectio divina helped me understand the value of creating a space for someone."

*(Blessings L.)*

- "There is a dignity in eating together – I'm neither receiving nor giving, I am in a co-equal space. When I speak, I am valued. I am not disadvantaged. I need to created space to help me grow, to push me outside of my comfort zone and force me to think outside of the norm. I need a variety of minds to do this."

*(Beatrice M.)*

- "The rhythm of lectio divina was so freeing to me. There are requirements in the Muslim culture<sup>78</sup> of how to read, where to read, and when to read [the Koran]. In this structure, the freedom refreshes and revives me. This was something I grew immensely in, in even two seconds. I think more people need to know about this sort of practice...People are in their own comfort zone, and they need to be invited deeper." *(Zaida M.)*

Thirdly, reflections on the growth that took place in their lives as a result of being pastored, shepherded, and developed intentionally by an experienced, mature Christian leader (myself):

- "You, Chris, are concerned for us, and so you make us feel comfortable by asking good questions. Out of these questions, we are free and comfortable to share in vulnerability. We could be vulnerable in a shared space." *(Blessings M.)*
- "Chris, you invited this space through posing questions – 'What do you think?' was often [your] response as to me as the one who asked questions. When you [entered this space] with questions, it allowed us to form our own answers. I felt, 'I thought about it, therefore I am a part of it.'" *(Beatrice M.)*

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<sup>78</sup> Zaida M. was raised within a Coloured family that were practicing Muslims. When she came to Christ, she did so at great familial cost.

- “This cohort, particularly the setup of the whole environment – playing with your kids, cooking a meal together, interacting as friends – invited me to bring my true self.” (*Zaida M.*)

What more can I say, even if I had made up these excerpts? (*I did not*). The Spirit of God met all three of these committed followers of Jesus, who have clear leadership gifting in their lives, and a call to engage in holistic Kingdom work, in the midst of this deeply imperfect experience. Even typing their reflections into this portion of my project gives me the chills once again. God is actively engaged in the development and formation of under-resourced Christian leaders, and I am grateful to participate alongside the Triune Community of Love, facilitating a safe, transformational, shared practice of *lectio divina* in the same social location.

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As a short postscript, I should add that as of this project's due date (February 2023), two of three leaders (Blessings L. and Beatrice M.) have enthusiastically committed to weekly mentoring dialogues with me over milkshakes each Friday afternoon, *as soon as I finish this project*. In other words, they are waiting on me! I'm sure Zaida M. will be interested as well, as soon as I go and visit her in Humansdorp, the next town over. Good things are coming in 2023!

## MILESTONE 6: PROJECT LAUNCH PLAN

Early within *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*, David Bayles and Ted Orland's ruminate on the process of creating art out of a vision that is birthed within you. As I sketch out a strategic plan for the vision that is still emerging within me, their words ring true with a prophetic sense of urgency. Bayles and Orland write, "You learn to make your work *by making your work*, and a great many of the pieces you make along the way will never stand out as *finished art*. The best you can do is make art you care about – and lots of it! The rest is largely a matter of perseverance"<sup>79</sup> (Bayles and Orland, p. 6, *italicized words their own*). Taking their counsel literally, what follows is my Project Launch Plan, the vast majority of which is in its current short-term iteration, as of February 2023.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### NPO STATEMENT:

How can a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders grow into the most transformative environment for a person to be formed and empowered holistically?

#### ULTIMATE<sup>80</sup> PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The ultimate, long-term project I will develop to address my NPO is to create a formational development center for under-resourced African Christian leaders (ACLs), situated in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa. I want to help African leaders find their voice with courage and dignity through the creation of this holistic space. This will take place slowly, deliberately, and with deep discernment over the next few decades. My desire is to birth a sustainable space for uniquely African

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<sup>79</sup> Bayles and Orland. *Art and Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> In creating this Project Launch Plan, I realized that I cannot initially have detailed development plans for my project beyond my short-term goals, which I have defined above as being contained to the rest of the 2023 calendar year. It simply isn't realistic nor possible given my other work responsibilities, the need to increase my salaried income and begin raising donor support for these existing ministry opportunities. Thus, 'ultimate' beyond this project description section, refers to my short-term goals within 2023.

formation, holistic development, higher theological education, community engagement, and discernment of one's vocational calling to take place. Ultimately, this space will become permanent in some form, a beautiful place of rest nestled within a South African province (the Eastern Cape) that is currently under-served and ill-resourced to transform the nation, let alone address its own systemic problems of poverty, unemployment, and lack of sustainable educational systems. How will I do this initially? Over many years, I will refine the framework of a new model of spatial lectio divina within small cohorts of under-resourced Christian leaders that I have created through this project, and develop strategy from there.

The medium-term aim of this project, nestled over the next 3 to 5 years within the long-term vision, is to solidify and ultimately publish the practice, related curriculum (written, audio, and visual), and overall learnings of spatial lectio divina from the learnings of several cohorts of under-resourced ACLs that I have facilitated. This will likely take on several forms, including a book, professional video and audio curriculum, as well as written formational guides that under-resourced leaders can easily contextualize in their own social-spatial locations. Again, how will I do this initially? Over several years, I want to discern and freely offer this holistic formational curriculum as a developmental resource to at least two other under-resourced communities, one within South Africa, and another in an international context as is prudent. I will also explore how to offer this cohort experience to leaders within greater positions of power within the church, NGO, and educational worlds.

The short-term (within the calendar year of 2023) goal of this project is the same as the medium-term goal, but within at least one beta cohort offered for under-resourced ACLs within my own local context. Similar to the medium-term aims of this project, I want to discern and freely offer this holistic formational curriculum as a developmental resource to an under-resourced community within my own home in Jeffreys Bay, and potentially a second one within the wider Kouga Municipality, most likely the town of Humansdorp twenty minutes away. My goal here is to facilitate this (these) beta cohort(s) of 8 to 12 ACLs for six months of this year, developing an initial

strategy to research, assess, and evaluate the needs and potential of under-resourced Christian leaders in a measurable manner. Audacious but possible, no?

## AUDIENCE

My ultimate target audiences will consist of two groups of African Christian leaders:

1. A cohort that serves low to mid-level, under-resourced African Christian leaders, primarily within a church, NGO, or educational setting (Short-Term Goal in 2023).
2. A potential second cohort that serves mid to senior-level African Christian leaders, often lead or associate pastors within churches, as well as leaders who manage teams within an NGO or educational setting. (Short to Mid-Term Goal begun by mid-2024).

The reason I am differentiating between these two groups is to ensure the creation of a safe, transparent, honest space for each particular leadership group. Although I personally don't want to perpetuate systems of hierarchical, often patriarchal leadership, I am aware of the cultural realities of how deeply embedded this form of leadership is within African cultures (particularly Christian ones). Thus, at least within the short to medium-term goals of this project, these cohorts will remain distinct from one another. I am hopeful that this could shift over time.

This is how I plan to connect with my initial short to mid-term intended audience, collaborating with others as I develop my project:

- Initially, continue to meet weekly on Friday afternoons for milkshakes with Blessings L. and Beatrice M., both committed leaders from my first beta Kouga Leadership Cohort, mentoring and developing them as leaders as they discern their next steps vocationally. I will invite them to lead this cohort alongside me.
- Prayerfully ask Blessings and Beatrice to identify 6 to 10 other leaders that can form the second iteration of a beta cohort for low to mid-level Christian leaders in Kouga.

- Once leaders have been invited, cast vision for this project for the next 6 to 8 months, asking leaders to commit their engagement for this timeframe. Invite leaders to begin meeting weekly from June to November 2023.
- *(Mid-Term Vision)*: Prayerfully begin to reach out to local pastors in the area, beginning with Pastor George Mwanza of iThemba Church, and discern whether there is desire from mid to senior-level leaders in Kouga to covenant together for a second beta cohort to be launched at some point in the last quarter of this year onwards (September 2023 or later).

### DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This is the development roadmap to execute the short-term goals of my project in 2023:

#### SPECIFIC MILESTONES (PHASES) COMPLETED:

- Phase 1 (Preparation): To refine spatial lectio divina curriculum, and then invite a beta cohort of 8-12 under-resourced African Christian leaders to gather together for a period of six months, beginning in June 2023.
- Phase 2 (Execution): To facilitate and empower a safe, transparent, welcoming space for the inner-world development of 8-12 under-resourced African Christian leaders to gather together, ideally within my own home, for a period of six to eight months, from April through November 2023. I will seek to facilitate this space with Blessings L. And Beatrice M. as much as is possible.
- Phase 3 (Evaluation): I will create a mid-year (*August*) and year-end (*November*) assessment rhythm that involves the dialogue and collection of evaluative feedback from cohort participants in a tangible, empirical manner. Methodology 1 will be ready by mid-year (August 2023); Methodology 2 will be ready by year-end (November 2023).



### KEY GOALS (DELIVERABLES) ARTICULATED:

- Goal 1 (for Phase 1): To meet weekly on Friday afternoons with Blessings L. and Beatrice M., beginning Friday, February 24th, to listen to, dialogue with, and empower them as Christian leaders, with a particular emphasis initially on discerning how God may be inviting them to partner with me in the facilitation of at least one of these beta cohorts.
- Goal 2 (for Phase 2): (2a) To launch a second beta iteration of the Kouga Leadership Cohort in June 2023, for a period of six months, with at least 6 to 8 local leaders present and committed to this cohort's developmental life span. (2b) To train and empower Blessings L. and Beatrice M. to co-facilitate the cohort with me each week, so that there is a plurality of leadership speaking into the creation and development of this cohort from the very beginning.
- Goal 3 (for Phase 3): To research, develop, test, and then assess at least two methodologies for how to most effectively evaluate human-centered transformational change within communities of under-resourced leaders. In particular, I'd like to focus my efforts here on researching the opportunities currently present for female African Christian leaders to be empowered within South Africa. I will dialogue with other leaders about how to best employ effective methodologies in the evaluation of the developmental transformation taking place within the female leaders in our cohort.

### CLEAR ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS (KPIs):

- Benchmark 1 (for Goal 1): As evidenced by the frequent rhythm of our weekly Friday dialogues, in particular if we have met together at least 3 times a month, Blessings L. and Beatrice M. will gain clarity and conviction in their personal vocational call and formational journeys as leaders, being able to articulate *what God is inviting them to co-create in 2024*.

- Benchmark 2 (for Goal 2): As Blessings L. and Beatrice M. are empowered to co-lead our second beta Kouga Leadership Cohort with me, they will identify and recruit 8 local leaders who will commit to participating in the Kouga Leadership Cohort for a period of at least six months, beginning in June 2023.
- Benchmark 3 (for Goal 3): Two distinct methodologies will be contextualized and used in assessment of the beta cohort's developmental transformation as leaders, one in August 2023, and the second in November 2023. As evidenced by (3a) the actual data collected in these two evaluative periods, and (3b) the lessons learned from interpreting what data is actually collected, recommendations for further evaluative assessment will be made at the end of 2023, to be implemented starting in 2024 with future cohort iterations.

#### REALISTIC TIMELINE ESTIMATES FOR EACH GOAL:

- Goal 1: To prepare for the launch of a second beta Kouga Leadership Cohort.
  - Initial Timeframe: Weekly Friday afternoon milkshake dialogues, every Friday from February - April 2023. Evaluate readiness for cohort launch in May 2023, with the goal of launching cohort in mid-June 2023. Continue weekly dialogues with a more personal focus from May 2023.
- Goal 2: To facilitate a second beta Kouga Leadership Cohort.
  - Initial Timeframe: Weekly time *to be determined* (likely afternoon weekday or early evening weeknight for ~ two hours), beginning in June 2023 for a period of at least 6 months, through November 2023.
- Goal 3: To research and evaluate two effective methodologies for assessing the potential transformation taking place in under-resourced African Christian leaders, particularly those who are female.

- Initial Timeframe: *Ongoing throughout the year*. Two periods of actual assessment, one in mid-year (*August 2023*) and one at year-end (*November 2023*). Although research in particular will be ongoing throughout the year, two methodologies for actual assessment must be identified, contextualized, and actually used for assessment with cohort participants during mid-year and year-end periods. Attention will be paid to methodologies that effectively empower and assess female leaders in South Africa.

### DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

I have described some of my intended development process in the earlier sections of this Project Launch Plan. However – and this feels both like a cop-out as well as an honest assessment of where I currently am in the iteration of this project’s development process – I don’t have deeply specified particulars at this point that relate to my development process. By contrast, I mostly have ideas and wonderings. So, the following is a short list of the ideas and wonderings I currently have that I *may use* to continue to evaluate my project, gather data, and make further improvements after launch in a realistic and executable manner:

#### PROCESS FOR EVALUATION AND DATA GATHERING:

- Speak to at least three leaders by June 2023 who have worked in the transformational development of under-resourced Christian leaders, particularly within South Africa. Current contacts that I can think about speaking to include Luc and Petunia Kabongo (Soshanguve), Lusanda Mashua (Cape Town), and Adri-Marie Van Heerden (Sedgefield).
- Research the whole-life mentoring community model that Dr. MaryKate Morse, my program's Lead Mentor, and current Executive Dean of Portland Seminary, has been trained in. Speak to someone within Leighton Ford Ministries that Dr. Morse knows who has worked in the development of under-resourced Christian leaders.

- Read 1-2 books or academic articles on developing under-resourced leaders and take notes about the various methodologies that have worked for these writers.
- Develop, contextualize for use within our beta cohort, and then actually implement an evaluative process that we undertake as a cohort mid-year, in August 2023. Figure out how to record this information, what method actually works (oral dialogue assessment?), and what has never been tried. Then, begin to experiment!
- Dialogue with Blessings L. and Beatrice M. about what worked, and what failed spectacularly. in our first evaluative period. Make adjustments for the second half of the cohort life cycle (September to November 2023) and try to collect data a second time.

#### PROCESS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS AFTER LAUNCH:

- I am unsure on this, to be honest. What I can say at this point is that I will create space in December 2023 to evaluate our assessment efforts in 2023, in order for us to take a more refined, helpful approach beginning in early 2024.

## APPENDIX A—MILESTONE 1: THE NPO CHARTER

### PERSONAL RESEARCH MANIFESTO

Through seeking to understand through first listening deeply, while acknowledging one's humanity, I will dialogue thoroughly with African leaders, for the purpose of discerning, sustainable, mature, and innovative formational development.

### NPO STATEMENT

How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?

### NPO SCOPE

I will focus initial discovery scope on two primary groups of maturing African leaders:

1. University students and young adult professionals in their early 20's to mid 30's from Philippi, a Cape Flats township area outside of Cape Town. Most young adults will be isiXhosa speaking as a primary first language, with the majority having relocated from the Eastern Cape.
2. Secondary students from Grade 8 upwards at Ubuntu Football Academy, a boarding school for South African males focusing on football skill development in an educational setting. Ubuntu is located in Masiphumele, a township 45 minutes outside of Cape Town.

### NPO CONTEXT<sup>81</sup>

Stakeholders agreed that the context that would create the greatest catalytic change was as follows: Older African generations, as the reality of elders speaking wisdom into younger generations has been largely lost and diminished, and younger African students, Grade 8 or earlier. This was surprising to me, as I was initially focused on university-aged and young professional adults primarily, and those who worked to develop them (NPO, church, and

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<sup>81</sup> I have borrowed my NPO Context almost word-for-word from the Key Insights taken away from my initial Discovery Session. The rationale for this at this early stage is due to how strongly unified my Stakeholders were in their belief that the recovery of a healthy sense of African identity and vocational calling was only possible if an intergenerational approach was taken that sought to reunify the African family across generations young and old.

education leaders). There was a unified sense that young African leaders need to be 'de-Westernized' and decolonialized, empowered to rediscover African ways of living in the world, in particular regarding the recovery of a black African identity and vocational calling in the world. This rediscovery is unable to be attained apart from the reunification of the African family across generations, and the seeking of wise counsel from elders that has been lost or never mined for its inherent value.

#### ROOT CAUSES<sup>82</sup>

1. The process of vocational discovery and identity formation has in large part been lost within young African leaders due to systemic injustices (in South Africa, the effects of apartheid continue), and the reality of living in a survival-driven environment where the need to make money to live is a daily struggle.
2. This can be countered by empowering older African generations (parents, elders, sages) to teach and empower younger African generations to discover their own unique black African identity, and corresponding sense of vocational calling and voice.
3. There are little to no physical spaces, developmental processes, or formational methodologies that exist for older and younger African generations to interact and discover their sense of self together. This wisdom is buried and must be rediscovered. A massive hurdle to this discovery process is one's perceived level of intelligence, often determined by how well one speaks English as a primary language.

#### DISCOVERY SESSION STAKEHOLDERS

1. Community Development professional
2. University student training to become a therapist
3. Two Former Community Development colleagues who are entrepreneurs and co-owners of a restaurant franchise.

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<sup>82</sup> Similar to the NPO Context, I have borrowed initial Root Causes directly from my One-on-One Interviews, as the insights were again profoundly helpful in speaking to central root causes. My research will flourish by beginning in this rooted place, as defined by African voices themselves.

### ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

1. Lecturer in Practical Theology and Developmental Coach
2. Doctor of Missiology and Director of InnerChange Africa, a missional order among the poor across Africa
3. Recent theological graduate and waiter at high-end fish restaurant

### ACADEMIC RESOURCES

1. Key (African) Academic Fields: African identity, Postcolonial African identity, African vocational calling, Intergenerational African reunification across families, The sense of place within African identity.
2. Key Scholars: Parker Palmer, Martin Luther, Simon Maimela, David Wilhite, Thomas Oden.
3. Key Theological Resources: Image of God as a source of identity for Christians, Vocational calling within the Church throughout history, The nature of work as a creatively participative act.



## APPENDIX

### DISCOVERY SESSION DESCRIPTION

On November 14th, 2019, I conducted my Discovery Session at Philippi Village, an entrepreneurial hub operating out of a large township in the Cape Flats, 20 minutes outside Cape Town. Four South Africans participated in an illuminating dialogue, including two females, a 36 year-old, Afrikaans, mother of two, who is a community development professional, as well as my wife, and a 20-year-old, isiXhosa university student, who is an orphan desiring to become a therapist for her community. Additionally, two males, both former community development colleagues, entrepreneurs, and co-owners of a growing restaurant franchise in Philippi. One is a 28 year-old isiXhosa man, single and unmarried, and the second is a 30 year-old isiXhosa man, married, and a father of two.

I initially met everyone in 2012 through work with a local NGO that focused on community development, including running a small high school for orphaned teenagers, where I served as chaplain and bible teacher. My wife and I have taught, disciplined, and mentored these friends for years, and are deeply invested in their holistic leadership development. For 2 1/2 hours, a robust, slow, and wide-ranging dialogue took place, often at length between the four participants themselves as I listened in, silently participating in a fascinating cultural exchange 25 years after the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, where Nelson Mandela was elected President, and the formal structures of apartheid were permanently abolished. The following report describes our conversation in brief.

### DISCOVERY STATEMENT

Considering intergenerational Africans (Audience), we've discovered that Africans have been told who they are as human beings and as leaders by outsiders, resulting in an inherent lack of identify and personal self-worth (value) (NPO), which is caused in part by little to no sense of personal agency, rooted in systemic injustices thrust upon them over generations (Root Cause).

If addressed, it would mean a fresh reunification of the African family, which would in turn create space for older and younger African generations to find their own vocational identity and unique African voice (Outcome).

#### KEY INSIGHTS FROM DISCOVERY SESSION

1. Stakeholders agreed that the audiences that would create the greatest catalytic change were as follows: Older African generations, as the reality of elders speaking wisdom into younger generations has been largely lost and diminished, and younger African students, Grade 8 or earlier. This was surprising to me, as I was initially focused on university-aged and young professional adults primarily, and those who worked to develop them (NPO, church, and education leaders).
2. There was a unified sense that young African leaders need to be 'de-Westernized' and decolonialized, empowered to rediscover African ways of living in the world, in particular regarding the recovery of a black African identity and vocational calling in the world.
3. This rediscovery is unable to be attained apart from the reunification of the African family across generations, and the seeking of wise counsel from elders that has been lost or never mined for its inherent value.

#### ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW DISCOVERIES

1. The process of vocational discovery and identity formation has in large part been lost within young African leaders due to systemic injustices (in South Africa, the effects of apartheid continue), and the reality of living in a survival-driven environment where the need to make money to live is a daily struggle.
2. This can be countered by empowering older African generations (parents, elders, sages) to teach and empower younger African generations to discover their own unique black African identity, and corresponding sense of vocational calling and voice.

3. There are little to no physical spaces, developmental processes, or formational methodologies that exist for older and younger African generations to interact and discover their sense of self together. This wisdom is buried and must be rediscovered. A massive hurdle to this discovery process is one's perceived level of intelligence, often determined by how well one speaks English as a primary language.

### SYNTHESIS

A significant felt need exists to re-awaken a uniquely African identity, in particular a black African identity, across the African continent, changing the mindset of future African leaders from a young age. This identity formation must be centrally defined by older African generations, with an emphasis given to doing so in non-English speaking first languages. A transformative opportunity is re-emerging for developing African leaders to stop being told by outside influences what their core identity is as Africans, and instead to be empowered to discover their own sense of self, made unique in the Image of God. This will happen through listening to elders, an inward journey of personal identity formation and vocational discovery as black African leaders, and appropriate tools to mature as such. Primarily, the need is to recover a sense of personal agency and power, both in the identity formation process as black Africans, as well as in the vocational discernment process. A key factor in the sustainability of this endeavor across Africa is that Western concepts and testing methodologies need to be re-contextualized and decolonialized, placed within an African context in a fresh manner.

### NEXT STEPS

Additional Discovery Sessions and One-on-One Interviews of key African voices would be helpful, as much of the wisdom inherent in this process is oral in nature, brought to life in safe, exploratory conversations, primarily amongst Africans themselves, where I take a listening posture. This is a key perspective I need to remember. Initial areas of research to focus on include:

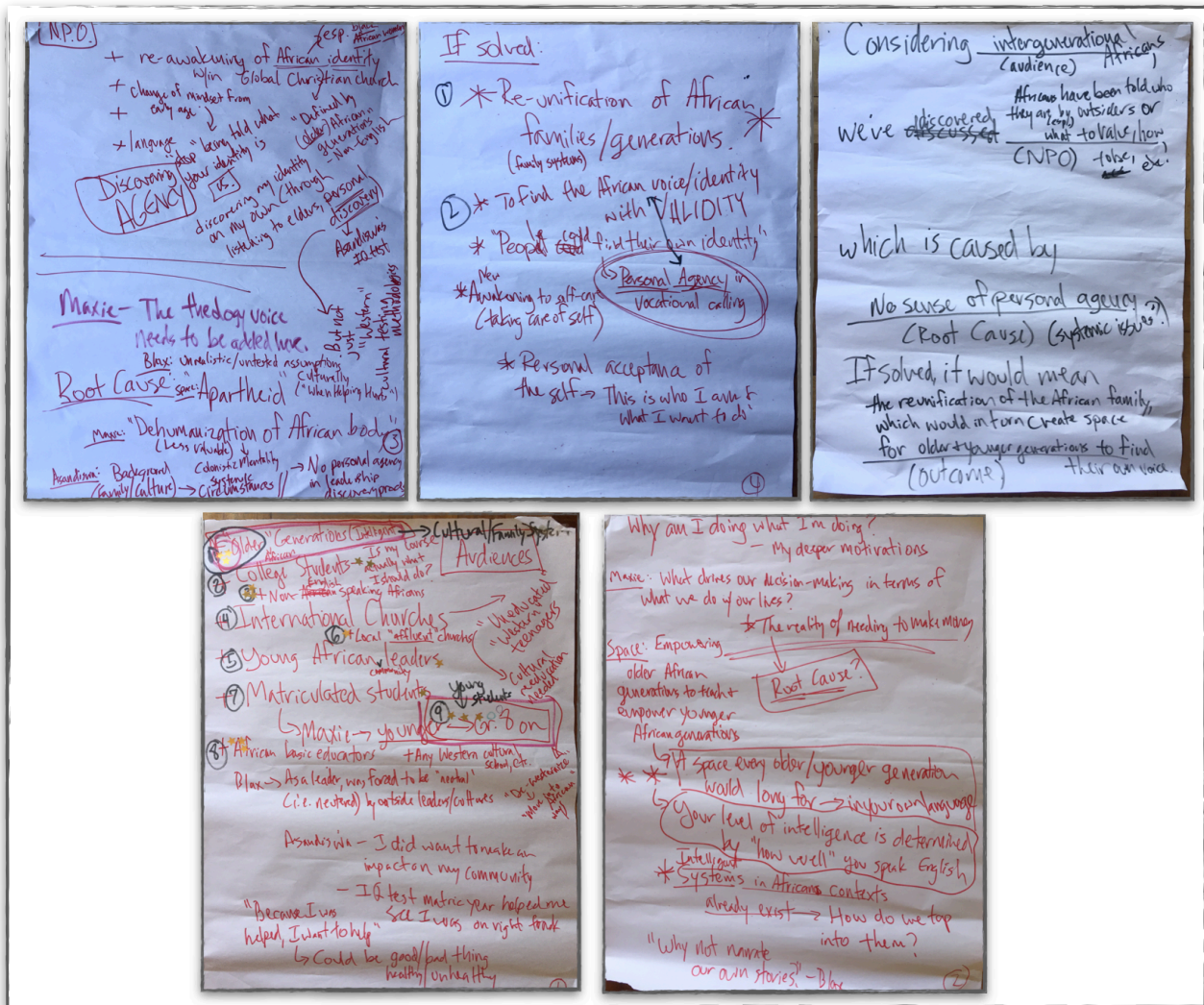
1. The African identity, sense of self, and relationship to an emerging vocational calling (in particular within black Africans)

2. The affects of colonialism, apartheid, poverty, and Western influence in media, education, and culture in muting the unique African voice.
3. The Image of God and its relationship to vocational calling. In other words, how does a maturing sense of self inform what one does with one's life as a leader?
4. Intergenerational reunification amongst Africans, and how this can affect the educational systems and developmental processes of African leaders.

Images from Discovery Session, from top to bottom, left to right:



1. Introduction and personal background as to why I am researching this NPO.
2. Same moment as first image, but from a side-angle.
3. Estraweni Mobile Foods, the restaurant two of my Stakeholders have begun. The university student in the picture was our other participant and a dear friend.
4. A graduate of Cape Town Biblical College, where I lecture, and a super helpful one-on-one interview. From the Democratic Republic of Congo originally.



Images from Discovery Session, continued, from top to bottom, left to right:

- Notes on potential Audiences for NPO.
- Continued notes on potential Audiences for NPO.
- Notes on potential NPO and Root Causes.
- Notes on the question of what would change if my NPO was solved or addressed.
- Revised Discovery Statement at the conclusion of our Discovery Session.

APPENDIX B—MILESTONE 2: NPO TOPIC EXPERTISE ESSAY

ROOTING VOCATIONAL CALLING IN THE HUMANITY OF THE IMAGE OF GOD  
IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS

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## INTRODUCTION

The African church is persistently under served, ill-resourced, and mis-developed; in particular as holistic, healthy Christian leaders who live from a mature, rooted understanding of their vocational identity in Christ. Acknowledging the global church's historical complicity in this systemic injustice is a complex topic that necessitates robust listening and nuanced dialogue, more so than this essay allows. Nonetheless, the global church has a unique responsibility to restore human vocation to its intended core meaning within the life of African Christian leaders: that of a maturing human being, rooted in the identity of one's unique voice as designed by God, coming fully alive into their most natural self as an Image-Bearer of our infinitively creative God. In light of this opportunity, the questions that frame my NPO, and thus this entire essay, are as follows: How has vocational discernment taken place historically in a healthy, holistic, sustainable manner (Has it ever?)? In this present cultural moment,<sup>83</sup> how is the global church invited to form, equip, mature, and empower seasoned African leaders to live out their vocational calling as the Imago Dei (i.e. their most natural selves, created with vocational intention and a creative mandate to partner with God) within this world? Most critically, within ongoing systemic systems of poverty, racial injustice, gender inequality, pervasive unemployment, and sustained economic disadvantage, how will holistic, mature African leaders flourish fully as human beings, for a global good?

Stanley Hauerwas, senior research professor of theological ethics at Duke University Divinity School, suggests an anthropological perspective that addresses all three questions with a fascinating simplicity: The maturation process in Christ of learning to become fully human as the Imago Dei lies at the intersection of these interconnected problems. In a theological essay entitled "God and Goodness," Hauerwas writes "To learn to follow Jesus is the training necessary to become a human being. To be a human being is not a natural condition but requires training.

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<sup>83</sup> This essay was written in August 2020, months into the the global COVID-19 pandemic. According to <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>, as of August 20th, 2020, over 22.43 million confirmed cases, over 787,773 confirmed deaths, and the worst global recession since the Great Depression are ravaging the world, with no imminent relief in sight. Truly, the entire world is changing on a historical level before our very eyes.

The kind of training, required, moreover, has everything to do with death. To follow Jesus is to go with him to Jerusalem, where he will be crucified. To follow Jesus is to undergo a training that refuses to let death, even death at the hands of enemies, determine the shape of our living.”<sup>84</sup> Becoming fully human in Christ, as God intended upon creating us in the image of the Trinity, is a lifelong process that requires deliberate training, reflection, and responsive spiritual formation, throughout the whole of one’s life. Ironically, developing throughout one’s life into a mature human being, the Image of God fully realized within one’s soul, is not automatically guaranteed. It requires consistent choice to become such a holistically formed person. Paul describes this formational process as one by which human beings “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>85</sup> Extending the metaphor further while using the imagery of human development, he writes that “then we will no longer be infants...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”<sup>86</sup>

This essay will seek to root humanity’s core identity as the *Imago Dei* within the framework of a holistic, historical understanding of the vocational calling of human beings by God to become their most mature, natural selves. Vocation is discerned through a relational dialogue between God and humanity that leads to a gradual awakening to the path one is to walk throughout life. This process of discernment takes place within the communal context in which a person lives, works, and roots their life. Slowly, as Christ is formed within one’s soul in maturity, human beings become empowered and released for holistic service and missional engagement within the Kingdom of God, flourishing fully in their vocation as Christian leaders. Parker Palmer, the great Quaker author who has been deeply influential within the Protestant church in writing on vocation, describes this formational journey in the following manner: “As I learn more about the seed of true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted – the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively,

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<sup>84</sup> Ruth W. Grant, *In Search of Goodness* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2011), 101.

<sup>85</sup> Ephesians 4:13b, *NIV*.

<sup>86</sup> Ephesians 4:14a, 15, *NIV*.

accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself.”<sup>87</sup> The communal ecosystem this essay is directed towards is that of African Christian leaders, and the challenges and invitations before them to mature into as full human beings who are leading sustainable formational efforts in Christ across the world.

## SECTION 1: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Dr. Gregory Mobley, professor of Hebrew Bible and Congregational Studies at Andover Newton Seminary writes, “The task of theology is the linking of our individual story to the biggest story we can imagine.”<sup>88</sup> Rachel Held Evans, a powerful author who wrote of the beautiful complexities within the Scriptural narrative just prior to her tragic death in May 2019, frames Mobley's idea within the epilogue of her own theological work: “If the biggest story we can imagine is about God’s loving and redemptive work in the world, then our lives will be shaped by that epic.”<sup>89</sup> If this maturing connection between one’s fragmented perspective on life and the larger redemptive narrative God is writing into human history is in fact true, Held Evans may be onto something deeply profound: that human beings are intentionally formed and matured into this epic story that God is telling. Life involves the task of making sense of the fragmented, often contradictory elements of the human sub-stories within God’s larger narrative, widening our perspective as the Spirit of God grows our own formational development in a holistic manner. By first acknowledging that our perspective is limited and incomplete, we seek to understand how the Scriptural narrative transforms the human story, and thus our place within the unfolding history of the Kingdom of God in this world. This posture of listening, responsive humility to the God who speaks creation into existence, is where we must begin.

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<sup>87</sup> Parker Palmer, *Let My Life Speak* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 17.

<sup>88</sup> Gregory Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters: And Other Backstories of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 6.

<sup>89</sup> Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2018), 218.

### *Vocational Calling Rooted in the Image of God*

The aforementioned paragraph answers a thorny initial question, namely: How does one address a critical developmental concept such as the reality of humanity's vocational calling being rooted within the Image of God? If vocation as currently conceived within the post-Christian world is not found explicitly within the ancient Scriptural narrative, what weight, if any, do we give to it as a motivating factor within Christian spiritual formation in 2020? As Mobley observes, we do so by linking fragmented stories to a larger narrative. Employing a horticultural metaphor, we graft the offshoot of vocational calling, an important, but implied concept that is not found explicitly within the biblical text, into the larger branch of the nature of the Image of God growing within the human soul. In so doing, vocation is rooted within a more significant, foundational idea that is both central to the Scriptural narrative, and explicitly present throughout the text: that of how the Trinity partners with (and within) us to grow the Kingdom of God in our midst. It is towards this embedded idea within a core biblical text that we now turn our attention.

### *Textual Discussion on the Nature of the Image of God in Genesis 1*

#### Genesis 1:26-31: The Core Text<sup>90</sup>

There are at least eighty references to the words image and images throughout the Scriptures. However, Genesis 1:26-31 alone, a central passage in the first pages of the Bible, roots the Image of God within the created nature of humankind. A swelling crescendo of the first of two Hebraic creation accounts found within the initial chapters of Genesis, Genesis 1:26 succinctly defines the nature of humanity being created in the image of God: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air,

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<sup>90</sup> The final paper I wrote to graduate in December 2008 with my seminary degree, a Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care from the [Institute for Spiritual Formation](#) at Talbot School of Theology, considered this very topic. Entitled "*God's Intention: Humanity Created in the Image of God*," it has served as a guiding theological concept and core Scriptural passage that I have used to orient my life and ministry for the past 12 years. This passage will be the anchor Scriptural text I will discuss throughout this essay, although I will make reference to a number of other passages at various points. I am grateful for the prior effort I gave to this work, and how it has informed this Topic Expertise essay.

over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”<sup>91</sup> A series of profoundly central foundations for human formation are rooted within this one creative declaration by the Triune God. Several will be discussed in greater detail.

Firstly, God is triune in nature, and humanity has been spoken into existence (literally, “God-breathed” into life) through this shared relational union. Barker and Kohlenberger III describe this union as that of “One God [who] created humankind through an expression of his plurality,”<sup>92</sup> out of which the historical Christian doctrine of the Trinity (God the Father, Son, and Spirit) developed. Critical to note here is the relationality of the Trinity being embedded within the nature of being human. In other words, humans uniquely reflect the Image of God, which is communal in nature. Therefore, to be human is to be relational by intentionally created design.

Secondly, there is clearly divine intent in establishing a relational partnership with (and ultimate submission to) this Trinitarian Godhead, uniquely intrinsic within the soul of humanity, among the entire created order. Bruce Waltke supports this view of the cooperative partnership in mankind’s relationship with God, arguing that the biblical author’s shift to Hebraic poetry from narrative prose in Genesis 1:27 deliberately “highlights God’s creation of humanity as God’s image bearers. The truth expressed here undergirds all of Genesis...Humanity is uniquely shaped by the hand of God.”<sup>93</sup> Diane Chandler echoes the purposeful distinction of humanity within the created order, concluding that “although all creation has its origin in God, only humankind is made in God’s image.”<sup>94</sup> Later, she strengthens her own point by noting that theologian Claus Westermann “observes that God made a concerted decision to create human beings, which was neither casual nor haphazard.”<sup>95</sup> Chandler summarizes this concerted decision by tying God’s

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<sup>91</sup> Genesis 1:26, NIV.

<sup>92</sup> Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, eds., *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 6.

<sup>93</sup> Bruce Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 67.

<sup>94</sup> Diane Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wellness* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 29.

<sup>95</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion, in *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wellness*, 29 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1984), 144.

creative choice to humanity's ability to uniquely respond to the divine: "Humankind being fashioned in the image of God implies the capacity for relationship with and responsiveness to God."<sup>96</sup> As we will see in discussing the nature of human beings having dominion over the created order, this responsiveness entails a relational co-laboring in the creation mandate we have been gifted with to responsibly cultivate as Image-Bearers of God. To state it plainly, both a lion and a giant sequoia tree bear significant semblance of being created, living beings, sitting atop their respective biological classes, reflecting true aspects of creative capacity of God. However, humanity alone is able to respond to God in growing awareness of its relationship with, and representation of being made in the very likeness of the Triune Godhead.

Thirdly, to what extent does humanity bear the Image of God? Chandler asks, "Did God create humans to be an imitation of God's character and nature, God's representatives on earth, or God's counterpart?"<sup>97</sup> Alexander and Baker wonder if "the fundamental question is whether image should be taken in an ontological sense or as simply a functional term. Is humankind like God, or does it only serve him as his agent?"<sup>98</sup> The text itself further muddies the waters, as there are two different Hebrew words in Genesis 1:26, *selem*, translated 'image,' and *demut*, which is translated as 'likeness.' Tom Smail, senior visiting research fellow at King's College, London, argues that *selem* was originally used in the context of pagan gods and kings that represented on earth the name and power of a god who ruled in heaven, acting in the image of that god.<sup>99</sup> Historically, the rulers of a nation alone were elevated to the status of divinity. By contrast, Genesis 1:26 posits a radically different notion: Normal humans possess the divine creative mandate to represent God by imaging him in their daily lives. This was a revolutionary idea within human development within the Ancient Near East. The reality that the author of Genesis was arguing that this honor was actually bestowed on all humanity, regardless of gender, power, wealth, or political title, was

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<sup>96</sup> Chandler, 31.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>98</sup> T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 442.

<sup>99</sup> Tom Smail, *Like Father, Like Son: The Trinity Imaged in Our Humanity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 45.

profound in its audacity. Smail agrees with this conclusion, writing “Adam, Everyman, is created in the image of God and has the calling and the dignity of being his representative.”<sup>100</sup>

Fourthly, if all of humanity bears the calling and dignity of being his representative, as Smail asserts, what does this representation actually look like? Biblical theologians refer to this as the functional, or dominion, view of humanity as the *Imago Dei*, “recognizing the empowerment of humankind to superintend the earth’s resources and creatures, as evidenced by God’s directive in Genesis 1:26-30.”<sup>101</sup> The emphasis is on what humanity does to co-create, cultivate, and give rule to the world that God is making. Genesis 1:28 itself answers this question of representation as God declares that humanity is to “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves along the ground.”<sup>102</sup> Key to this text is a holistic look at the nature of subduing and ruling over the earth. A brief survey of several other English translations help fill out an initial understanding. To subdue the earth and rule over includes having “dominion”<sup>103</sup> over it, “reigning [and] governing”<sup>104</sup> the earth, owning the reality that humanity has “power over [the earth], under your control”,<sup>105</sup> and perhaps the most natural sounding, to “be responsible for [and] take charge of”<sup>106</sup> the earth’s care, stewarding all things towards goodness and life that that is flourishing. The *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* (NRSV) suggests that “The divine intent was that human beings should take responsibility for the earth (‘have dominion’) in union with God, and that together they would progressively bring about the condition on earth that God had envisioned.”<sup>107</sup> Richard Middleton (in Chandler’s words) summarizes the dominion perspective of the Image of God in

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<sup>100</sup> Smail, 45-46.

<sup>101</sup> Chandler, 36.

<sup>102</sup> Genesis 1:28, *NIV*.

<sup>103</sup> Genesis 1:28, *ESV*.

<sup>104</sup> Genesis 1:28, *NLT*.

<sup>105</sup> Genesis 1:28, *GNB*.

<sup>106</sup> Genesis 1:28, *MSG*.

<sup>107</sup> Richard J. Foster, ed., *The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible, New Revised Standard Version with Deuterocanonical Books* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005), 1.



humankind well, describing it as “superintending all of the non-human world, earthly life and its institutions, including politics, education and the arts.”<sup>108</sup>

### *Synthesis of the Image of God Within Vocational Calling*

Tim Mackie, Old Testament scholar and co-founder of The Bible Project encapsulates the concept of humankind as the Imago Dei most holistically, however. Notice in the following passage the relational cooperation and shared cultivation that takes place between God and human beings who are fully empowered into their lives as creative Image-Bearers of the Triune Godhead. Beginning in an unfinished, not-fully perfected garden in Genesis 1 and continuing throughout the entire narrative sweep of the Scriptures, culminating in a vibrant, unified, flourishing city in Revelation 22, God is continually empowering mature, responsible, loving people who are coming alive as Image-Bearers. Mackie is onto something deeply profound, namely the holistic integration of mature human beings, flourishing as Image-Bearers as they cultivate their vocational calling in union with God, for the good of the world. It’s worth quoting him in full:

God makes humans, or *adam* in Hebrew, in ‘his image,’ a concept that has to do with their role in God’s world. They are made to be reflections of God’s character out in the world, and they are appointed representatives to rule God’s good world on his behalf. They are to harness this world’s potential, to care for it, and to make it a place where they can multiply and flourish. God blesses the humans – a key theme in [Genesis] – and gives them a garden from which they can begin their task of building the world.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Richard J. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, in *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wellness*, 36 (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 29. Middleton’s argument is summarized by Chandler in her own words.

<sup>109</sup> Tim Mackie, *Read Scripture: Illustrated Summaries of Biblical Books* (Portland, OR: The Bible Project, 2017), 2.

And just what will these humans do from their first breath, throughout all of eternity? The final chapter of the Scriptures provides an intriguing glimpse into the future vocational identity for humanity: *"They will reign forever and ever."*<sup>110</sup>

Thus, how does a holistic understanding of the Image of God rooted deeply in the nature of humankind connect to the concept of vocational calling? Colin Gunton ties it together well, concluding that "Likeness to God consists in the fact that human beings are persons, while the remainder of the created world is not."<sup>111</sup> Quoting my 29 year-old self, I find my initial conclusion even more startlingly relevant today: "To be human is to be made in the Image of God. If one is not made in the Image of God, one is not human."<sup>112</sup> If being made in the Image of God is the unique distinction that matures a person into their full humanity, then the question becomes, towards what end? And more critically, how and where does this maturing take place? Addressing the former question involves learning the formational rhythm of discernment of God's voice, which leads slowly towards an awakening to one's vocational call within the wider Kingdom of God. In other words, as human beings learn to listen, discern, and respond to God, we become our most natural self, and our vocation (literally, our voice) becomes clear. Answering the latter, this holistic maturation takes place within the communal context in which we live a rooted life. Our community defines the tenor and direction of God's voice within our souls. We hear, and then respond, from the garden in which we are planted. Therefore, it is only natural to turn towards the nature of vocation first, and then the wider environment in which we are planted.

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<sup>110</sup> Revelation 22:5, *NIV*.

The Greek word for reign in Revelation 22:5 is transliterated "basileuo." On <https://biblestudytools.com>, Joseph Thayer's 2017 Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament entry for "basileuo" defines reign in the following manner: "meaning to be king, to exercise kingly power, to reign: (a) of the governor of a province, (b) of the rule of the Messiah, (c) of the reign of Christians in the millennium. As a metaphor, it is used to exercise the highest influence, to control." Accessed at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/basileuo.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 208.

<sup>112</sup> Chris Kamalski, "God's Intention: Humanity Created in the Image of God." (La Mirada, CA: Institute for Spiritual Formation at Talbot School of Theology, 2008), 7.

## SECTION 2: TOPIC HISTORY AND KEY VOICES

To understand vocation as a concept rooted in the nature of the Image of God within humanity, it is crucial to consider how the meaning of vocation has shifted throughout human history. The definition of a word gives language to a structural framework that is building as a society develops its inherent sense of self at a particular moment in time. Jane Dawson, professor of Adult Education at St. Francis Xavier University, writes in *Adult Education Quarterly* that "Particular words and expressions often become emblems of symbolic power where tacit assumptions about social experience are embedded and contested. By examining the trends associated with changing usage over time, it is possible to get a sense of changing worldview and the inevitable inconsistencies and ambiguities that go along with such changes."<sup>113</sup> Dawson's point is a necessary framework for the development of vocational calling throughout history: We must pay attention to both the common meaning of vocation within a particular historical period, and how that definition has informed the larger cultural development within society.

### *The Development of Vocation Throughout History*<sup>114</sup>

The postmodern, largely Western, post-Christian understanding of vocation in 2020 is radically different from the concept of vocation in the Ancient Near East, thousands of years ago, as the Scriptural narrative was unfolding. As previously mentioned, the word vocation isn't directly found in the Scriptures. Jane Dawson clarifies this well: "Vocation is, in its origins, a term with deep religious roots and associations. One of the earliest usages of vocation is connected to the

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<sup>113</sup> Jane Dawson, "A History of Vocation: Tracing a Keyword of Work, Meaning, and Moral Purpose," *Adult Education Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (May 2005): 222, [https://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/fui76t/TN\\_cdi\\_dipf\\_primary\\_690941](https://alliance-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/fui76t/TN_cdi_dipf_primary_690941).

<sup>114</sup> I have chosen to greatly expand the topic history section of this paper, and to include key scholars and practitioners of vocation throughout. The concept of vocation is intrinsically linked with its development throughout history, in particular the church's shifting belief in what vocation is, over the past two millennia. With that said, neither the exhaustive history of vocational development, nor the inclusion of all relevant authorities on the subject, made it into the final version of this essay. In some sense, this is purposeful, for it raises the idea that vocation is an ongoing, shifting concept that can become something better in our day.

Christian monastic tradition established in the Middle Ages.”<sup>115</sup> It was only developed hundreds of years into the Church’s existence, initially as a Latin phrase, *vocatio*, referring primarily to the monastic call of monks and nuns. Therefore, how is the concept of vocation understood within the Scriptural narrative? In essence, it is strongly implied through the usage of how human beings are called by God into loving relationship, and towards the completion of a particular vocational mission within the Kingdom of God.

#### Vocation in the Scriptures: Called by God<sup>116</sup>

In the Scriptures, both Hebrew and Greek verbs translated ‘to call’ are the closest words associated to vocation in English. Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word ‘Qara’ carries the following contextual meanings: “to call, to cry (for help), to proclaim, to read aloud, to summon, to invite, to call and commission, to appoint, [or] to give name to.”<sup>117</sup> A common example of its usage occurs in 1 Samuel 3:8.<sup>118</sup> In this one verse alone, Yahweh calls the boy Samuel because God has a prophetic message for him to convey, Samuel mistakenly thinks that Eli the priest was beckoning him, and ultimately Eli realizes that God was actually speaking to Samuel. This young boy will become one of the most significant prophets throughout the Old Testament, ultimately instrumental in naming David, King of Israel. Samuel is literally called by name, and in responding to God’s voice, is given a vocational purpose – a Kingdom mission that he alone is uniquely able to fulfill – that propels him forward for the rest of his life. Eli experiences a deeply personal call by God as well, through Samuel, towards the conviction that his family will experience judgment as a result of his sons’ blatant sexual immorality and continued poor

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<sup>115</sup> Dawson, 222.

<sup>116</sup> Sub-headings throughout the section “The Development of Vocation Throughout History” are adaptations of William Placher’s sections on vocation throughout church history, as found in *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation*.

<sup>117</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Los Angeles: Snowball Publishing, 2011). Accessed at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/qara.html>.

<sup>118</sup> In 1 Samuel 3:8 (NIV), ‘Qara’ is used in three distinct ways. The verse is as follows, with ‘Qara’ italicized: “The Lord *called* Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, ‘Here I am; you *called* me.’ Then Eli realized that the Lord was *calling* the boy.”

choices. Contextually, calling here includes actual communication from God to humanity, as well as a deeper sense of the prophetic nature of listening in discernment when God has a word of exhortation for an individual or community.

The Greek verb 'Kaleo'<sup>119</sup> is used in a similar manner throughout the New Testament and is defined much the same as 'Qara'. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received,"<sup>120</sup> using 'Kaleo' as an edification to spur the local church towards a deep witness that is worthy of the matchless invitation God has given to them. The Ephesian church is to step fully into its Kingdom calling, a mandate arising from the initial call to faith by God that they responded to. After this verse, Paul then spends the rest of his epistle instructing them on how to live out their vocational calling as mature saints equipped for holistic ministry. Thus, calling in this context entails both a relational invitation by God, and a particular responsibility towards a specific work.

In Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation, William Placher summarizes the dual Scriptural focus on calling simply: "When the Bible talks about 'call' or 'vocation,' it characteristically means a call to faith or to do a special task in God's service."<sup>121</sup> Biblically, vocation involves two invitations: to respond internally towards God in relationship, and to respond externally towards the work God has placed where one is rooted. Humanity's posture remains the same in both, for "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...It is the Lord Christ you are serving."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded With the Numbering System from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (West Nyack, NY: Parker Publishing Co., 2017). Accessed at <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/kaleo.html>.

'Kaleo' can mean anything in the New Testament from "to call aloud, to invite, to call by name, to receive the name of, [or] to bear a title." As is readily apparent, a contextual understanding of calling is critical to its correct hermeneutical usage.

<sup>120</sup> Ephesians 4:1, *NIV*.

<sup>121</sup> William Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 4.

<sup>122</sup> Colossians 3:23-24, *NIV*.

### Vocation in the Early Church: Called to a Christian Life

Throughout the first several centuries of the Church's existence, Christ-followers were a small minority largely found within the dominant empire of the day, the Roman Empire. The majority of Christians professed Christ as adults and rooted within a local faith community (often a house church, or small group of Christ followers that grew out of the local Jewish synagogue). Making such a significant decision as an adult often involved a deliberate choice to break from one's family, previous religious life, and at times, one's prior occupation, as all three could be hostile towards a new life centered on Jesus as Messiah. Quoting Placher here is clarifying:

Their response to their call (in Greek, *k/lesis*) made them automatically outsiders to most facets of society, uncomfortable with its standard forms of entertainment, unable to share much of its social life...in the Roman Empire, where most Christians lived, refusal to perform the sacrifices of the imperial cult was technically illegal. Even if the risk of torture was usually small, being a Christian meant the possibility of arrest, torture, and death. Thus the fundamental vocational questions for Christians or potential Christians were initially, first, should I be a Christian? and, second, how public should I be about my faith?<sup>123</sup>

In 313 AD, Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, which made Christianity an accepted religion within the Roman Empire, and things began to shift quickly. Within a decade, Jesus-followers transitioned from persecuted to the official religion of the empire, and an increasing number of converts realized that the Christian faith provided a new opportunity for advancement within society. As Christians wrestled with this newfound ease in confessing Jesus as Lord, Christianity no longer involved such a sacrificial consideration. A growing number of Christ-followers fled the Roman Empire for lives of radical solitude and silence in the desert as a result, eventually becoming known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They "found their callings in lives of radical self-denial that preserved the dramatic challenge of Christianity."<sup>124</sup> Bruce Shelley, professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Denver Theological Seminary, agrees with

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<sup>123</sup> Placher, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 6.

Placher's assertion: "The hermit often fled, then, not so much from the world as from the world in the church."<sup>125</sup>

Father Antony (215-356 AD), considered the first Desert Father, is widely attributed by Athanasius, who wrote his autobiography, *Life of Antony*, to have encouraged all burgeoning ascetics to pursue their vocational calling through going home to "'Sit in your cell,' where the full meaning of what you had heard would slowly dawn on you. Indeed, the cell itself, its silence and protection against distraction, would be your teacher."<sup>126</sup> Thus, for early Christian ascetics, the central vocational invitation from God was to a life of solitude and silence, set apart from cultural corruption, ever deepening the pursuit of holiness in Christ. Vocational calling unto Jesus became known in opposition to empire once more, although opposition didn't involve government persecution as much as a personal conviction to resist temptation and creeping cultural compromise. This perspective continued into the Middle Ages.

#### Vocation throughout the Middle Ages: Called to a Religious Life

Beginning in the early Middle Ages, vocation began to take on a significantly different connotation. Coinciding with the rise of Latin as the official language of the Roman papacy, *vocatio* was known as "a term used to describe a call away from the world of productive activity in order to dedicate one's life to prayer and contemplation."<sup>127</sup> Sharon Beder, a professor at the University of Wollongong, echoes this definition: "A 'vocation' or 'calling' originally referred to the work of monks, nuns and priests who served God by removing themselves from daily life and serving the church."<sup>128</sup> As a carryover from both Greek and Roman thought, contemplation was

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<sup>125</sup> Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 118.

<sup>126</sup> Philip Rousseau. "The Desert Fathers, Antony and Pachomius," in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, SJ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 121.

<sup>127</sup> Dawson, 223.

<sup>128</sup> Sharon Beder, *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 14.



held in high esteem as an end unto itself, the life of contemplative prayer and reflective thought apart from the mundane demands of daily work an ethos to aspire to in one's life.

This was particularly true for Christians who were wealthy, powerful, and privileged, as the choice to send a family member off to a life of celibacy in a monastery or convent was conceivable because they didn't need to toil away in farming or trade for their family's survival. Slaves, manual laborers, and within the domestic household, women, carried most necessary work, allowing the privileged (normally men) to pursue a contemplative vocation of the mind and heart unto God. This was somewhat mitigated within monastic communities due to the necessity of manual work to help the community function, but the belief persisted as the desire for contemplative prayer deepened. Again, Dawson is helpful in understanding just how pervasive this belief was, arguing that "The value of work, beyond its practical necessity, was as an ascetic discipline for furthering one's contemplative capacity. The idea of work as a source of personal satisfaction or material gain in its own right was discounted."<sup>129</sup>

Benedict of Nursia (480-547 AD), the father of Western Monasticism, and author of *The Rule of St. Benedict*, a fundamental 6th-century text that created a structure for monastic communities to flourish through the vocational work of fixed-hour prayer, was instrumental in developing the idea of contemplative prayer as a central monastic vocation. As Diana Bass observes, "Benedict noted, 'To pray is to work, to work is to pray.' Hence the idea of fixed-hour prayer as *opus dei*, or 'the work of God.'"<sup>130</sup> Throughout the centuries, this spiritual practice became widely adopted. This practice led to the development of liturgy within local churches, the rhythm of fixed-hour prayer within the home, and by 1100, the carrying of hand-copied, pocket-sized books that contained the means of this vocational contemplation. Over time, fixed-hour prayer as *opus dei* became possible for lay people within their daily lives, and normal

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<sup>129</sup> Dawson, 223.

<sup>130</sup> Diana Bass, *A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 106.

Christians found themselves adopting an “essentially monastic form of piety.”<sup>131</sup> The vocational distinction of monastic life – once separate – now influenced the masses once more.

### Vocation in the Shadow of the Reformation: All Work is a Calling

During the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, vocation, in large part due to the work of Martin Luther and John Calvin, once again underwent a seismic shift within the global church. To some extent, Luther and Calvin were influenced by broader cultural forces across late medieval Europe, as the continent began to transition from feudal, agrarian societies into increasingly entrepreneurial, urban communities. The nature of work within European culture itself was shifting, and a greater sense of personal ownership of one’s vocation began to influence the type of work one pursued. However, Luther’s criticism in particular “was highly critical of what he saw as the corruption of the formal hierarchy of the Catholic Church, including the monastic orders. Luther argued ‘that a divine calling could be followed no matter what one’s occupation. Thus elevated, non-religious work was no longer a punishment but was, in Luther’s thinking, something sacred to be enjoyed.’<sup>132</sup>” To say that Luther’s perspective on work was a revolutionary idea within the established Church would be an understatement.

Miraslov Volf, in his seminal book on the subject, Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work, summarizes how influential Luther’s thinking on vocation became in the 16th century.

Quoting him in full is illuminating to see the development of Luther’s theology of vocation:

[Luther] came to hold two interrelated beliefs about Christian vocation: (1) *all* Christians (not only monks) have a vocation, and (2) *every type of work* performed by Christians (not only religious activity) can be a vocation. Instead of interpreting *vocatio* as a call of a select group within the larger Christian fellowship to a special kind of life, Luther spoke of the double vocation of every Christian: spiritual vocation (*vocatio spiritualis*) and external vocation (*vocatio externa*). Spiritual vocation is God’s call to enter the kingdom of God, and it comes to a person through the proclamation of the Gospel. This call is common to all Christians and is for all Christians the same (“*communis et similis*”). External vocation is God’s call to serve God and one’s fellow

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<sup>131</sup> Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>132</sup> Beder, 15. Quoted by Jane Dawson in “A History of Vocation: Tracing a Keyword of Work, Meaning, and Moral Purpose,” *Adult Education Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (May 2005): 222-223.

human beings in the world. It comes to a person through her station in life or profession (*stand*). This call, too, is addressed to all Christians, but to each one in a different way, depending on his particular station or profession ("*macht din unterscheid*").<sup>133</sup>

Given how universally Luther's convictions on vocation have been accepted within the Protestant church writ large, it is challenging to convey the degree of controversy these simple ideas would have first created. Luther was upending the entire hierarchy and established power structure of the Catholic church, in particular the papacy, for the last millennium. In protesting the grave abuses of the Catholic church, returning to a belief in justification by faith alone, simultaneously he was re-imagining the very nature of the vocation of the priesthood itself. Now, the priesthood comprised all believers. No longer was sacred and holy work limited to the religious office alone, or to monastic orders removed from secular culture. *All*<sup>134</sup> were permitted to join God's Kingdom, and *all* were able to find purpose within their daily work. God also called followers to find mission within their 'station' (occupation, place of residence, or circumstances in life). For Luther, Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church to "remain in the situation (Greek: '*klesis*,' translated 'calling' or 'vocation') one was in when God called a person"<sup>135</sup> would shift everything. As William Placher writes, "In his German translation of the Bible, Luther at that point translated '*klesis*' as '*Beruf*,' the ordinary German word for an occupation. (A standard German application form would say, *Name, Vorname, Beruf* – Last Name, First Name, Occupation). Thus for Luther your "calling" was first of all your job."<sup>136</sup> Literally, vocation became a new word in German and a fresh concept for the Church as a whole.

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<sup>133</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers: 2001), 105-106.

<sup>134</sup> All in Christian Western Europe in the 16th century largely meant Caucasian men, often of privilege. Rare exceptions were made for female leadership, but only in monastic convents. Society was patriarchal, ethnocentric, and skewed to the wealthy. Women, the poor, and most ethnic groups that were not White were excluded from this designation.

<sup>135</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:20, *NIV*.

<sup>136</sup> Placher, 7.

John Calvin<sup>137</sup> and other Protestant theologians, in particular those of the Puritan tradition, furthered Luther's development of daily work as a divine vocation throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, in particular as the Industrial Revolution grew more robust across Europe. As global economic markets expanded, urbanization and technological innovation grew, and the political world order shifted once again, work more broadly within culture as a whole began to take on a new clarity. Hard work, diligence, and self-disciplined living, which ultimately came to be known as the 'Protestant work ethic,' came to increasingly define vocation both inside and out of the Church. Both Luther and Calvin argued robustly against a lingering cultural force from the Middle Ages that defined the Church: the split between the sacred and secular.<sup>138</sup> Calvin in particular affirmed Luther's idea that God assigns a station or calling to every person, and that this vocation is not accidental. "Consequently, it is our sacred duty to accept and even embrace that to which God has called us. The sacred is not distinct from the secular; rather the sacred is what sanctifies the ordinary and thus makes it good and noble. This idea of sanctification was critical to Luther's assertion that every Christian believer, regardless of station, is a priest."<sup>139</sup> Whether a homemaker, farmer, factory worker, politician, or priest, all work was sacred, and all effort had the potential to be viewed as a form of ministry for the glory of God. Over 500 years later, Luther and Calvin's worldview – the vocational priesthood of all believers – remains steadfast, a bedrock conviction regarding calling within the Protestant tradition worldwide.

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<sup>137</sup> Calvin not only echoed Luther on the concept of work as a divine vocation from God. In many ways, he took it a step further, arguing for the elimination of a dominant belief within the Catholic church since the Medieval period – that there was no difference in value or morality between the sacred and the secular. Listen to his conviction on vocation from the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: "In following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and forbid as not to have splendor and value in the eye of God."

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.10.6, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 2:35.

<sup>138</sup> This cultural belief is still prominent among many Protestant denominations to this day.

<sup>139</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1999). 24.

### Vocation in a Post-Christian World: Drifting From One's Calling

As the Western world gathered speed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, in particular as the Enlightenment merged increasingly with the effects of the Industrial Revolution, the nature of work throughout one's lifespan began shifting rapidly. The concept of vocation took on an increasingly secular connotation, divorced from one's religious life and the sacred place that faith occupied within a person's sense of identity. Work became known as one's occupation<sup>140</sup> as the root meaning of work shifted ever further away from vocation. Less frequently was work viewed through a vocational lens, where an outside voice, often God, called forth one's sense of identity, and co-laboring in creative endeavors of one's hand for the good of the world. Instead, the concept of work as occupation, with a root meaning that one's job took control of residence within a growing portion of one's life, a forced occupation of sorts, began to root ever more deeply within the cultural subconscious.

Quoting Meilaender, Jane Dawson notes that the concept of vocation came to "'reinforce the idea that the human being is essentially and primarily a worker,' and that work - especially paid work - was the primary sphere in which the ultimate in human expression and fulfillment could be achieved."<sup>141</sup> Human beings were seen less and less as the *Imago Dei*, "unique in our calling as we are in being made in the Image of God,"<sup>142</sup> and instead viewed as impersonal cogs within a factory assembly line, replaceable as any broken machine part would be. William Placher acknowledges this irony as a Christian, writing that Karl Marx was onto something in his

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<sup>140</sup> Jane Dawson, in "A History of Vocation," nails this shift in the value and emphasis of work in containing not only one's vocation, but defining a human being's sense of identity: "Occupational work concurrently became an increasingly central dimension of human worth and dignity. Work became necessary and desired, not for the glory of God but for the sake of personal fulfillment and dignity" ("A History of Vocation," 224).

<sup>141</sup> Meilaender, 13. Quoted by Jane Dawson in "A History of Vocation: Tracing a Keyword of Work, Meaning, and Moral Purpose," *Adult Education Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (May 2005): 224.

<sup>142</sup> Novak, 34. Quoted by Marc Cortez in "Vocationalizing the Imago Dei," *Opus Vocation Scholars Program* at Wheaton Center for Faith & Innovation. (Wheaton, IL: Wheaton College, 2016), 1.

conclusion that the modern world was filled with 'alienated labor.'<sup>143</sup> Consider Placher's reflection on Marx's famous phrase: "The shoemaker of several hundred years ago made shoes for friend and neighbors, and brought all the skills of a craft to making them well. The modern assembly-line worker too often anonymously adds a particular bolt to a product for an unknown customer, a task in which one cannot really excel. The work does not seem to belong to the worker."<sup>144</sup> This loss of belonging within the work of one's hands was further alienating to the majority of workers who filled manual labor of one type or another, working for a boss or a growing corporation that they no longer knew on a personal level. In many ways, their sense of vocational identity was seen as a battle for control, their sense of self subordinated under the authority of whomever they worked for. Vocation became a "power struggle in everything but name, a battle to force the working people to accept, in the name of the ethical nobility of working life, a life neither noble nor responding to their own standards of moral decency."<sup>145</sup>

Other key voices within these centuries pushed this growing disconnect even further. The German sociologist Max Weber, for instance, coined the idea of a Protestant work ethic as being fundamental to the financial viability of capitalism as an economic system. Weber saw work as a vocational activity with direct capitalistic ends, particularly from a historically Calvinist and Puritan theological worldview, and this perspective on work was literally good for the bottom line.

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<sup>143</sup> Marx's famous philosophical concept of alienation, often applied to work, in greater context:

Let us suppose that we had carried out production as human beings. Each of us would have, in two ways, affirmed himself, and the other person. (i) In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and, therefore, enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also, when looking at the object, I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses, and, hence, a power beyond all doubt. (ii) In your enjoyment, or use, of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work, that is, of having objectified man's essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man's essential nature...Our products would be so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature."

34. Karl Marx, *Karl Marx: A Reader*, ed. Jon Elster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999),

<sup>144</sup> Placher, 8.

<sup>145</sup> Zgmunt Bauman, *Work, consumerism, and the new poor* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1998), 8.

According to Petrus Steenkamp, Weber saw work as a "vocation to please God, thereby obeying the calling of God to live and work in his honor. The harder they worked, the more wealth they accumulated and that, in turn, led to positive economic spirals (harder work, more affluence). Thus, this work ethic could be viewed as a self-sustaining motivator to create wealth."<sup>146</sup> Essentially, humanity's vocation was now directly connected at a foundational level to capitalist economic success. Pride in one's vocation, and the ability to translate that belief towards a diligent work ethic, has literally influenced capitalist thought to the modern day.

And thus, the subtle vocational drift that began several hundred years ago at the dawn of the Enlightenment and Industrial age, has only solidified in an increasingly post-Christian, postmodern world in which truth is relative to one's cultural perspective. To many, vocation feels like a dated concept that is neither familiar nor relevant to the world today. It is either largely imbued within the hazy language of self-focused purpose, creating a sense of meaning within one's life, rooted within one's occupation in a cultural moment that is seeing the dramatic re-definition of the world of work itself, or dismissed as relevant only to a select few religiously faithful. In other words, vocation has almost completely lost its mooring – its anchor – as a concept deeply rooted within the nature of humanity as Image Bearers of God, co-creating a better world with a true divine mandate to rule in God's name. Ironically, culture has come full circle back to Genesis 1 and the fulfillment of the creation mandate as the *Imago Dei* of the triune Godhead. Placher concludes that it is "possible to see a connection between our time and the earliest centuries of Christianity, when Christians were outsiders in a world dominated by non-Christian values and assumptions. *Simply living as Christians* should be our calling too."<sup>147</sup>

### SECTION 3: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

In Colossians 1:15-17, Paul writes powerfully about the Image of God: "[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created:

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<sup>146</sup> Petrus L. Steenkamp, "Protestant ethic: Contributing towards a meaningful workplace," *HTS Theological Studies* 69 (1), Art. #1315 (April 2013): 5, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1315>.

<sup>147</sup> Placher, 9.

things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”<sup>148</sup> Paul’s vision of Jesus is as the perfected *Imago Dei*, actively co-laboring with the triune Godhead in loving relationship to bring about the restoration of all of creation within God’s good Kingdom. This is a profound Scriptural picture of the wedding of one’s core nature (*Rooted human identity as the Image of God*) with an unfolding awareness of the relational invitation by God towards a creative, co-laboring endeavor (*My vocational calling*). My favorite author on

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<sup>148</sup> Colossians 1:15-17, *NIV*.



vocational calling, Quaker teacher Parker Palmer,<sup>149</sup> does the same, wedding self and service together. Listen to his definition with a sense of joyful wonder: "Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we *ought* to be. As we do so, we will find not only the joy that every human being seeks - we will also find our path of authentic service in the world. True vocation joins self and service, as Frederick Buechner asserts

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<sup>149</sup> Let's be honest. Parker Palmer is my favorite author, period. Here is a 3/4's page footnote filled with 10 Palmer gems on vocation from *Let Your Life Speak* that I couldn't work into the main body, but needed inclusion:

What a long time it can take to become the person one has always been! How often in the process we mask ourselves in faces that are not our own. How much dissolving and shaking of ego we must endure before we discover our deep identity - the true self within every human being that is the seed of authentic vocation (Palmer, 9).

Vocation does not come from a voice "out there" calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God (Palmer, 10).

We find our callings by claiming authentic selfhood, by being who we are, by dwelling in the world...The deepest vocational question is not, 'What ought I to do with my life?' It is the more elemental and demanding 'Who am I? What is my nature?' (Palmer, 15).

I had never stopped being a teacher - I was simply teaching in a classroom without walls... Teaching, I was coming to understand, is my native way of being in the world. Make me a cleric or a CEO, a poet or a politico, and teaching is what I will do. Teaching is at the heart of my vocation and will manifest itself in any role I play (Palmer, 21).

Vocation at its deepest level is, 'This is something I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling (Palmer, 25).

Here, I think, is another clue to finding true self and vocation: we must withdraw the negative projections we make on people and situations - projections that serve mainly to mask our fears about ourselves - and acknowledge and embrace our own liabilities and limits" (Palmer, 29).

Our created natures make us like organisms in an ecosystem: there are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die (Palmer, 44).

The God I know does not ask us to conform to some abstract norm for the ideal self. God asks us only to honor our created nature, which means our limits as well as potentials. When we fail to do so, reality happens - God happens - and way closes behind us (Palmer, 50).

The God whom I know dwells quietly in the root system of the very nature of things...If, as I believe, we are all made in God's image, we could all give the same answer when asked who we are: 'I Am who I Am.' One crosses God by trying to be something one is not. Reality - including one's own - is divine, to be not deified but honored (Palmer, 51).

Our strongest gifts are usually those we are barely aware of possessing. They are a part of our God-given nature, with us from the moment we drew first breath, and we are no more conscious of having them than we are of breathing (Palmer, 52).

when he defines vocation as 'the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need.'"<sup>150</sup>

To address vocation in this rooted manner, it is critical to approach calling within this relational, responsive holism. Thus, what are some initial first steps towards a more deeply responsive, relationally rooted holism? Two small steps forward immediately rise to the surface. First and foremost, the various concepts of vocation throughout history (*Kaleo, Vocatio, Beruf, Occupation*) must be integrated in a dialogical fashion, seeking commonality. There has been too much diffused energy given to pursuing one's own sense of vocation throughout human history, often at the expense of a larger community that could benefit from a unified relational approach. Secondly, the realities of the world in 2020 must be addressed with a spirit committed to courageous, empathetic listening, regardless of the controversy or cost. As our world is increasingly post Christian, post colonial, and filled with failing empires (particularly in the West), it is simultaneously crying out for equality, justice, and actionable love for all. We see this in cultural movements of wide variety and social impact, including such complex issues as Black Lives Matter, Me Too, LGBTQIA rights, income disparity, universal health coverage, structural racism, and economic inequality, amongst other cultural wounds. Freshly overwhelmed, one naturally asks, where does one begin to work in creative, relational co-operation with God?

As Esau McCaulley writes in his new book, *Reading While Black*, "All theology is socially located."<sup>151</sup> In other words, what one believes is intrinsically, irrevocably linked to where one is. Place informs posture. One's neighbor clarifies the necessity of one's action within an increasingly rooted world. The implications of McCaulley's statement are simple yet profound for my family, having moved across South Africa from Cape Town to Jeffrey's Bay, just prior to Covid-19 lockdown in February 2020: Firstly, the wedding of one's nature as *Imago Dei* with the spiritual rhythm of discernment of one's vocational call must become true for all people, Africans included.

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<sup>150</sup> Palmer, 16.

<sup>151</sup> Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 179.

This desire for shalom must begin in one's body, in particular if one's body is Black. And this vision of maturing spiritual holism must be extended back around the globe again, rooting deeply in selfless love for one's neighbor, and in the God who will not stop working inside of us "until Christ is formed in you."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Galatians 4:19, *NIV*.

## APPENDIX C—MILESTONE 3: DESIGN WORKSHOP REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

In October 2020, I wondered if my DMIN 850 Design Workshop would unfold in a creatively exciting, yet culturally stretching manner, as I reflected upon the concept of “gamestorming” within my NPO Design Exploration Plan assignment. At the time, I had no idea how beautifully prophetic and strangely hopeful these words would actually become, especially at the end of the COVID-19 year of disruption that is 2020. An excerpt of my wondering follows:

What excites me about my Design Workshop, and in many ways, this entire second year of my NPO's development, is the inherent wide possibilities. I am comfortable in the vague fuzziness of my NPO at its current iterative state, and am anticipating a challenging, engaging time of facilitation with the diverse group of Stakeholders I hope to gather together in the next month. In other words, I am eager to jump into the creative process inherent in establishing the wide framework that will be narrowed over time into my actual NPO project. This sort of brainstorming, ideating, dreaming process is less culturally normative within an African context, in particular within many black South African cultures, and thus I am also concerned that I will have to demonstrate this process in a slower manner than I wish, in order for it to be understood, and fruit to be harvested. Since many of my Stakeholders come from impoverished backgrounds, and this process is rooted in highly Western, logical ideas, I anticipate that it will be challenging for some to engage with, at least naturally. However, this is exactly why I am excited about this process unfolding in an organic manner over the course of this semester.<sup>153</sup>

The following Design Workshop Report will testify towards this hopeful horizon unfolding before me as I quickly approach the midpoint of my Doctor of Ministry studies. I am increasingly eager to progress forward towards the prototyping process of ‘*making actual*’ several naturally emerging ‘*Big Ideas*,’ as the calendar slowly lurches towards 2021.

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<sup>153</sup> Chris Kamalski, “DMIN 850 NPO Design Exploration Plan.” (Portland, OR: Portland Seminary, 2020), 1-2.

## NPO STATEMENT

How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God rediscover their uniquely African voice within a safe, transparent, formational cohort?<sup>154</sup>

## NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

In 2021, my prototyping scope will focus on two groups of maturing African leaders:

1. A small, beta cohort of African Christian leaders who reside, are rooted within, and who minister among the communities of Kouga Municipality, our local collective of small towns in the Jeffreys Bay region of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A majority of this initial cohort will likely be filled with leaders from Victory4All, a holistic community development organization my wife Maxie runs in Jeffreys Bay, as well as key leaders from The Leadership Experience, another local organization.
2. University students and young adult professionals in their early 20's to mid 30's from Philippi, a Cape Flats township area outside of Cape Town. Most young adults will be isiXhosa speaking as a primary first language, with the majority having relocated from the Eastern Cape, where I now reside. This long-distance cohort will gather virtually, as well as several times through in-person concentrated gatherings, as COVID-19 travel restrictions permit. It will primarily run through local connections made by Space and Blax, two young African entrepreneurial leaders I have mentored for years.

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<sup>154</sup> "The global Church has a significant responsibility to form, equip, mature, and release seasoned African leaders who are coming alive into their holistic vocational calling.

- The theoretical / big idea version undergirding my NPO: How do we restore human vocation to its intended core meaning: that of a maturing leader, rooted in the identity of one's unique voice as designed by God, coming fully alive into their most natural self as an Image-bearer of our infinitely Creative God?
- The contextual version of this question that would frame my NPO: Given the global reality of persistently under-served, ill-resourced, and mis-developed Christian leaders, how does the global Church form, equip, mature, and release seasoned leaders who live and minister within systemic systems of poverty, injustice, unemployment, inequality, economic disadvantage, and structural problems of race, gender, and inequality?
- Stated plainly in light of my own vocational calling: How do we form and empower African leaders to come alive again (and for the first time) as they grow into who God has always intended them to be, living out their vocational calling for the good of the world?"

What a mouthful! Today, I celebrate the simplification from an NPO statement essay to an NPO statement footnote.

NPO CONTEXT<sup>155</sup>

In part as a result of the initial 'hard lockdown' across South Africa, an urgent food shortage was created in many impoverished township<sup>156</sup> communities, including several in the Kouga region where we had just relocated in January 2020. My wife Maxie began to coordinate emergency food parcel distribution across an organic network of local churches, NGO's, and small businesses. In 3 months, over 6,000 food parcels were distributed through local faith community leaders, most of them Christian pastors and NGO leaders. In mere weeks, across ethnic, socio-economic, and denominational lines, a community of over 40 local faith leaders became connected, some of whom lived in the same communities, but had never really established relational partnerships outside of their own faith context. With large church gatherings shuttered for the foreseeable future, how could this organic leadership cohort help form and deepen the Kingdom of God in our midst?

As the role of 'Christian leader' shifted dramatically in function and responsibility almost overnight, from evangelism to physical provision, from prophetic proclamation to shepherding one's neighbors, from exuberant worship to serving as an incarnational presence within local neighborhoods, an unprecedented opportunity began to emerge on the horizon. Christ-followers needed holistic discipleship, spiritual formation that anchored the rhythms of the day, and empowering leadership development that could address the systemic issues of this cultural moment. Do they have healthy, formational, sustainable resources to truly mature and empower the Church in their midst? More critically, are these Christian leaders who are called to form such Christ-followers prepared to do so themselves? I have long known that a core component of my

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<sup>155</sup> This section is long, but I felt it too significant not to include in fullness. I wrote this section in September 2020 for my DMIN 808 Integrative Change Proposal, and have only lightly edited its contents for this assignment. I am astounded at the manner in which the Spirit of God seems to be integrating my Doctoral program as I progress, towards a cohesive, holistic vision of formational leadership development of African Christian leaders.

<sup>156</sup> A township in South Africa is defined as *"a suburb or city of predominantly black occupation, formerly designated for black occupation by apartheid legislation"* (2019 MacBook Air Dictionary). Although apartheid was dismantled officially in South Africa in the early 1990's, the vast majority of South African townships remain in place, severely under-resourced to this day, largely as a result of the systemic injustices of the apartheid era.

vocational calling in working with African Christian leaders was to walk alongside them as they form, mature, and empower themselves, in preparation to equip the saints to grow up in their midst (See *Ephesians 4:11-12*). Has an opportunity emerged for me to begin to form and develop African Christian leaders, in covenanted, vulnerable, deep relational community, who are struggling to do the same? This is the crux of the NPO I am exploring in this '*Covid-19 season*.' This is the vocational vision I am invited to co-create with God in this cultural moment. It has always been within me; I sense that now it is to come alive in fullness.

### ROOT CAUSES

1. The process of vocational discovery and identity formation has in large part been lost within young African leaders due to systemic injustices and the reality of living in a survival-driven environment where the need to make money to live is a daily struggle. Across South Africa in particular, the effects of colonialism, apartheid, corruption, vast unemployment, and systemic health and educational challenges have resulted in vast social inequality that colors every attempt to sustainably develop mature leaders.
2. There are too few physical spaces, developmental processes, or formational methodologies that exist for African Christian leaders to interact and discover their sense of self together across generations, denominations, and cultural distinctions. This wisdom is buried and must be rediscovered. A massive hurdle to this discovery process is one's perceived level of intelligence, often determined by how well one speaks English as a primary language.
3. African leaders need to be 'de-Westernized' and 'de-colonialized,' empowered to rediscover African ways of living in the world, in particular regarding the recovery of a black African identity and vocational calling in the world. This rediscovery is unable to be attained apart from the reunification of the African family across generations, and the seeking of wise counsel from elders that has been lost or never mined for its inherent value.

## DEFINITION OF 'DONE'

My telos is a beta 2-year Kouga Leadership Cohort; a small, safe, covenanted community of holistic formation & honest empowerment of African Christian leaders.

## THREE BIG IDEAS

1. Year-long throughout 2021: Pilot a beta (12 people) Kouga Leadership Cohort with local African Christian leaders across the Jeffreys Bay region of the Eastern Cape. Pilot a shorter, hybrid virtual/in-person Leadership Cohort with young leaders connected to Estraweni Foods, an entrepreneurial business in Philippi, a township in the Cape Flats.
2. Quarterly throughout 2021: Host a series of educational experiences and honest, safe leadership dialogues across local churches, NGO's, and ministry organizations in the Kouga Municipality on the core issues that divide African leaders from maturing in the Image of God.
3. Longterm discernment: Discern whether God is inviting us to develop a retreat centre, retreat, and/or curriculum that embodies the Image of God and vocational discernment process for African leaders. This holistic approach would be contextually appropriate, culturally relevant, biblically true, and powerfully empowering in deepening sustainable, holistic transformation across individuals and systems.

## 3 NAPKIN PITCHES

1. Napkin Pitch #1: Kouga Leadership Cohort (Year-long throughout 2021)
  - Big Idea: Pilot a beta (12 people) Kouga Leadership Cohort with local African Christian leaders across the Jeffreys Bay region of the Eastern Cape. Pilot a shorter, hybrid virtual/in-person Leadership Cohort with young leaders connected to Estraweni Foods, an entrepreneurial business in Philippi, a township in the Cape Flats.
  - Audience:
    1. Local African Christian leaders across the Jeffreys Bay region of the Eastern Cape.



2. Young leaders connected to Estraweni Foods, an entrepreneurial business in Philippi, a township in the Cape Flats.

- NPO: How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God rediscover their uniquely African voice within a safe, transparent, formational cohort?
- Benefit: All cohort members benefit through participation and engagement in a small, safe, covenanted community of holistic formation and honest empowerment of African Christian leaders.
- Approach: African Christian leaders engage in and commit to weekly participation in a small, non-threatening, developmental community of like-minded and like-hearted leaders, across local churches, NGO's, and other leadership organizations, for the purpose of holistic spiritual formation and honest empowerment. This beta cohort commits to a year of growth together, with the potential to re-commit for a second year of development together, and a potential third year to co-lead a new cohort of African Christian leaders.
- Risks: Using Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' framework, this holistic self-actualization work may simply not be valued as critically important enough to be committed to in a world marked largely by survival and a focus on 'the immediate.' Additionally, financial participation, internet access, and the time necessary to contextualize learning are real hurdles that must be addressed for this project to achieve success and real sustainability.
- Assumptions/Hypothesis to test: Is a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders – across churches, NGO's, and leadership organizations in a local area – the most transformative vehicle for a leader to be formed holistically, honestly empowered?
- Benchmarks of success: 1) Initial covenanted commitment from a beta cohort of African Christian leaders across the Kouga Municipality for 2021. 2) Final

'graduation' and/or completion of the same cohort of leaders who saw this process through. 3) Tangible, measurable, sustainable growth in each African Christian leader's sense of identity as an Image-Bearer of God, with growing clarity in their sense of vocational calling.

- Other approaches: It is a slow, small, steady, safe, ruthlessly honest, locally rooted approach to formation in a non-competitive, neutral environment.

## 2. Napkin Pitch #2: Honest, Safe Leadership Dialogues (Quarterly throughout 2021)

- Big Idea: Host a quarterly series of educational experiences and honest, safe leadership dialogues across local churches, NGO's, and ministry organizations in the Kouga Municipality on the core issues that divide African leaders from maturing in the Image of God.
- Audience: Local African Christian leaders across the Jeffreys Bay region of the Eastern Cape.
- NPO: Same as Napkin Pitch #1.
- Benefit: Local African Christian leaders will enjoy a facilitated, safe, honest, neutral space of learning, dialogue, and holistic development across the broader Kouga Municipality region. This new 'safe place' will be known as a space whereby all can bring honest, forthright questions.
- Approach: Each quarter throughout 2021, a 1/2 day learning lab and facilitated workshop will be offered to local African Christian leaders that creates a 'praxis community of dialogue' learning, and formational practice among one another. The process of these quarterly dialogues would have an ongoing, 4-cycle focus of praxis: 1) Topic Lecture Presentation, 2) Invited Response, 3) Group Dialogue and Communal Discernment, 4) Shared Tools Leading Towards Praxis and Integration.
- Risks: Is this approach too far outside the box, threatening, and/or foreign of a learning concept for local African Christian leaders?

- Assumptions/Hypothesis to test: Is there a need and corresponding hunger for a formative, safe space for local African Christian leaders to dialogue with and learn from each other with regularity?
- Benchmarks of success: 1) Initial buy-in and shared facilitation from Kouga Leadership Cohort members is a good 'trial balloon.' 2) Does this region value this sort of facilitated shared space? We will be able to answer this as we see how fully African Christian leaders engage in a non-competitive, neutral manner.
- Other approaches: It is broader (across Kouga Municipality), safe (no one ministry benefits, receiving all the glory), collaborative (a wider focus on the Kingdom of God as experienced within this region), and directed towards the greater common good.

### 3. Napkin Pitch #3: Retreat Centre (Retreat/Curriculum) for African Leaders (Longterm)

- Big Idea: Discern whether God is inviting us to develop a retreat centre, retreat, and/or curriculum that embodies the Image of God and vocational discernment process for African leaders. This holistic approach would be contextually appropriate, culturally relevant, biblically true, and powerfully empowering in deepening sustainable, holistic transformation across individuals and systems.
- Audience: Initially, local African Christian leaders across the Kouga Municipality and the Eastern Cape province of South Africa.
- NPO: Same as Napkin Pitch #1.
- Benefit: Same as Napkin Pitch #2.
- Approach: There are too few spaces in South Africa (let alone the African continent as a whole) where African Christian leaders can play, rest, dream, envision, and be holistically equipped towards maturation, that are not owned or controlled by one particular organization. The Centre for African Formation

and Leadership would be a collaborative, cooperative, publicly owned retreat and learning space that has a (literal) large, long table where all Africans are welcome to contribute, learn from one another, and have their voices heard. It would be an intentionally safe, honest, inquisitive, formational, accessible, and open place for the benefit of all African leaders.

- Risks: Same as Napkin Pitch #2.
- Assumptions/Hypothesis to test: Same as Napkin Pitch #2.
- Benchmarks of success: Same as Napkin Pitch #2.
- Other approaches: Same as Napkin Pitch #2.

#### DESIGN WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

1. Afrikaans woman; Victory4All Director of Operations
2. English South African man; Clinical Psychologist
3. Zambian man; The Leadership Exchange Director, Lead Pastor of iThemba Church
4. isiXhosa woman; The Leadership Exchange key leader
5. Afrikaans coloured woman; Victory4All Skill Centre Manager
6. isiXhosa man; Victory4All Garden Projects
7. Afrikaans coloured woman; Victory4All Skill Centre Catering Manager

#### ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

1. isiXhosa woman; Ravi Zacharias International Ministries; Circle Around podcast host
2. isiXhosa men; Estraweni Fast Foods; Young entrepreneurs and local community development advocates in Philippi, Cape Flats
3. American woman; Dean of Portland Seminary; Lead Mentor of DMin in Leadership & Spiritual Formation; Authority on Cross-cultural Leadership Mentoring Communities; Author of Lifelong Leadership
4. Afrikaans woman; Facilitator for Centre for Courage & Renewal; Ignatian Spiritual Director at the Jesuit Institute; Community development advocate and former teacher

## 3-5 KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

1. Genesis 1:26-31: Humanity is created in the Image of the triune God as vocational caretakers (rulers) within God's Kingdom.
2. Exodus 35:4-36:7: Humanity is filled with the Spirit, empowered in their artistic skills and abilities, and willing to bring their vocational work as an offering to the Lord in the creation of the Tabernacle.
3. 1 Samuel 2:35-4:1: Samuel's vocational call as a young boy who discerns and responds to Yahweh's voice, participating fully in God's prophetic work in the Temple.
4. John 15:1-17: As apprentices of Jesus are attached to God, abiding in Christ our friend, they bear the specific vocational fruit God has created for us to steward.
5. Ephesians 4:11-24: The Body of Christ is to be formed, empowered, and released for Kingdom service, growing towards maturity in Christ as it engages in the vocational work God is calling us to fulfill.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Macleod, Saul. "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs." Article revised on March 20th, 2020, originally written May 21st, 2018, for Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>.

Macleod is an author, and contributor to <http://simplypsychology.org>, a leading 'front-door' academic site to complex psychological theories for an amateur audience. He writes, "The growth of self-actualization (Maslow, 1962) refers to the need for personal growth and discovery that is present throughout a person's life. For Maslow, a person is always 'becoming' and never remains static in these terms. In self-actualization, a person comes to find a meaning to life that is important to them" (Macleod, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs"). In seeking to facilitate a holistic formation and leadership development approach to small leadership cohorts, Maslow's approach is a needed framework to critically evaluate, especially as a potential hindrance for non-Western, non-White leadership populations that exist among conditions of systemic under-resourcing and deliberate inequality. Dr. Macleod is a researcher at the University of Manchester, UK. I am aware that this is an introductory article to this topic.

McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020.

Tish Harrison Warren warmly endorses McCaulley's illuminating new work by writing, "*Reading While Black* makes clear how the Scriptures, rightly read, are the source of Black justice and liberation, and how an orthodox belief in the authority of the Bible bolsters the dignity and flourishing of people of color in America...I cannot think of a more relevant, pressing, helpful, and hopeful book for our contemporary moment" (McCaulley, *Reading While Black*). I was introduced to Dr. McCaulley's voice on Twitter, and found his clear theological hermeneutic and laser-focus on Black justice to be prophetically hopeful for this cultural moment. McCaulley writes, "All theology is socially located," which is a core idea that frames much of my DMIN 751 Topic Expertise Essay. McCaulley is an Assistant Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. I want to ask him about the intersection of liturgy, Black justice, and the Bible.

Morse, MaryKate. *Lifelong Leadership: Woven Together Through Mentoring Communities*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2020.

MaryKate is a lifelong leader of great wisdom, discernment, and strategic strength. In *Lifelong Leadership*, she invites leaders into a life of leadership mentoring communities, originated by Dr. Leighton Ford and a small team of leadership experts, including herself. Morse writes, "The primary need for younger leaders is companionship and safe support for their spiritual and ministry journeys. Many developing leaders do not have church communities that 'get' them and that know how to support them in their ministry calling. The primary need for mature leaders is a highly effective, low-lift way to mentor several younger leaders at one time. Mentoring assures that the church's ministry or the organization's mission continues by preparing the next generation of leaders" (Morse, *Lifelong Leadership*). Dr. Morse has planted several churches, served as a missionary in the Andes Mountains, and currently is the Dean of Portland Seminary, as well as the Lead

Mentor of the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation at Portland Seminary. She is *the leadership expert on mentoring communities*, and my own Lead Mentor for the LSF5 doctoral cohort. I treasure her wisdom implicitly.

Tupamahu, Ekaputra. "The Stubborn Invisibility of Whiteness in Biblical Scholarship." Essay published on November 12th, 2020 for "Whiteness and Biblical Studies Symposium Essays" for the "Politics of Scripture" blog at the Political Theology Network. <https://politicaltheology.com/the-stubborn-invisibility-of-whiteness-in-biblical-scholarship/>.

Ekaputra argues that biblical scholarship exists within a world of whiteness, writing "Because whiteness lies at the center of biblical studies, the accepted way of doing biblical scholarship is one that engages white questions, white concerns. The system forces scholars of color, especially those who receive their doctoral trainings in the western educational system, to be familiar with white scholarship" (Tupamahu, excerpt from Abstract of "The Stubborn Invisibility of Whiteness in Biblical Scholarship"). Dr. Tupamahu is an assistant professor of New Testament at Portland Seminary and George Fox University, a member of the Political Theology Network editorial team, and the forthcoming author of *Contesting Languages: Heteroglossia and the Politics of Language in the Early Church*. Tupamahu is an emerging voice of color in the overly white world of biblical scholarship and theological training. I consider him a new friend.

Wheatley, Margaret. "Who Do You Choose to Be? An Invitation to the Nobility of Leadership." *Leader to Leader* 85, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 37-41. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.20304>.

Wheatley describes the challenge that leader's face within culture today as an "age of retreat: from one another, from values that held us together, from ideas and practices that encouraged inclusion, from faith in leaders, from belief in basic human goodness." This calls for leaders to acknowledge where they are, what they must deal with, and what and with whom they have to work with. She reminds us that "all people want to belong and feel part of a community." (Wheatley, excerpts from Abstract of "Who Do You Choose to Be? An Invitation to the Nobility of Leadership"). Dr. Wheatley is the cofounder and president of The Berkana Institute and an author of nine books, including the leadership classic *Leadership and the New Science* (1992). Wheatley provides academic leadership and organizational consultation expertise, describing leadership mentoring communities as "islands of sanity." MaryKate Morse recommended her work to me.

## APPENDIX

DESIGN WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONDesign Workshop Schedule

- Tuesday, November 3rd, 08:45am – 13:00pm | Victory4All Skills Centre (Humansdorp, Kouga Municipality, Eastern Cape)
- 08:00am: Arrival / Set-Up and Pray
- 08:45am: Stakeholders arrive / Coffee & Tea
  - Present:
    - Chris & Maxie K. (Facilitator, V4All Director of Operations)
    - Nathan R. (Psychologist and Next-Door Neighbor)
    - Pastor George M., Cornelius N., Musa M., Bernadette M. (Leadership Exchange)
    - Zaida, Cristal, Viwe, Lucas (Victory4All Beta Leadership Cohort)
  - Absent:
    - None
- 09:00am: Welcome, Introductions, Short Reflection
  - Name, How long in Kouga, How long you have served in the KOG as a leader
  - Reflection:
    - Mark 4:26-29 (The Parable of the Growing Seed): *"As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*
    - Wendell Berry poem (This Day, 1982, Sabbath VII, p. 44): *"High Heaven's Kingdom come on earth. Imagine paradise. O dust, arise!"*
    - Sean Curran ("Catch Me Singing"): *"You've been God for a long time"*
    - Pray
- 09:20am: OPENING 1 (Stage Setting): INTRO TO MY NPO
  - Brief personal introduction
  - The Design-Thinking Process: Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test
    - In my program, this Design Workshop falls under "Ideate" (Purpose: Brainstorm and come up with as many creative solutions to the NPO as possible. Wild ideas are encouraged!)
    - This morning, we will move broadly through all 5 phases of the DTP
    - *What is critical: Listening to your creative voice*
  - NPO topic I am researching seeks to answer this question: *How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?*
    - Twin foci: IDENTITY (Image of God in humans) + VOCATIONAL CALLING (Your unique voice heard throughout the world), rooted in an African context (*"All theology is socially located"* – Dr. Esau McCaulley)
  - Read introduction excerpt to my DMin 751 Topic Expertise essay
- 09:35am: OPENING 2 (Theme Development): REFRAMING MY NPO DEFINITION
  - Table activity (3 groups of 3 to 4) steps (15 min):
    - Dialogue through your understanding of NPO as Chris first wrote it.
    - Take notes while dialoguing 5 questions on NPO Definition worksheet.



- Each table rewrites NPO statement in own words on large poster paper.
- Share rewritten definitions with larger group (5 min).
- Chris rewrites NPO a 3rd time given large group feedback (5 min).
- 10:00am: EXPLORE 1 (Examine): THE 5 WHYS
  - Personal activity at table (Pass out 5 post it notes per person) (10 min)
    - Look at rewritten NPO and answer question, “*Why is this a need, problem, or opportunity worth exploring?*”
    - Number post-it notes. Write down first thing that comes to mind each time we ask why. Don’t overthink this – a phrase or sentence max per ‘Why.’
    - Post-it note #2: Ask “*Why is the answer on #1 true?*” Write response on #2.
    - Repeat process until 5 post-it notes are filled.
  - Everyone puts post-it notes in descending order lines on wall. We read each others responses and dialogue commonalities. (10 min)
  - 5 last sticky notes (give to Maxie to write): As a group do exercise 1 last time, reflecting consensus of what we have heard as a larger group.
- 10:30am: COFFEE, TEA, & SNACK BREAK
  - Call back together at 10:45am
- 10:50am: EXPLORE 2 (Experiment): 3-12-3 BRAINSTORM
  - All participants take 3 post-it notes and brainstorm 2 ideas that could address NPO. Put in big pile on central table. (3 min)
  - Pairs activity developing 1 idea from pool of 4 ideas. (12 min)
    - Take 4 ideas from big pile. Decide to develop 1 of the ideas. Create a rough sketch or prototype (What does this idea look like in reality?) that can be shared in a 3-min presentation. Focus on solutions and challenges.
  - Pair presentations (3 min each, hard stop)
    - Explain 1 big idea and why you landed on that. Briefly mention discarded ideas.
      - *Note: Leaving extra time (+/- 20 min more). This activity will go long.*
- 11:30am: CLOSE 1 (Decisions): R100 Test
  - Table activity (3 groups of 3 to 4). Every table has R100 to spend in developing the 6 ideas presented above. Use poster paper to rank and include ‘why’ amount given.
  - Table Dialogue: Each group assigns a Rand value to each idea, totaling R100, ‘ranking’ from 1-6 each idea and its value.
    - Capture why each idea was ranked the way they did.
  - Group Dialogue: Share conclusions as group. *NOTE WHAT IDEA(S) STOOD OUT.*
- 11:50am: STRETCH BREAK
  - Call back together at 10:55am.
- 12:00pm: CLOSE 2 (Action): SERVIETTE (NAPKIN) PITCH
  - Cultural context note: *Not a Napkin Pitch although great ideas do come while sitting on the throne! :)*
  - Pairs activity: Select one of the 6 ranked ideas and complete the Napkin Pitch worksheet.

- Dialogue the key components listed below within the worksheet:
  - NPO : What is the unmet need/problem/opportunity we are addressing?
  - Approach : What is our approach to meeting that need, and how is it novel?
  - Benefit : How does the user benefit? How do you benefit?
  - Others : How are others addressing this NPO? What sets this approach apart?
  - Risks : Why might it fail?
  - Assumptions/hypotheses to test : What critical hypothesis or assumption does each prototype 'test'?
  - Benchmarks of success : What information do you need to either confirm or disprove your hypothesis? Articulate the 2-3 benchmarks (or indicator, clue, criteria, test, metric, or milestones) that verify that the project is successfully addressing the NPO.
- Dialogue as a large group. Big insights and learnings noted.
- Pray for lunch and break.

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## DESIGN WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION

- *Notes taken, transcribed poster paper and post-it note exercises.*

### 1-5 LIKERT SCALE ASSESSMENT ON DESIGN WORKSHOP

- 4 out of 5.
  - I would have ranked it higher, if not for the reality that I felt rushed the entire morning, and that I had to move the Workshop along the moment dialogue about a particular component was just finding root. It consistently felt like I was forcing movement forward before ideas had really crystallized. This felt especially challenging given my Stakeholders, and the reality that the Design-Thinking Process was foreign to almost all of them. I am deeply grateful we were able to meet in person, according to COVID-19 safety protocols in South Africa at the time (early November 2020). A Zoom workshop would simply not have worked for me. I didn't get to the closing activities of my workshop, and this has forced me to fill-in some of the details I suspect we were heading towards. Hopefully I have captured the spirit of our process adequately.

#### 1. OPENING 1 (Stage Setting): INTRO TO MY NPO

- *2 groups of 4-5 workshop participants discussed my own NPO 2.0 description.*
- 1. NPO 2.0: How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (i.e. their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?
  - Note: This is my first revision to my initial NPO, taken from DMIN 751 Topic Expertise Essay, completed in August 2020.
  - Twin Foci, Rooted in an African Context:
    - Identity (*Image of God in human beings*)
    - +
    - Vocational Calling (*Your unique voice, bursting forth from your most natural self, heard throughout the world*)
    - Rooted in an African Context (*"All theology is socially located," Dr. Esau McCaulley, Reading While Black*)

#### 2. OPENING 2 (Theme Development): REFRAMING MY NPO DEFINITION

- *2 groups of 4-5 workshop participants (The same groups as Opening 1 Activity then reframed my NPO 2.0 description, noting what stood out to them in their discussion.*
- 1. Group 2.5A: Discussed the following questions:
  - How could maturing African leaders rediscover & live out their context?
  - What would the evidence be of a matured African leader living out their unique voice?
  - What does a mature African leader's unique voice actually look like?
  - Chris' further 'Distilled' Notes as Group 2.5A was sharing:
    - Genesis 2:13: Part of the Garden of Eden 'created' rivers originated in present-day Ethiopia.
    - In other words: Place matters.
    - Deconstructing some assumptions in Chris' NPO 2.0 question:

- How does a mature African leader rediscover their context and their uniquely African voice?
- What does mature spiritual growth even look like? Said another way, What does it mean for a Christian leader to grow in an African context?
- How do Christian leaders grow and flourish in Africa?
- Has the African voice been lost, or rather suppressed?
- What is the African voice? Does “voice/vocation” =
  - New models (of church, spiritual growth, etc.)?
  - A cultural expression?
  - A deep identity shift?

2. Group 2.5B: Discussed the following questions:

- Where do the thoughts that shape our ‘African identity’ actually come from?
- How do we identify the lenses that shape our historical/cultural/spiritual understanding of what it means to be made in God’s Image as Africans?
- Identity speaks of calling, which is rooted in a particular context’s place.
- Image speaks of voice, which fills up a particular space.
  - Both are critical, connected concepts.
- Chris’ further ‘Distilled’ Notes as Group 2.5A was sharing:
  - What is redeemable and good from the widely diverse and confusing mixture of African identities (Ex: 54 countries make up the African continent; 11 official national languages in South Africa alone)?
  - General response that the NPO 2.0 question posed was thought-provoking and sparked great dialogue.
  - Focus on what the physical representation of an Image-Bearer of God looked like in a mature African leader.
  - How is an African leader constituted across different social circles/ ethnicities/economic classes? In other words, *how does place, context, culture, and socio-economic status inform vocation for Africans?*
  - Whose perception first and foremost informed and defined the sense of an African self (i.e. To what extent is the sense of an ‘African’ colonial and Western in and of itself?)
  - What does an African leader actually look like? Fascinating response from a participant: “I am clueless. My head is spinning in what an African leader looks like. Who am I?” (<– This response validates my entire NPO itself).
  - Broader questions: What was God’s intent in the beginning? What is the Garden of Eden for Africa? Said in Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s manner, “What is God’s Dream for Africa?”

3. EXPLORE 1 (Examine): THE 5 WHYS

- Personal activity involving 5 post-it notes, ordered #1-5 and stuck on wall.
- Each row will include 5 responses from the same workshop participant.
- The initial question asked, “Why is this NPO worth exploring at its root levels?”
  - Key:
    - Roots was defined as “an underground system of life.” (In other words, we are focusing on systemic issues in this activity).
    - #4 WHY was a specific sentence to finish: “The Root Issue is...”
    - #5 WHY landed on a core ‘reason’ why the Root Issue is what it is.

<b>WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT INITIALS</b>	<b>WHY #1</b>	<b>WHY #2</b>	<b>WHY #3</b>	<b>#WHY 4: FINISH THE SENTENCE: "THE ROOT ISSUE IS..."</b>	<b>WHY #5</b>
<b>SMK</b>	"Because we miss a significant part of who God is and why we are here if we ignore His Image in Africa."	"...It shapes our faith (our theology of God and people) and how we live it out on earth..."	"It defines our entire life and faith in God. It shapes our purpose on earth for eternity."	<b>"The Root Issue is... finding our God-given identity (voice) in the context of our place and history."</b>	<i>"Because it leads us to love (relationship). It [leads to] love of God, self, others, and creation, all in the context of relationships."</i>
<b>NR</b>	"It's about defining meaning and purpose. What is worth pursuing?"	"We are clarifying our assumptions of what African leadership could look like."	"Our ideas about identity shape our living and our way of being in the world."	<b>"The Root Issue is... how do African leaders grow in Africa."</b>	<i>"Growth is always contextual and embodied."</i>
<b>LW</b>	"It's much needed for attention, direction, and to make an impact in the world."	"Because it is a problem that needs attention."	"We have neglected it for a long time."	<b>"The Root Issue is... lack of knowledge and information."</b>	<i>"No identity. Not understanding the root problem; so unable to solve it with real ideas."</i>
<b>VJ</b>	"You have to know where it all started."	"Because I need an identity that explains who I am."	"Because without knowing who I am, I will be lost."	<b>"The Root Issue is... [knowing] who I am in my [core] identity."</b>	<i>"Because I've realized today that I may not actually know who I am."</i>
<b>GM</b>	"To test and clarify the assumptions with the original [NPO] proposition."	"In order to ensure that we have a correct departure point."	"So that I may adopt the correct process to establish and find the answer."	<b>"The Root Issue is... a misunderstanding of what the African voice or identity is."</b>	<i>"If we understand what the African voice is, then we can root out the issue."</i>

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT INITIALS	WHY #1	WHY #2	WHY #3	#WHY 4: FINISH THE SENTENCE: "THE ROOT ISSUE IS..."	WHY #5
BM	"Because it holds the key to unlocking the African potential."	"Because I believe she [Africa] has something unique to offer [to the world] but she has not yet identified her uniqueness."	"I see her [Africa] struggle to come to terms with who she is. I am part of that struggle."	<b>"The Root Issue is... outward circumstance or thought coming to bear on the original unadulterated thought."</b>	<i>"I believe the Creator had a thought in His heart and mind when He created Africa and her people. This has either not been discovered or was there [originally], but so much has come into the picture to distort the original idea."</i>
MM	"To rediscover the source of African thought."	"So that we can appreciate the mindset of an African leader."	"So that we can ascertain the reason that the African voice was lost."	<b>"The Root Issue is... to identify the African voice and why it is allegedly lost."</b>	<i>"So that the African leader's voice can be rediscovered."</i>
CR	"It changes one's mindset."	"Because of conditioned, limited thinking."	"Because of historical, cultural, and societal influences."	<b>"The Root Issue is... conditioning."</b>	<i>"Because a conditioned mindset is limiting."</i>
CN	"There's a presupposition that there must be a uniquely African voice that is apparently lost. Why is this even significant in [God's] Kingdom?"	"There is need to clarify what an identity in Christ looks like. Isn't it supposed to be universal?"	"I believe that the fundamental identity of believers should be Christ-centric and not ethnicity based."	<b>"The Root Issue is... that we put aside what Jesus said - 'They will know that you're my disciples by the way you love one another.'"</b>	<i>"Kingdom living is not emphasized nor taught. Hence, misinterpretation of Kingdom culture and loss of a [Kingdom] identity [persists]."</i>

#### 4. EXPLORE 2 (Experiment): 3-12-3 BRAINSTORM

- Pairs (1 group of 3) activity involving selecting a "Big Idea" to develop and prototype, out of time spent in reflective dialogue in reading through workshop participant responses to the "5 WHYS," in particular #4 and #5, which land at the 'Root Issue' and core reason why said issue exists.

- Note: This activity could have (should have) lasted much longer, but was only begun with 1 hour left in the workshop.

<u>WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT GROUP &amp; INITIALS</u>	<u>BIG IDEA TO PROTOTYPE</u>	<u>HOW TO BEGIN</u>
Group #1 (BM & CR)	"Returning to the original state we were [as Africans] in the heart of God."	<p><b><u>Vehicle for Big Idea: Education.</u></b></p> <p>As <b><u>teachers of the Gospel</u></b>, we focus on returning to the heart of the Image of God within Africans. We must remain mindful of stripping away cultural excess and cultural (mis)translations of what this looks like for Africans. We must <b><u>look systemically from the mountaintop</u></b> [Heifetz: 'Get on the balcony'] at this issue. How do we develop courageous conviction to [speak the truth] with Western / American cultures [about where they have steered us wrong here]?"</p>
Group #2 (MM & VJ)	<p><b>Q: "In (a diverse) South Africa, what is a unified African voice?"</b></p> <p><b>A: Focus on [maturing] identity as African leaders. <u>Formal training</u> is necessary to elevate African leaders with the rest of the world, particularly from the West. Surveys and dialogue with diverse African voices are key in discerning this question. We will need to <u>evaluate race relations</u> and how they have historically, and currently, affected the South African voice. Look at the <u>effects of the English language as a dominant global voice</u> through which 'all' must speak.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Hosting inter-ministry dialogues</u></b> to bridge the existing cultural gaps, and to [create new unified, safe spaces to mature].</p> <p>Some of the 'hows' are in the answer for the Big Idea (&lt;-).</p>

<u>WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT GROUP &amp; INITIALS</u>	<u>BIG IDEA TO PROTOTYPE</u>	<u>HOW TO BEGIN</u>
Group #3 (SMK, GM, & CN)	"Our identity is found in how we love one another ( <i>John 13:35 - "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."</i> ) We must find a Christ-centered identity as disciples of love from credible, authoritative voices that are not in competition with one another."	We introduce this sort of love through <b>discipleship</b> . It is linked to <b>modeling this love in community</b> . This is an <b>embodied, relational process that becomes actualized in intentional community</b> . Initially, this must be experienced in non-threatening, intentional spaces such as shared music, food, and sports.
Group #4 (NR & LW)	"How do we unlock <u>local potential</u> across Kouga Municipality? We develop an <u>Incubation Hub</u> where we use <u>local leaders to mentor youth in our communities, using existing resources</u> . Practically in JBay, we begin with Leadership Exchange (LXP) and Victory Gap Year (VGY) students."	Start <b>short-term local service projects for local youth</b> . Existing leadership development organizations like LXP and VGY are not easy to join (costly, focused on non-locals). These projects are practically known as 'local programs, not for locals.' This <b>Incubating Spiritual Growth Hub</b> should take on an apprenticeship model that is low cost, local, and simple in focus. It must be connected to existing resources that are organically found.

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### 1-PAGE POST-WORKSHOP MESSAGE TO STAKEHOLDERS

#### A SUMMARY OF MY NPO

- How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (i.e. their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?
  - Twin Foci, Rooted in an African Context:
    - Identity (*Image of God in human beings*)
    - +
    - Vocational Calling (*Your unique voice, bursting forth from your most natural self, heard throughout the world*)
    - Rooted in an African Context ("*All theology is socially located*" – Dr. Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black*)
  - Note: This is the 2.0 version of my NPO, that I used to begin my Design Workshop and have carried since Spring 2020 in my Topic Expertise Essay. This will be revised as a 3.0 version for the final Design Workshop Report.



### 3 BIG IDEAS TO 'NAPKIN PITCH' AND PROTOTYPE IN DMIN 851 (SPRING 2021)

1. Year-Long Throughout 2021: Pilot a beta (12 people) Kouga Leadership Cohort with local leaders.
  - Note: *This idea was expressed in by every single group, and for most groups, was a critical, if not core, component, of what they were trying to express. This is overwhelmingly the Big Idea I am to prototype (and what I feel called to experiment with given my own vocational calling & vision) heading into Spring 2021.*
2. Quarterly throughout 2021: Host a series of educational experiences and honest, safe leadership dialogues across local churches, NGO's, and ministry organizations on the core issues that divide us as African leaders maturing in the Image of God. Core audience for these experiences: *Local pastors, NGO leaders, key community leaders across denomination, church, organization, age, culture, etc.*
3. Long-Term Discernment: Develop a retreat centre, retreat, and/or curriculum that embodies the Image of God and vocational discernment / development process for African leaders, that is contextually appropriate, culturally relevant, biblically true, and powerfully empowering in deepening sustainable, holistic transformation across individuals and systems.
  - Note: Please see scanned PDF Napkin Pitch Worksheets for further rough detail for these 3 Big Ideas to Prototype in Spring 2021 during DMIN 851.

### DEFINITION OF DONE

- My telos is a beta 2-year Kouga Leadership Cohort; a small, safe, covenanted community of holistic formation & honest empowerment of African Christian leaders.

### OTHER KEY INSIGHTS & AREAS REQUIRING FURTHER RESEARCH

- I was grateful that COVID-19 regulations in South Africa allowed for us to meet in a small workshop group, in person. A Zoom workshop would not have worked.
- I could have used at least 2 days for this whole process. Literally every section of my notes include the scribbled phrases "Need longer" or "Didn't do." Culturally with Africans, and also with Christian leaders from a developing context, rushing the process is simply not possible. Many "quick brainstorming" or "write this idea down on a Post-It Note" sort of activities don't work. What does work: *Slow, robust dialogue facilitated by a trusted scribe. Really listening for the heart of the African voice, especially if you are a Westerner / non-African.*
- We didn't get to any closing activities, and thus didn't rank votes for Big Ideas, nor work on follow-up Napkin Pitches. I have completed this work as faithfully as possible given what I have discerned and sense from my work the past 16 months.
- An area I will continue to need to explore: *How does life in a survival mentality (the 'lower levels' within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) affect and color maturation as an African leader in a holistic, slow, formational sustainable way?*

## ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS DOCUMENTATION

Date/Location of Interview: Thursday, October 29th, 2020 (Bootlegger Coffee Century City)

Interview Subject: Lusanda M. (isiXhosa woman, RZIM, Circle Around podcast host)

Interview Notes:

Two concepts spring to mind:

1. *Reclaiming proper ubuntu as a philosophical construct* – One that is taken back from the idea that we all need to be nice to each other (a whitewashed version of ubuntu). To reclaim it as a philosophy that our humanity is interlinked with one another. If a person's humanity or dignity is affirmed or dignified by others, then we all are growing in humanity.
  - *"A theology without memory cannot abolish slavery"* – If there wasn't memory of what actually happened, this cannot be called ubuntu.
    - 1994 and afterwards in South Africa: Pursuing social memory as a marker stopped once all the apartheid museums opened here. Rwanda was different than this. Look at her instagram post from today for more.
    - Who created the vision for upward mobility?
    - We can change the street names but memory work has stopped there.
    - Apartheid and colonization has stopped – but the memory work hasn't gone deeper than them.
    - We were grown up being told "don't be a burden to others" – is this the effect of urbanization where we train others to stay in their silos?
    - In the township you fend for yourself – this speaks to the lack of trust and ownership of that space. It is either where people were removed to – you never own a place, you move around to a place to take roots.
    - We know our identity when we want to recognize other people too. I am an isiXhosa Christian woman.
2. *The theology of place and memory* – I am being invited to honestly reflect about my position as I help others.
  - *"The obsession of modernity is abstraction"* – We want a universal truth because we don't want to look at the particulars of things.
    - Part of a faithful witness is going back to particulars of place and resisting the way which modernity has caused us to be distracted and removed
    - From a tourist to a pilgrim – this is honest, good, hard work.
    - *Returning to our particular places will help us recover the gifts of our families, our place. What does a "Christian Theology of Place" entail?*

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Date/Location of Interview: *Thursday, 29 October 2020 (McDonalds Century City)*

Interview Subjects: *Siphamandla (Space) M. & Siphumeze (Blax) R. (isiXhosa men, Estraweni Fast Foods, Young Entrepreneurs & Philippi Community Development Advocates)*

Interview Notes:

- Note: Most of my interview with Space and Blax, who I have mentored for years, was unrecorded and deeply personal in nature. I initially interviewed them and used their feedback in my Discovery Workshop in Fall 2019. This was a follow-up and check-in of sorts, to ask them if they would be willing to help me facilitate some sort of beta group for leadership formation cohorts (*one of my Big Ideas to prototype in Spring 2021, essentially*), even though they live in the Cape Flats, about 8 hours from where I now live. One profound insight in particular from them stood out enough for me to record in the moment. It was their simple answers to this question:
  - My Question: *What do you need in this season of leadership?*
    - Siphamandla (Space) M.'s Answer: *REST*
    - Siphumeze (Blax) R.'s Answer: *SUSTAINABILITY*
  - My Summary: *"A safe space to process and develop in vulnerability."*
    - In other words: A FORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP COHORT.

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Date/Location of Interview: Tuesday, November 10th, 2020 (After our weekly LSF5 Cohort Call)

Interview Subject: Dr. MaryKate Morse (Dean of Portland Seminary, Lead Mentor of DMin in Leadership & Spiritual Formation, Authority on Cross-cultural Leadership Mentoring Communities, Author of *Lifelong Leadership*)

Interview Notes:

- Creating mentoring communities for 'frontline,' under-resourced leaders is so critical. These leaders are especially lonely, with few safe spaces, hungry for people to come alongside them.
- This work is largely unsustainable 1 on 1. *Something gets multiplied in a peer relationship within a cohort* – this makes it sustainable for the long haul
- Training people in how to replicate this is the key. MKM has done this in a variety of contexts cross-culturally over the past several decades.
- What I find happens is that *"I create the experience and then train a community of leaders from within that experience."* This is the idea of 'Reflective Practice' at work.
- Colonialism teaches you to work hard to get ahead – to work hard for 'the man' – to get connected to those who can help you succeed – usually this is by being a part of a leader's entourage, as being affiliated with the right leader establishes the groundwork for you to start your own thing.
- This isn't mentoring however. It is the capitalistic way of getting ahead and connecting. You never speak truth or show your weakness in this sort of group. You always act like things are better than they are. There is no honesty.
- MKM – I think I made people hungry but didn't root and settle in for the long haul.
- *First – You have to be discerning of who is hungry, in it for the vulnerability and true transformational process. There is a deep safety in this sort of leadership hunger.*
- *I wonder if even smaller groups is a better idea in developing contexts (5-8 leaders).*
- *A major challenge in a developing context is the funding strategy. How do you solve this? How do you create and expect people to be away for five days to train? This would work better for the long haul if it could work in country – to work with Christians in country who can raise up and develop Christian leaders – raising up the next generation of Christian leaders (like Christ, to Christ, for Christ) is the compelling message here.* There is a marriage between the formation and the business to make it sustainable for the long haul.
- I would need to create a non-profit, solicit a board, a group of wealthy donors, (not a lot) to make this sustainable, at least initially. *Leighton Ford Ministries has a grant like this (So does the Lily Endowment, Mergon, Hannelie Rupert with In Harmonie).*
- Book recommendations:
  - Who Do We Choose to Be? by Margaret Wheatley
    - Wheatley's Big Idea: What we are called to do is create "Islands of Sanity (MKM: "Islands of Shalom")"
    - "We can no longer solve the global problems of this time at large levels" – where people experience love, collaboration, rest, hope, etc.
    - "We are not broken people - it is our relationships that need repair."
    - Western Civilization is in a decline stage – inequality is growing and growing. This must be addressed at a leadership level.
  - Lifelong Leadership by MaryKate Morse
    - Leaders need to feel accepted, loved, trained for (training etc comes out of this). Safe cohort communities is the key creation. – (General Theory of Love – not about what a therapists says, but the profound sense of

acceptance, allows for mimicking, revision, etc.). People don't get that leaders can't be formed without feeling loved by God and others. This takes a guide (this is my calling and work!).

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Date/Location of Interview: Thursday, November 10th, 2020 (Zoom)

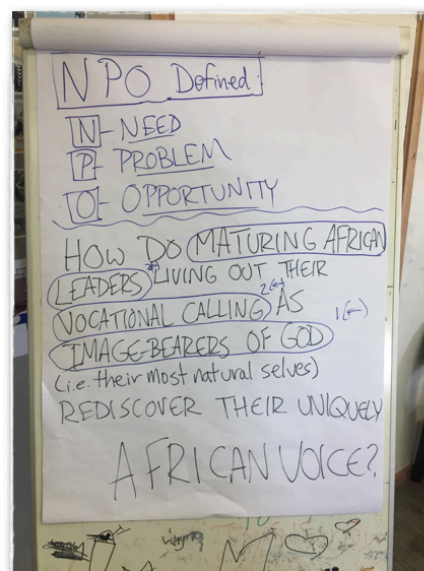
Interview Subject: Adri-Marie V.H. (Afrikaans woman, Facilitator for Centre for Courage & Renewal, Ignatian Spiritual Director at the Jesuit Institute, Longtime friend, Community Development advocate, teacher)

Interview Notes:

- Any setting of a safe space – the setting of a container is the absolute heart of what formation will take place. *"How we gather matters"* (Tom Smith) The container does half of the work in setting a safe space. This is what people take for granted.
- Also important than the establishing of a safe space: What are the small habits to put in – learned behaviors, consistency of group setting, 'what' they they are saying yes to. This often hasn't been clear in cross-cultural settings that I've led, and I've made mistakes – *"People are so hungry for safe spaces they will bring whatever they want."*
- In developing leaders: Are you able to tap into well-being work without it being blatantly Christian – I have a heart for care-givers so I wanted to do this.
- Parker Palmer: Speaks frequently of one's role and one's soul (He defines this as being whole, full of integrity). Where do they clash, where are they aligned? *We resource the Inner Teacher – they are able to hold individual work in a communal space. Often we have to choose this – are we together learning the same things, or more individually rooted in a community?*
- Ignatius: Am I giving the spiritual exercises in a healing mode, or a prayer mode (*Do I want to make it a healing journey, or a prayer /development journey? or do I put the emphasis on a 'building' journey? Subtle but significant formational differences*). Ignatian spirituality talks a lot about the healing of the Image of God within our souls.
- Our primary healing is in our belovedness: This is the centrality of it all. Some of the people I do direction with cross-culturally I cannot start with zero (I have to start with harmful images of Jesus, 'off' images of Jesus cross culturally).
- Trevor Hudson (HER SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR!) – *"The Cycle of Grace"* – he designed it from a theologian / psychologist perspective – why are people burning out – study the life of Jesus and find a sustainable way of living. *Starts with 'resting,' then 'input' then significance / output. – Look at this as a model for my cohorts.*
- African context for leadership formation – *Need to make it communal. Need to keep the individual growth journey communal – 'what have you gained from your grandparents, etc'" – calling on them to witness from their family history, etc. Adri-Marie views it as her crowd of witnesses from Hebrews 12. An overly individual focus accentuates that it is Western. Pace, etc. are super critical here.*
- As a fellow white person / Western person – we have to go through our own identity crises. But every single South African has a deep identity crisis – it doesn't matter from what side. I am called to faithfulness and being true to who I am. In some sense I am more communal than I think. Need POC to be allies and give feedback as friends. Because we live in such a large cancel culture, it's not helpful to listen to everyone any longer. I cannot be everything for everyone.
  - God is a Trinity – in itself, God is a community.
  - God as Community – this grounds this work into a sacred community.
  - The concept of home or land – if there is a gaping wound for someone (grandfather forcefully removed) – where is home is such a beautiful idea – *"Home is such a beautiful idea rooted in community."*

- People can tell if you trust God within them, if I value them as people. In terms of my whiteness, this is where I go. In groups, people can be very forgiving if people sense I have an actual belief God will guide them in their wisdom within. This covers a multitude of sins.
- Never underestimate the power of a good joke.
- Adri-Marie's focus on leaders' free will: The free will for someone to be part of something. Someone needs to have CHOICE to be there in a leadership community for this. If you are forced to be a part of something, it doesn't work. Introducing 'tastes' as appetizers before belonging fully.
- Make it hard for a group to join (really need to work to fully commit).
- Emphasize from the start there is a relatively strict Rule of Life (commitment, buying in – this is 'creating the container') – Ignatius talks a lot about desire and making sure it is there for people.
  - *"Work with those who want to and the right people will be in the room"*
  - Still doing Rhythm of Life stuff (with Tom Smith) as it talks about the whole of life. Gives language to what you are doing. Want to get the conversation on the table with consistency. *I have totally overestimated how much we can change over time (change happens small and deep and slow).* If we can get leaders to have a certain way of life
  - Question I asked her: How do you do deeper level work when you live in a survival mentality / world?
    - *"The soul knows what the soul needs. The gift of space in a Christian context to notice what God is up to is such a profound gift."* This is what the soul needs to discern and listen and hear what the soul and God needs to say. You create some pathways to walk on, but each person discerns what the next step is for them. This gift of space – when a person is in survival mode, they won't naturally go there. But if they are saying yes to a program or to enter into this space, this is helpful.
      - Enough arrival time is key – to decompress and to express or let go of life, so that I can start with the deeper thing. *"It's about doing what we can to help the soul show up."*
  - Just be faithful to what my heart is telling me. The rest will fall into place.

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**Clockwise From Top Left:**

- 1) Design Workshop crew;
- 2) My NPO, Version 2.0 (will be revised); 3-5) Working groups developing a Big Idea to present to the group at the end of the Design Workshop; 6) Pairs Dialogue unpacking 'The 5 Whys' underneath my NPO.



## APPENDIX D—MILESTONE 4: PROTOTYPE ITERATION REPORT

PROTOTYPE #1: KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORT: (*Beta: 8 months, May – Dec 2021*)

1. Prototype Description: The KLC prototype functions as an experiential '*Lectio Divina*'<sup>157</sup> experience that reflects on the inner world of a leader's holistic formation unto maturity

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<sup>157</sup> Dr. David Benner, a psychologist, spiritual director, retreat leader, and prolific author of spiritual formation, defines '*lectio divina*' (Latin, originally meaning 'Divine/spiritual reading') as a prayer of opening the self to God:

Although it is often treated as a technique, *lectio divina* is not really a procedure or even a method – at least not a single method. It is more an approach and an expectation. It arises out of a desire to not simply hear the words of Scriptures but also encounter the Word behind the words. At other times and in other ways of engaging with Scriptures we may seek insights, eternal truths and precepts for living. But in *lectio divina* what we seek is not information or motivation but communion and union. We seek nothing less than God. We attend to the Word as a way of opening ourselves to God and listen for God's living word to us. *Lectio divina* treats Scriptures not as a text to be studied or a set of truths to be grasped, but as the living Word – always alive and active, always fresh and new. It is, therefore, not so much a way of reading as a way of listening. The listening posture that it encourages is more passive than active. Reading Scriptures in this way is reading (and listening) with heart and spirit open. Don't try to find something or make anything out of the passage. Wait for the gift that God has for you in it. Read slowly and reverentially, savoring what you hear and gently listening for the still, small voice of God that says, 'This is my word for you today.' It is listening for the voice of God, communicated through Scriptures and revealed by the Spirit. It is, therefore, prayer because it is an opening of self to God." (Benner, *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer*, p. 40).

Building off Benner's expansive concept of *lectio divina*, my prototype will use four spaces (rooms) within my house as a formational progression into the heart of a leader's inner world. The four spaces will be created to invite the heart more deeply into a communal experience of the love of God, our friend. They will mirror the classic historical steps of *lectio divina* in its formational essence.

We will begin at (1) our *dining table*, as we *listen attentively* to each other's stories, in an informal narrative process of shared dialogue as we welcome each other to be present to God, each other, and our own souls, around a common table. Food and drink will be shared as we gather together as one community. We will then sit down in (2) our *living room*, for the purpose of a more focused period of *meditating upon* the presence of God, and the Triune Community of Love's active work within our midst in this current moment. We will *ponder deeply* a guiding, formational concept that frames our shared space for this time.

Next, we will literally descend down our stairs to (3) our girls' *playroom* (doubling as our *family room*), as a metaphor for the formational journey downward and inward, from the mind to the heart, which is a core inward movement within the contemplative inner world of a leader. Once there, with a unified childlike spirit, we will *respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, and play*, as we dialogue more deeply with the Spirit of God, our inner hearts, and each other in honesty. Lastly, we will ascend outside to (4) our *outside deck*, which provides a beautifully expansive view of the Indian Ocean less than a kilometer away. As our gaze lifts upward and outward, we will *rest in contemplation* of the formational invitations that Christ, our friend, has opened our hearts to throughout this short experience. We will seek to '*gain a balcony perspective on our lives*,' to borrow a critical leadership practice from Ronald Heifetz. Together, we will commit to an accountable pathway forward to walk in community, as we mature unto Christ.

in Christ, in the hospitable warmth of our home, as several leadership triads move through four 'spatial environments' (rooms) designed to draw the heart out of hiding, and into the light of a safe, honest community of formational love.

2. 'Goldilocks Quality': Key strategies to ensure that my Leadership Cohort prototype will maintain a 'Goldilocks quality' include: (1) Hosting the prototype and interview debriefing in my own home, in order to communicate a deep sense of hospitality; that the creation of a shared, safe 'home' is central to the willingness of leaders to open up to one another in transparent vulnerability. (2) Modeling the spiritual practice of '*Lectio Divina*' (*Listen, Ponder, Respond, Rest*) as a formational rhythm that will serve as the trellis (*Rule of Life*) by which our cohort community will thrive. (3) Listening deeply, without confirmation bias, for what is communicated (and what remains unspoken) as initial reactions in the interview process, particularly in relationship to how these leaders desire to be formed unto maturity in Christ.
3. Research Question: Is a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders - across churches, NGO's, and leadership organizations in a local area - the most transformative vehicle for a leader to be formed holistically and honestly empowered?
4. Assessment Benchmark(s): 1) Confirmation that this spatial environment approach to leadership formation does create a safe space for leaders to open to God and one another for deep transformation. 2) A covenanted commitment from a beta cohort of African Christian leaders across the Kouga Municipality for 8 months, May to December 2021. 3) Tangible, measurable, sustainable growth in each African Christian leader's sense of identity as an Image-Bearer of God, with growing clarity in their sense of vocational calling. Desired growth will be surveyed, transformed into a sustainable development path, and evaluated each quarter throughout the course of the Beta Cohort.
5. Prototype Participant Demographic Description: My participants are associated with the Leadership Experience program. They represent hungry, willing, and mature young

leaders across Jeffreys Bay, and wider up into the continent of Africa, and thus serve as a prime 'Beta Cohort' for me to prototype with. 4 are women, 2 are men. Ages range from a late 20's male to a mid 40's female. I am blessed to have a wide variety of African ethnicities present in this small participant group, including an Afrikaans female, a Zimbabwean female, two South African coloured females, and three black South Africans of isiXhosa descent.

6. Summarize Learnings: What worked well included meeting in the warm hospitality of our home, sharing a common meal together, facilitating a shared spiritual practice that featured group dialogue and no dominant spiritual leader, and the fairly robust transparent honesty that was present from the first conversation. What could be improved are the logistics of transporting leaders without their own cars or drivers' licenses to and from their work, and safely returning them home. Additionally, and this was shared widely across the participants, we simply need more time together - to dialogue, to read Scripture, to pray and worship, to learn to listen to the Spirit. The formational content felt intriguing, yet challenging and difficult, to most. Developing a liturgy that can be taken home, or a curriculum that had preparation work, a guide for the evening, and reflective followup, would be key to content being more functionally usable for underdeveloped leaders. Additionally, settling on a set date and time will prove to be a challenge.
7. My Important Discovery: Quoting my observation notes: *"We need more time (to think, process, engage, dialogue, form together in community)."* I was amazed at how deeply everyone bought into the opportunity to journey in formational development together in a small, covenanted cohort community. I loved how the immediate discovery was a mixture of *"we really need this sort of intentional formational development, and we need it to last longer!"*

PROTOTYPE #2: KOUGA LEADERSHIP DIALOGUES: (Beta: Quarterly, June 2021 on)

- I will repeat the Prototype #1 experience for the entire LXP staff at their house, inviting other leaders who weren't able or willing to participate initially, at some point during early winter in South Africa, likely from early June. I will deepen and widen the experience into an entire evening of formational dialogue, content, and feedback, as a 'taste and see' of the sort of formational rhythm our Beta Cohort will follow. We will seek to use this experience as a deeper test for a s\_a three-part formational leadership dialogue I will facilitate quarterly, beginning in June 2021. As a result of this, Prototype #2 is much less 'fleshed out' because I am going to use the framework from Prototype #1 for a deeper experience at the LXP house. In other words, I will be giving this much greater attention once the Spring 2021 DMIN LSF5 semester ends. Lastly, I sensed from early in Year 1 that my NPO project would center around a formational leadership cohort. I desire to pursue that further.

MOST VIABLE PROTOTYPE (MVP): 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort

I sensed an emerging invitation from the Spirit of God, from at least a year ago, if not earlier, and this initial prototyping experience only confirmed my discernment even more strongly: There is a deep hunger, and wide desire, for a safe, vulnerable, honest, mutually-supportive, formational cohort for African Christian leaders. Leaders in this country, who pour out to others sacrificially, are not taken care of, resourced, or supported for the most part. They are drowning and on their own. A 'beta' covenanted formational cohort where leaders are relationally trained in a practice-based cohort of shared life, the inner life of a leader, and broad Kingdom principles, is what my NPO must focus on in Year 3 of this Doctor of Ministry program in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

African Christian leaders are under-resourced in the formational development of their own inner world. In many ways (and this is true of leaders globally as well), they are thrust into adulthood with the unformed development of a much younger child. If they are adequately

resourced at all, it is likely in either basic survival necessities (food, shelter, bare-bones education and skills development) or in Christian theology. There is a large disconnect between the lives of most African Christian leaders, their spiritual practice, and the realities of their actual lives. I seek to help bridge this gap by empowering leaders to develop and mature their inner worlds, as they discern and step into their vocational calling within the 'Community of Creation.'

In many ways, this feels like the "natural ecology of my life," as Parker Palmer describes the vocational environment in which a person flourishes. Palmer writes *"As I learn more about the seed of true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted - the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively, accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself"* (Palmer, Let Your Life Speak, p. 17). This will hopefully be a large portion of my vision and calling moving forward, and my increasing focus in this coming season of my life.

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# Napkin Pitch Worksheet #1 - Kouga Leadership Cohort

Use this template to solidify an idea. Gain clarity on how to execute and pitch your idea. A good idea can be communicated simply, often on the back of a napkin.

Create a napkin pitch for each concept you propose to address the NPO.

WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?

#1 - Kouga Leadership Cohort (Year-long throughout 2021): Pilot a beta 12-15 person Kouga Leadership Cohort with local leaders across the Kouga Municipality.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Local African Christian leaders across Kouga Municipality.

WHAT IS THE NPO?

How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-bearers of God (i.e. their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?

HOW DOES THE USER BENEFIT?

Participation & engagement in a small, safe, covenantal community of holistic formation & honest empowerment of African Christian leaders.

ILLUSTRATE OR DESCRIBE HOW IT WORKS

African Christian leaders engage in & commit to weekly participation in a small, non-threatening, developmental community of like-minded/like-hearted leaders, from a variety of local churches, NGOs, leadership organizations, & other sectors, for the purpose of holistic spiritual formation & honest empowerment. The beta cohort commits to a year of growth together, with the potential to re-up for a second year of development together, & a third year to co-lead a new cohort.

WHY MIGHT IT FAIL?

Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs framework, this holistic self-actualization work may simply not be valued as critically important enough.

WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE WE TESTING?

Is a small, covenantal, safe community of ACL's - across churches, NGOs, & local area - the most transformative vehicle for a leader to be formed holistically, & honestly empowered?

HOW MIGHT WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

1. Initial covenantal commitment from a beta (12 ppl.) cohort of ACL's.  
2. Final "graduation"/completion of the same cohort of leaders, who saw this process through.

WHAT MAKES THIS STAND OUT FROM OTHER APPROACHES?

To be committed to in a world marked largely by survival & a focus on "the now." Also, financial participation, internet access, & the time necessary to contextualize our learning are real hurdles that must be addressed.

It is a slow, small, steady, safe, ruthlessly honest approach to formation in a non-competitive, neutral environment.

3. Tangible, measurable, sustainable growth in the ACL's sense of identity as an Image-bearer of God, & clarity in their sense of vocational calling.

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\* ACL's = African Christian leaders



# Napkin Pitch Worksheet #2 - Honest, Safe Leadership Dialogues

Use this template to solidify an idea. Gain clarity on how to execute and pitch your idea. A good idea can be communicated simply, often on the back of a napkin.

Create a napkin pitch for each concept you propose to address the NPO.

<p><b>WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?</b></p> <p>#2 - Honest, Safe Leadership Dialogues (Quarterly throughout 2021): Host a series of educational experiences + honest, safe leadership dialogues across local churches, NGOs, + ministry organizations on the core issues that divide us as African leaders maturing in the image of God.</p>		
<p><b>WHO IS IT FOR?</b> Local African Christian leaders across Kenya Municipality.</p>	<p><b>WHAT IS THE NPO?</b> How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image Bearers of God (i.e. their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?</p>	<p><b>HOW DOES THE USER BENEFIT?</b> A facilitated - safe, honest, "neutral" space of learning, dialogue, + holistic development across the broader municipal region. A place whereby all can bring honest, forthright questions.</p>
<p><b>ILLUSTRATE OR DESCRIBE HOW IT WORKS</b></p> <p>A quarterly 1/2 day learning lab / facilitated workshop / "praxis" community of dialogue, learning, + formational practice, whereby a cross-section of local leaders come together in a safe space to listen to + learn from one another. The process of the dialogues would have a 4-cycle focus:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div>① Topic Lecture/Presentation</div> <div>② Invited Response</div> <div>③ Group Dialogue + Discernment</div> <div>④ Towards Praxis + Integration (Tools)</div> </div>		
<p><b>WHY MIGHT IT FAIL?</b> Too outside the box / threatening / foreign of a learning concept?</p>	<p><b>WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE WE TESTING?</b> Is there a need/hunger for a formative, safe space for leaders to dialogue + learn from each other with regularity?</p>	<p><b>HOW MIGHT WE MEASURE SUCCESS?</b></p> <div style="display: flex;"> <div>① Initial buy-in from Kenya leadership cohort members is a good "trial balloon."</div> <div>② Is there value/hunger for wider dialogue + facilitated space across this region?</div> <div>③ Will ACL's show up in a non-competitive, neutral manner?</div> </div>
<p><b>WHAT MAKES THIS STAND OUT FROM OTHER APPROACHES?</b></p> <p>It is broader (across Kenya Municipality), safe (for no one ministry's benefit), collaborative (a wider Kingdom focus), + focused on the greater common good.</p>		

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\*ACL's = African Christian Leaders

# Napkin Pitch Worksheet

## #3- Retreat Centre (+ Retreat Curriculum) for African Leaders

Use this template to solidify an idea. Gain clarity on how to execute and pitch your idea. A good idea can be communicated simply, often on the back of a napkin.

Create a napkin pitch for each concept you propose to address the NPO.

<p><b>WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?</b></p> <p>#3- Retreat Centre (+ Retreat Curriculum) for African Leaders (Longterm vision) over years/decades</p>		
<p>Develop/discern whether a retreat centre for African leaders (incl. a corresponding retreat + curriculum) that embodies the Image of God + the vocational discernment/development process, is a contextually appropriate, culturally relevant, biblically true, + powerfully empowering in deepening sustainable holistic transformation across individuals + systems.</p>		
<p><b>WHO IS IT FOR?</b></p> <p>Initially: Local African leaders across the Kanga Municipality + the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.</p>	<p><b>WHAT IS THE NPO?</b></p> <p>How do Maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (i.e. their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?</p>	<p><b>HOW DOES THE USER BENEFIT?</b></p> <p>(See Napkin Pitch #2).</p> <p>A facilitated, safe, honest, "neutral" space of learning, dialogue + holistic development across the broader province.</p>
<p><b>ILLUSTRATE OR DESCRIBE HOW IT WORKS</b></p> <p>There are <sup>too</sup> few spaces in South Africa (let alone the continent as a whole) where African leaders can play, rest, dream, envision, be equipped, etc., that are not owned or controlled by one particular party. This would be a collaborative, cooperative, publicly owned retreat + learning space that has a (literal) large, long table where all are welcome to contribute, learn, + have their voices raised. It would be safe, honest, inquisitive, formational, accessible, + open to all African leaders.</p>		
<p><b>WHY MIGHT IT FAIL?</b></p> <p>(See Napkin Pitch #2).</p> <p>Too Western/outside the box/threatening/foreign of a learning concept.</p>	<p><b>WHAT SPECIFICALLY ARE WE TESTING?</b></p> <p>(See Napkin Pitch #2)</p> <p>Is there a need/hunger for a formative, safe space for leaders to dialogue from + learn from each other w/ regularity?</p>	<p><b>HOW MIGHT WE MEASURE SUCCESS?</b></p> <p>(See Napkin Pitch #2)</p>
<p><b>WHAT MAKES THIS STAND OUT FROM OTHER APPROACHES?</b></p> <p>(See Napkin Pitch #2)</p>		

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## APPENDIX

### RECRUITING SCREENER: KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORT

#### Recruiting Process Summary

As hinted at in my storyboard, I am relying completely on the wisdom and discernment of local leaders in Jeffreys Bay, most of whom are associated with the [Leadership Experience](#) program. They represent hungry, willing, and mature young leaders across Jeffreys Bay, and wider up into the continent of Africa, and thus serve as a prime 'Beta Cohort' for me to prototype with. Additionally, since our family only moved to Jeffreys Bay just over a year ago, a few months prior to the South African lockdown for COVID-19, LXP leaders have proven to be some of the deepest people of peace<sup>158</sup> for my family since we have made our home here. I am entrusting the deep work of the Spirit of God in Pastor George Mwanza, Director of the LXP program, and Blessings Liato, a key leader within LXP, in particular, to help me prayerfully discern who should make up this initial beta cohort for the rest of 2021.

I am keenly aware that the Spirit of God has preceded me in this work, and that I am partnering with the Triune Community of Love to empower and mature highly capable leaders who live and work in this area. I will use the principle of *God, preceding me in formational work in the heart of all people* to prayerfully discern who to invite to be a part of the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort group for the rest of this NPO project. Thus, my Recruiting Screener questions are simple and straightforward, and are as follows:

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<sup>158</sup> Jesus describes a "person of peace" in the gospels in both Matthew 10:11 and Luke 10:6 as someone the disciples are to search for when they enter a village who will offer hospitality and openness to gospel ministry. He calls such people "worthy" of the disciples time and attention, a person whose home the disciples can base their efforts from when entering into an unfamiliar village. This principle - *Looking for a 'person of peace' as a relational hub from which to base mission within the Kingdom of God* - has long been a core principle within cross-cultural missional strategy. Tom Marshall, writing for <http://renew.org>, a disciple-making ministry, defines a person of peace as someone who "often opened the way for the Gospel to enter one's social group or even a village" (Marshall, "What is a 'Person of Peace?'" Accessed at <https://renew.org/what-is-the-person-of-peace/>).

### Recruiting Screener Questions

1. Desire to mature: *Do I see a willingness to grow in depth with God and others?*
2. A formational approach: *Is there a noticeable rhythm to how you learn and change?*
3. Honesty and transparency: *Is there a preference for real questions to be asked?*
4. Availability and commitment: This is initially a free, non-certified formational cohort experience for a period of 9 months. *Are you able to carve out 4-8 hours a week to dedicate to the reading, reflective exercises, prayer projects, and community commitments necessary to open the soul to the greatest depth of transformation possible with one another?*
5. Discerned invitation from the Spirit: *Do you sense God inviting you to participate?*

...

## STORYBOARDING MY MOST VALUABLE PROTOTYPE (MYP)

### INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Note: **Green text: Positive Observations** | **Red Text: Negative/Challenging Observations**

In my Recruiting Screener, I wrote the following: *"I will use the principle of **God, preceding me in formational work in the heart of all people** to prayerfully discern who to invite to be a part of the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort."* The ideal heart and makeup of a leader that I am looking for in potential Beta Cohort members include as many of the following characteristics:

- **Desire to mature:** *Do I see a willingness to grow in depth with God and others?*
- **A formational approach:** *Is there a noticeable rhythm to how you learn and change?*
- **Honesty and transparency:** *Is there a preference for real questions to be asked?*
- **Availability and commitment:** *This is initially a free, non-certified formational cohort experience for a period of 9 months. Are you able to carve out 4-8 hours a week to dedicate to the reading, reflective exercises, prayer projects, and community commitments necessary to open the soul to the greatest depth of transformation possible with one another?*
- **Discerned invitation from the Spirit:** *Do you sense God inviting you to participate?*

I also wrote that I am completely relying on the 'previous' work of God, and **the engagement of Blessings Liato, a key Leader Exchange staff member and one of two leaders who has shown the most interest in this potential cohort. Blessings has recruited and invited people from within her sphere of influence who she thought would fit the sorts of character profile that I sketched out above.** I was blown away by the kindness, character, desire to grow, and willingness to open up to a total stranger (myself) that I experienced in one short evening with some new friends in our home. Blessings' work clearly went before us, and I truly believe that the Spirit of God drew who was supposed to be present for our evening. I am confident that God will continue to do so moving forward as we seek to launch some sort of 'Beta Cohort' for the rest of 2021.

Regarding the Interview and Feedback process, I knew that **I had a small group of 6 local leaders for one short evening in our home**, in the middle of a busy week just prior to a long holiday weekend, and the week before LXP welcomed their own students for their gap year program beginning in April 2021. **Thus, I knew that I wouldn't be able to schedule 1x1 Interviews with each participant, nor would I be able to easily capture the sort of authentic, natural reaction I was looking for from a group Lectio Divina experience throughout my home.** Additionally, most Africans have been raised to be fairly soft-spoken, particularly out of a sense of honor for a pastor/perceived spiritual mentor such as myself. **What this means pragmatically is that a design-centric, instant feedback, off-the-cuff feedback style that is common for highly educated, well-versed Westerners to give simply doesn't work in my cultural context.** I knew that **my interview process would need to be done in a group format, gently and patiently asking a few simple questions, looking for 1-2 people to give feedback that would prompt someone else in the group to speak up.**

I also knew from years of experience working with under-resourced populations that **my wife Maxie is deeply gifted as a leader in these situations, and creates a safe and welcoming environment that allows others (particularly African women) to speak up with greater confidence.** Thus, I asked Maxie to be present throughout the evening, to take observation and interview notes for me (see attached), and to help me gently prompt further comment when she thought it necessary to ask for more. I have learned to lean implicitly on her during these sorts of conversations, especially if the company is mixed in gender and ethnic difference.

Thus, it made no sense for me to prepare an Interview Script with rote questions, or to divide each participant into a smaller group for feedback. We simply turned on my iPhone voice note recorder at the end of our Lectio Divina experience, and I asked the following 4 questions:

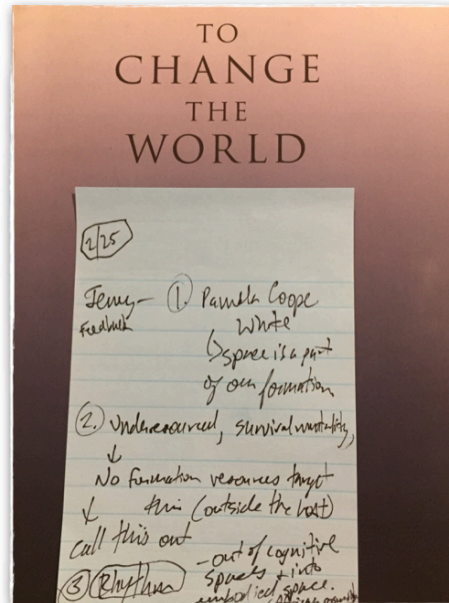
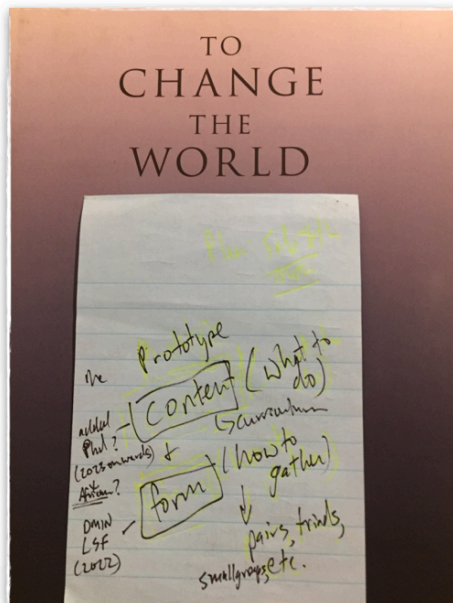
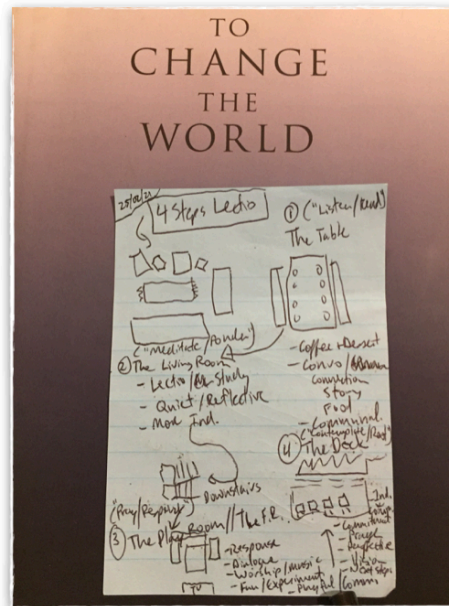
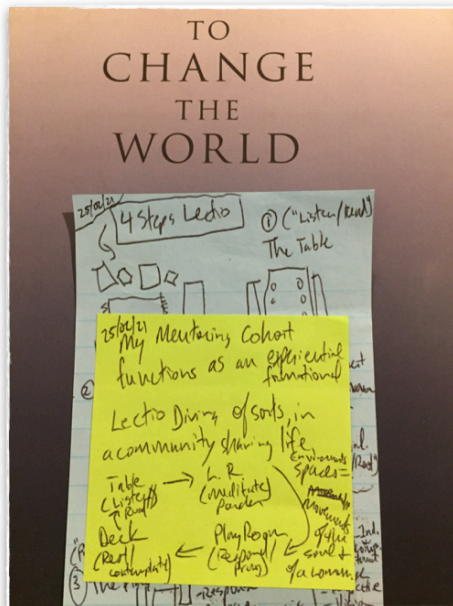
1. *What worked? / What didn't work?*
2. *What was the most important part of the evening to you? What mattered?*
3. *What about the way we discussed the Scripture made it come to life?*
4. *What could be different?*

Not everyone answered the questions, nor answered them directly. These questions were intentionally broad, open-ended, and not overly specific so that my guests could express themselves as they best saw fit. Their feedback is recorded and included in the *“Observation Notes and Summary – Kouga Leadership Cohort”* attachment.

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## DOCUMENTATION OF MY PROTOTYPE

Images Top to Bottom, Left to Right: My initial realization that my Cohort prototype idea should function as an experiential Lectio Divina of sorts, and my first 'napkin pitch' sketch of the concept prior to our February 2021 Peer Group call with Dr. Jeney Park-Hearn, our Project Faculty. Her feedback follows in the bottom hastily scribbled notes.





Images Top to Bottom, Left to Right: Beginning the evening around our dinner table sharing a simple common spaghetti meal, messy kitchen in the background and all! A liturgy and Lectio Divina on the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4 was well discussed. Responsive prayer to a meditative video and song of worship closed out our prototyping evening together.





# MY STORYBOARD

| Adapted by Chris Kamalski

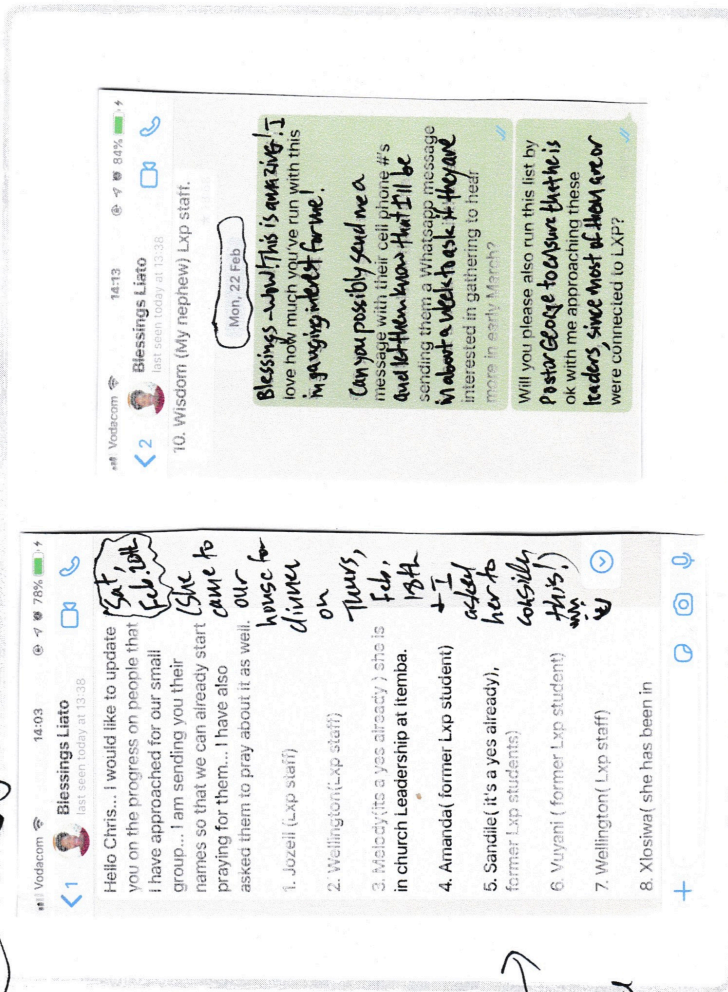
Title: Blessings the beta Kunga Leadership Cabot

## Inciting Incident

Feb. 18-2020

What do you see?

An invitation to come over for dinner, followed-up by a hunch that Blessings would be 'ripe' and eager to invite to a beta KLC, led to this Whatsapp convo 48 hours later. (Key: Look who initiated follow-up...)



March 2021

①

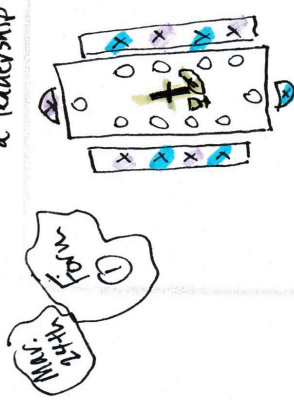


Flashback:

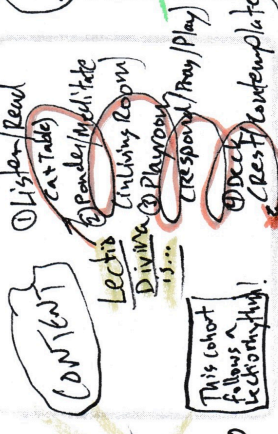
Jan 2021  
(x) Zoom w/ Jerry, my Project Faculty



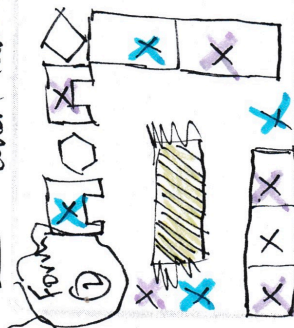
Scene 1: Jerry's throwaway phrase  
Action Step: How do I prototype a leadership cohort?



Feb 25th (1 hour before Peer Group call)



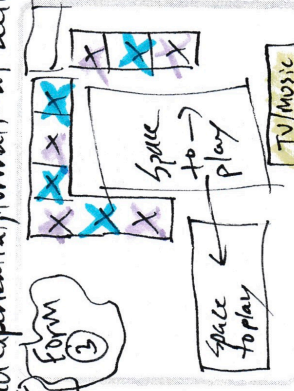
Scene 2: A Burst of Inspiration  
Action Step: "My mentoring vision" → cohort functions as an experiential, formational Lectio Divina of sorts



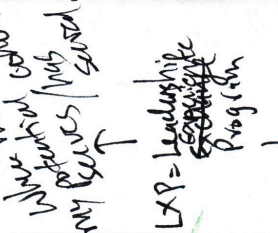
Mar 10th



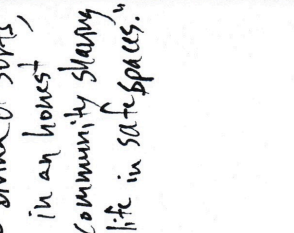
Scene 3: An Invitation to an Experiment  
Action Step: Will you join me in prototyping this experiment?



Mar 10th



Scene 4: Our Dining Table  
Action Step: We @ Listen Attentively to each other's stories in an informal narrative process at the table.



Scene 5: Our Living Room  
Action Step: We sit together for a formal period of meditation upon God's pondering deeply

Definition: A story is a character who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it. (Donald Miller a guiding concept)

Scene 6: Our Girls' Playroom  
Crisis Decision: We respond in shared worship prayer, confession, & play dialoguing in honesty

Definition: The central choice of the protagonist who has come face-to-face with the most powerful struggle of his/her life, leading to a story's climax. (March 2021)

Scene 7: Our Girls' Playroom  
Crisis Decision: We respond in shared worship prayer, confession, & play dialoguing in honesty

Definition: The central choice of the protagonist who has come face-to-face with the most powerful struggle of his/her life, leading to a story's climax. (March 2021)

Definition ← Climactic Scene

What do you see?

"Climax is the height of the story arc, where the main conflict is brought into resolution."

This is the whole point, the very invitation from Jesus to throw US.



Scene 7: Our Outside Deck

Action Step: We will invest in contemplation for the invitations that Christ, our friend, has spread us to in this cohort prototype. We will seek to "gain a balcony perspective" on our lives" (Donald Heifetz).  
We will commit to a pathway forward.

"A story is a character who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it." | Donald Miller

March 2021

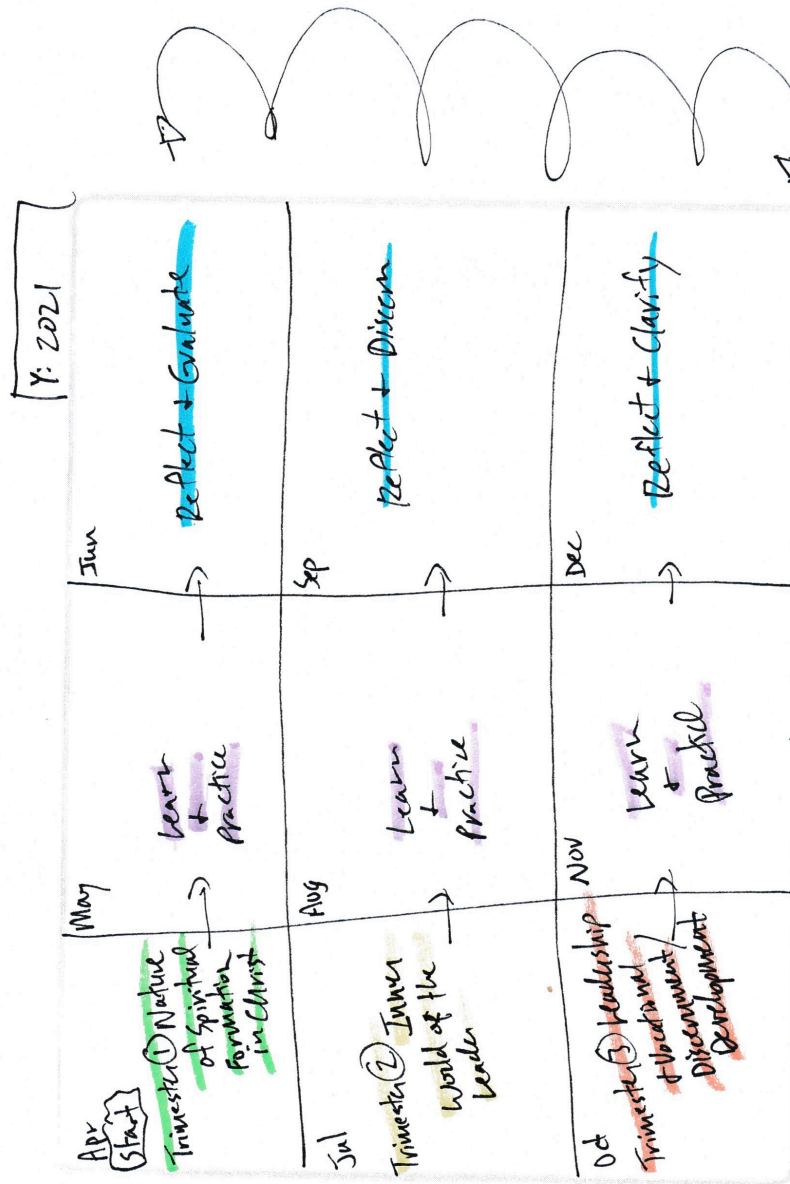


**Definition:** ← **Resolution**  
 What do you see?  
 "The place where the protagonist is left once the climax resolved. of the story has been"

"I'm all in!"  
 Scene 8: Commitment

Action Step: We will commit to walk together in honest relationship for a beta trial process of 9 months, April-December 2021, evaluating regularly what the Spirit of God is up to.

"A story is a character who wants something and overcomes conflict to get it." | Donald Miller



March 2021

Note: This is a liturgical guide based on the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4 that I developed as the 'content' for my prototype. It is a formational reflective series of exercises that I've entitled "*Fertile Soil: A Parable of Deep Roots.*"

## **FERTILE SOIL: A PARABLE OF DEEP ROOTS**

*Reflective Exercise created by Chris Kamalski (Restore Voice)*

### **A Parable of Deep Roots** | written by Rob Yackley (*Thresholds Community*)

"Study this story of the farmer planting seed. When anyone hears news of the kingdom and doesn't take it in, it just remains on the surface, and so the Evil One comes along and plucks it right out of that person's heart. This is the seed the farmer scatters on the road.

"The seed cast in the gravel—this is the person who hears and instantly responds with enthusiasm. But there is no soil of character, and so when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

"The seed cast in the weeds is the person who hears the kingdom news, but weeds of worry and illusions about getting more and wanting everything under the sun strangle what was heard, and nothing comes of it.

"The seed cast on good earth is the person who hears and takes in the News, and then produces a harvest beyond his wildest dreams."

*— Jesus the Christ, Matthew 13:18-23*



**Visio Divina:** Spend a few moments in quiet, gazing at the image of the bean plant slowly growing. Ask the Spirit to reveal what sort of soil your heart is rooted within in this season.

## **FERTILE SOIL: A PARABLE OF DEEP ROOTS**

*Reflective Exercise created by Chris Kamalski (Restore Voice)*

### **Mark 4:1-20: Parable of the Farmer Scattering Seed (NLT)**

**1** Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore.

**2** He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

**3** *"Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. **4** As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. **5** Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. **6** But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died. **7** Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. **8** Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"*

**9** Then he said, *"Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."*

**10** Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant. **11** He replied, *"You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, **12** so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:*

*'When they see what I do,  
they will learn nothing.  
When they hear what I say,  
they will not understand.  
Otherwise, they will turn to me  
and be forgiven.'*<sup>1</sup>

**13** Then Jesus said to them, *"If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables? **14** The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others. **15** The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. **16** The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. **17** But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. **18** The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, **19** but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. **20** And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"*

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 in this parable. Note contextually that these verses directly follow Isaiah's *"Here I am, send me!"* declaration to Yahweh. Why do you think Jesus quotes these verses to his disciples at this moment?

## **FERTILE SOIL: A PARABLE OF DEEP ROOTS**

*Reflective Exercise created by Chris Kamalski (Restore Voice)*

### **Formational Rhythm: Lectio Divina (“Sacred Reading”)**

*“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth  
until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19)*

**Lectio (Read):** Read a Scripture text slowly & prayerfully 2-3 times. Pause when a word or phrase catches your attention, allowing God’s living word to read you.

**Meditatio (Meditate/Ponder):** Reflectively chew (Like gum) on the word or phrase the Holy Spirit highlighted in your soul. Allow the text to “roll around” in your mind; sinking from your mind into your heart. Use your imagination to enter into the text, letting the “Word abide or richly dwell in you” (Colossians 3:16).

**Oratio (Respond In Prayer/Speaking):** Express your response to God. Be open & truthful; share your feelings with Him. Speak freely to God about what He has prompted—you are listening to what God is doing inside you with the Word rolling around your mind and heart!

**Contemplatio (Contemplation/Rest):** Rest in the Spirit’s presence, letting Jesus sink deep into your soul; yielding to His work in you. Purpose to revisit God’s living word in you throughout your day. *What is God trying to remind you about Himself, or who you are in Christ?*

**Note:** As with all spiritual formation practices (mental, bodily, or spiritual), we experience them where we are. For some, you will experience joy; for others, agony or boredom. In any case, they build spiritual muscles. If we never train as a runner, we cannot expect to go out and run a 3 minute kilometer race. Be open to where you are in relationship with Jesus. Be open to what He gives you!

*Let’s practice Lectio Divina using the short verse from Galatians written above.*

<b><u>WORD OR PHRASE THAT STANDS OUT</u></b>	<b><u>WHAT IS THE SPIRIT SPEAKING TO YOU?</u></b>

## INTERVIEW NOTES

- Notes below taken by Maxie Kamalski while Chris facilitated the evening.

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### Welcome and Introduction by Chris

- Present: Blessings, Amanda, Wisdom, Joselle, Mama Lucy, Sandile, Maxie Kamalski

### Dining Table (Upstairs)

- After picking everyone up, we shared a common meal – spaghetti – around the same table. It was filled with laughter and conversation. We were bummed that we had sent our daughters to their grandparents house for the evening, when one of our participants brought her 7-year old daughter along because she didn't have childcare!

### Living Room (Upstairs)

- Story on Chris's first church service in South Africa.
- Prayer
- Introduction of Lectio Divina / Formational Guide for the evening
- Mark 4 (Parable of the sower) – Central Scriptural text for the evening.
  - Personalized version: *A Parable of Deep Roots* (Written by Rob Yackley)
  - Question to all: *What stands out as you read this? (Chris)*
    - Look at the picture and pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what the soil of your heart is at the moment. *What is my soil like right now?*
  - Group sharing time (Groups of 3)
    - Talk about what was your reaction to the Rob's translation (Initial thoughts & emotions).
    - Read Mark 4 text (Parable of the Sower) together
      - Fill in the box - write down words or phrases from the reading.
  - Amanda comments: I can not even get myself to ask this question. There is too much going on to even engage in this process.
    - Response to Amanda: A confession of vulnerability. You acknowledged that you (Amanda) cannot really get into it this reflective exercise at this moment. Perhaps the Holy Spirit is using this experience to help reveal to you where your heart is actually at. *What if you opened to this revelation? (Chris)*
- Verse 11: There is a significance in residing close to God. You are able to see more / different things but it was because of their connection with God.

- Verse 7: What would that look like? Jesus explains it in verse 17.
- The seed has a purpose of sprouting up through the ground, and growing into a plant. But that is not the first priority. The focus is first on the roots submerging, burrowing down deep into the soil for life-giving nutrients. We want to rush to grow, but we miss the rooting and building of foundation.

Kid's Playroom / Family Room (Downstairs)

- Time-lapse video of seed growing and worship song of reflection - New Wine (Hillsong).

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Group Interview & Feedback: "Four Questions"

1. *What worked? / What didn't work?*

2. *What was the most important part of the evening to you? What mattered?*

- I saw a way of love. There was a love between us - from when you picked us up, till now. The way you are welcomed matters. The way of love is warm and welcoming and open. You make us feel free. We are in a safe space. The combination of us as a couple. You are in one accord. Enjoyed receiving from both Maxie and Chris. It was an easy transition into the conversation because it came from love & listening. (*Mama Lucy*)
- The discussion - enjoyed listening to others, that is what helpful. It was beyond one person speaking. Everyone contributed and you were able to learn from everyone. The Spirit was teaching out of multiple voices. Not a hierarchy of who is in charge. Empowered to speak. (*Blessings*)
- The way we discussed this parable helped us have a deeper understanding of this scripture that we have read multiple times. The scripture got new life. (*Mama Lucy*)

3. *What about the way we discussed the Scripture made it come to life?*

- In church we are taught to simply listen. But here we are asked to share. So I listened and reflected and then got to share. Participation / Dialogue deeply matters. It roots the Scripture. The environment matters - it's not a formal setting. When something is seen as formal then there are certain rules. We also focused on one thing at a time. The flow was good. This is what fellowship is about. (*Joselle*)
- I was thinking it was going to be a presentation. I was unsure of this uncertainty. When I voiced my concern / questions, it actually created space for me to still engage. When I first looked at it it took me to a place that was scary. But as we started sharing and unpacking it slowly it created space for me to engage. The different dynamics was so beautiful. Even as a seed I am good enough. It's okay that God is grooming me under the ground where no one sees me. This would be something I want to share - I went from my heart racing to finding peace. My heart



stopped racing. It really landed with the worship. I loved how everyone participated and spoke. It was uplifting. (*Amanda*)

- Response to Amanda: You made a deliberate choice to share in vulnerability at the beginning of the evening, and then a harder choice to still engage and remain present. This is why you are able to go to the other side. You showed up as your real self, you were received, you remain engaged and as a result the Spirit heart is opened more to the love of God, and to all of us. (*Chris*)

- I would love to spend more time unpacking some of this, I have many questions. It feels like we haven't unpacked it enough. There is a need to root ourselves more deeply so that we can find the light. It does not matter how many different voices (lights) we are - we must find the right light. We can have different soils in our hearts at the same time so the seed can't grow. We must look at ourselves honestly. (*Wisdom*)

- Response to Wisdom: One of the values of space like this is that over time you can go into those places and sort through those. Over time it can make a deep impact. Tonight, I intentionally pushed you beyond the relational capacity of the group at present for the sake of your feedback. You can't rush this. (*Chris*)

- It was a challenge with the picture. Where is my heart really rooted? Is it actually in the right soil? Is my heart really that rooted at all, or am I just doing things for the sake of others to see me? A question of motivation. (*Blessings*)

#### 4. *What could be different?*

- *Have more time*. I would love to spend more time unpacking some of this, I have questions. It feels like we haven't unpacked it enough. (*Wisdom*)
- *Deep questions require time* - so it might be helpful to give things to take home and work through before we meet, and then come back and share again. Having the context and information before we meet together would help a lot. (*Joselle*)

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## OBSERVATION NOTES AND SUMMARY

Note: **Green text: Positive Observations** | **Red Text: Negative/Challenging Observations**

### My Own Personal Observation Notes and Summary

1. I will have to factor in almost **everyone needing a ride too and from wherever we gather** (I ended up picking up and dropping off people, and it took well over an hour). **Safety in transport is a massively important factor in female participation, especially late at night** when coming back to their house.
2. **Transport, lack of data on cell phones to communicate, and unreliable evening transport are all really relevant factors in a person's availability to gather with regularity.**
3. Most participants have at least 1 weeknight engagement, if not more, given their responsibilities at work, ministry, and in their local faith community. Sundays are almost always an unavailable day.
4. **In-person meetings work best.** I have no idea how a virtual gathering would even work.
5. **Beginning with a shared common meal around the same table in our home was a really good idea. Eating together opened people's hearts to one another, caused natural laughter and relational connection, and helped everyone transition from work/their weeks to be fully present** for our cohort gathering together.
6. People needed time to think, to warm up to dialogue with one another, and to share vulnerably out loud. **It needed to be modeled, with a liturgical sort of guide in front of them** (see Lectio reflective handout entitled "Fertile Soil: A Parable of Deep Roots" that I made as an example of what is needed to prompt internal, thoughtful insight). Asking for this immediately is a slow burn process that will take time.
7. Group dialogue, worship through song, Scripture discussion, and prayer is more familiar. **An African Christian leaders cohort would be similar - more about the group, communal experience ("the collective experience") and less about the individual, personal development.** This is deeply cultural, particularly to the African worldview. One

on one conversation, prayer, and transparent sharing is simply less common in South African culture in general.

8. **Reflective space for silence, quiet, contemplative prayer, and journaling types of feedback is much less common, in particular if English as a spoken or written language is not the primary tongue.** Thus, this sort of reflective feedback must be slowly, patiently cultivated.
9. **I must be careful to not slip into teaching / preaching / overtly leading sort of mode,** but rather seek to continue facilitating an open, safe, communal space where the Spirit can be experienced and listened to.
10. Conversely, **I must also seek to not overly direct, control, or seek to pull out thoughts or emotions that I sense from the leaders I am working with in a Cohort.** This is a Western approach to internal awareness, ownership, and integration. What is needed is an open, safe, welcoming, hospitable approach.

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#### Feedback from Group Interview

Note: Please see “*NPO Prototype #1 Notes – Common Dinner and Lectio Divina*.” I am quoting many of the observations from the notes that my wife Maxie Kamalski recorded for me.

4. **Liturgical guide (especially for unfamiliar spiritual practices like Lectio Divina) are welcome.** Having a place to focus eyes, slowly read and absorb what is being asked, and have a takeaway resource is helpful.
5. **Much more time is needed, and at a much slower pace than I am used to** – to dialogue, to respond personally out of reflection, to read and process what we are learning prior to, as well as after, the actual shared evening space in community. Prep time, and post-reflective time, are crucial to content and formation being internalized.
6. Amanda’s comment in the beginning: “*There is too much going on to even engage in this process.*” I wish I could highlight this **both green and red**. I was struck once again by **how much unprocessed trauma, and relative unawareness of what is going on in the soul,**

there is in most people. There is both a great opportunity, and a lot of resistance, to walk through for real transformation to take place.

7. **Multiple mediums of formational experience - shared table, dialogue, group Scripture reading and prayer, worship through song. A liturgy or formational curriculum of sorts is needed for a group like this to thrive together.** The traditional mode of passive spirituality whereby a leader relies on the lead pastor for everything simply doesn't work.
8. **Asking for a cohort member's input, and truly listening in response.** This is revolutionary to the majority of African Christian leaders.
9. The major thing flagged over and over again: **We need more time (to think, process, engage, dialogue, form together in community).**

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#### OVERALL SUMMARY (CHRIS'S WORDS)

1. I suspected this strongly going in, and it was confirmed: **There is a deep hunger, and wide desire, for a safe, vulnerable, honest, mutually-supportive, formational cohort for African Christian leaders. Leaders in this country, who pour out to others, are not taken care of, resourced, or supported for the most part. They are drowning and on their own. A covenanted formational cohort where leaders are relationally trained in a practice-based cohort of shared life, the inner life of a leader, and broad Kingdom principles, is what my NPO must focus on in Year 3. This will hopefully be a large portion of my calling moving forward, and my focus in this season of my life.**

## APPENDIX E—SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

1. The Steward of the Global Christian Movement is a Young African Woman (!)

In December 2022, I will have lived in South Africa and worked in a variety of leadership development roles for almost 13 years, the longest season in one country during my adult life thus far. As I reflect back upon my experience in helping to form African Christian leaders, and the last three years of my NPO research work in particular, I am coming to a growing conviction that is both sweeping in its implication, and inescapable in its reality: *The future of the global Church is largely in the highly capable hands of young African Christian leaders, a majority of whom are women.* On an anecdotal level I know this is deeply true, as I compare my doctoral project's overly idealistic benchmarks with the actual experience of prototyping a beta cohort of African Christian leaders who gathered to practice a spatial model of lectio divina in my home late last year. Although I have barely scratched the surface, the research data<sup>159</sup> that is available, albeit insufficient at best, supports this reality as well. All of this leads me to a haunting question that underlies this appendix, necessitating much greater attention in the future: *If both my recent experience and the available data correlate the reality that the future of Christian leadership is a young African woman, why does the face of global Church leadership not reflect this truth?*

Several dissertations could be written, but in this space, I'll introduce three brief observations. Firstly, the systemic realities of life for the typical African Christian female consistently dilutes the impact that her leadership does make within the church across the continent. Secondly, many cultural norms present within traditional African cultures, in particular within the communal, tribal nature of most black African ethnic groups, obscure the leadership voices that could potentially raise to the surface within a more individualistic cultural grouping. Thirdly, and most devastatingly, the majority male African church leadership hierarchy suppresses most capable female leadership through a stubborn patriarchal worldview that also permeates

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<sup>159</sup> Gina Zurlo. *Why the future of the world's largest religion is female - and African* (Universities of the Witwatersrand and Western Cape: The Conversation, 2022). Full article URL: <https://theconversation.com/why-the-future-of-the-worlds-largest-religion-is-female-and-african-178358>.

the wider Christian expression worldwide. All three observations must be addressed in honest, courageous dialogue if sustainable structural transformation is to occur.



*Across South Africa, black African women are most likely to stay unemployed.*

Statistics South Africa<sup>160</sup> is the national statistical service within the South African government, which has the mandate of producing timely, accurate, and official data-driven reports for a wide variety of economic and social trends within the country. A recent economic report<sup>161</sup> on the second quarter of 2022 was bleak, yet not surprising, in its findings. In a stark Twitter thread,<sup>162</sup> Stats SA reported the following information: “Black African women are the most vulnerable population across South Africa, with an unemployment rate of 39.3%.”<sup>163</sup> When you expand that to include the female population that has stopped looking for work, or is under-

<sup>160</sup> <https://www.statssa.gov.za>.

<sup>161</sup> <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15668>. Published August 23rd, 2022.

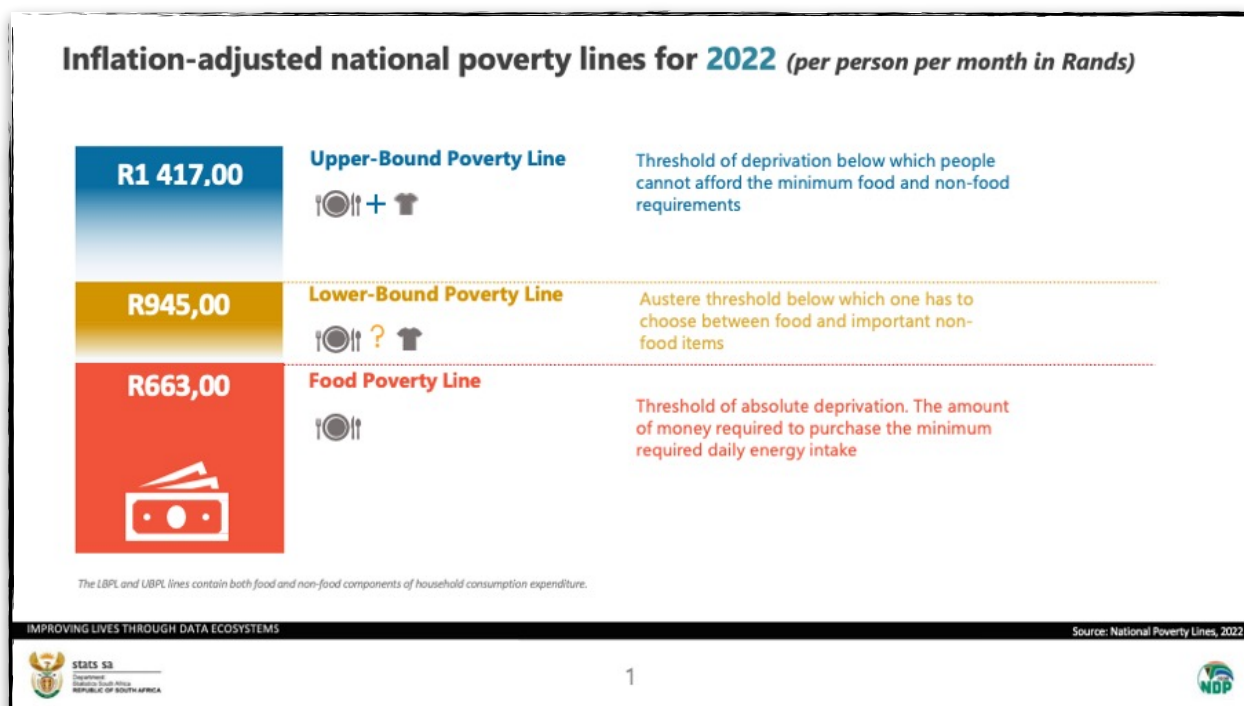
<sup>162</sup> <https://twitter.com/StatsSA/status/1562009334971858944>.

<sup>163</sup> <https://twitter.com/StatsSA/status/1562012013785751553>.

employed, that figure rises to 47.2%,<sup>164</sup> or every other African female living in South Africa!

Coloured<sup>165</sup> women fare slightly better, but overall, this rate is four times higher than the unemployment rate for white South African women. Couple these figures with the 2022 inflation-adjusted national poverty lines (see image below),<sup>166</sup> and the picture becomes clear:

*African women are barely – yet admirably – surviving, let alone thriving, within South Africa two and a half years after the COVID-19 pandemic's inception in March 2020.* If the vast majority of female African Christian leaders live within an environment of basic survival, how are they to lead their faith communities, let alone impact and transform the wider culture around them? The task is simply too onerous. Thriving is off the table when a culture of survival is all one can see. In a normative state, the transformational impact of African Christian leaders who are female is highly diluted. At best, it is inconsistently present, not as a fault of the lack of commitment of the



On February 17th, 2023 the exchange rate on <http://xe.com> was R18.05/\$1 US. The math is scary.

<sup>164</sup> <https://twitter.com/StatsSA/status/1562012135873462272>.

<sup>165</sup> Coloured South Africans are of mixed ethnic heritage. This term is ethnically descriptive and racially neutral in South Africa, and is not used as a racial slur, as it is often weaponized in Western cultures worldwide.

<sup>166</sup> <https://twitter.com/StatsSA/status/1564953920627216385>.

leadership, but as a direct result of the never-ending demands of survival within a system that simply isn't working.



*Further detail regarding black African women as the most vulnerable population.*

Compounding this systemic reality within South Africa are the cultural norms that most female African Christian leaders live within. Although South Africa is a relatively modern, diverse nation with a recent history of racial desegregation, cultural patterns of behavior are well-established, as is the case anywhere. Well-known sociologist Richard Lewis, in his masterwork When Cultures Collide, describes the reality African women live within broadly, yet accurately. He paints the following picture of far too many African women, writing,

In the battle of the sexes, many African women are still at a disadvantage. Most marry very young to much older men. Spousal abuse is not unknown and female subservience is often expected. Women are expected to eat after men and may be addressed only indirectly in some cases. Female circumcision (excision) persists in most countries, often supported by traditionalists and the parents of wives. Many marriages are arranged; the husband's family must pay 'brideswealth' [known as '*lobola*' in South Africa] to compensate for the loss of a daughter...In spite of these disadvantages, as well as less schooling than the men, the African woman is charismatic, reliable and possesses great integrity. Her ultimate



advancement will be a great boon to the welfare of the continent (Lewis, 567).<sup>167</sup>

A 25 year-old isiXhosa (South African) woman living in the townships outside of Cape Town for work may scan Lewis' description and scoff at its outdated cultural antiquity, but if she were to return to her ancestral village in the rural Eastern Cape during the December holidays, life with her extended family all too frequently turns back the cultural norms that she lives within. Although it's true in a sense that we all become children again when we return home, these cultural realities also persist within urban, modern spaces and more progressive family systems, not only within conservative families. They describe the daily reality for many African women far more accurately and uncomfortably than many with cultural power would be rife to admit. If these norms persist within more communal, tribal cultures, how do the individual voices of capable, gifted African female leaders rise to the surface within their cultural systems? Are these voices even listened to, let alone believed, valued, and empowered within their families? Or does the voice of the individual African female leader remain hidden, her power largely unseen? To what extent is this true within African Christian communities in particular?

Most problematically, does the majority male African church leadership hierarchy<sup>168</sup> suppress the capable female leadership in its midst? In short, far too frequently, often through the maintenance of a stubborn patriarchal, overly-rigid complementarian worldview that permeates

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<sup>167</sup> Richard Lewis. *When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures* (Boston: Nicholas Brealey International, 2006), 567.

<sup>168</sup> To spread my critique equally, I would argue a similar line of reasoning for most patriarchal cultures worldwide. This isn't merely an African problem, nor is it a Western issue. Patriarchy is a power-hungry, problematic, frequently *sinful* system that elevates and platforms men at the expense of the women around them. Dallas Willard's description of the gospel of sin management in *The Divine Conspiracy* applies to this faulty system of thinking as well. Willard concludes the following, which could easily be describing the result of biblical patriarchy gone horribly awry, writing:

It would be foolish to expect anything else other than precisely what we have got. A saying among management experts today is, 'Your system is perfectly designed to yield the result you are getting.' This is a profound though painful truth that must be respected by all who have an interest in Christian spiritual formation, whether for themselves as individuals or for groups and institutions. We who profess Christianity will believe what is constantly presented to us as gospel.

Dallas Willard. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (London: Fount Paperbacks, an imprint of HarperCollinsReligious, 1998), 69.

the majority of wider Christian expression worldwide. In Gender Roles and the People of God, Alice Mathews, a renowned theologian and academic dean at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, elucidates the birth of biblical patriarchy with startling clarity. She writes,

It is in Genesis 3:16 (God speaking to the woman) where we first see hierarchy in human relationships...Hierarchy was not God's will for the first pair, but it was imposed when they chose to disregard his command and eat the forbidden fruit... Adam would now be subject to his source (the ground), even as Eve was now subject to her source (Adam). This was the moment of the birth of patriarchy. As a result of their sin, the man was now the master over the woman, and the ground was now master over the man, contrary to God's original intention in creation (Mathews, 43-47).<sup>169</sup>

As Beth Allison Barr concurs in The Making of Biblical Womanhood, "The first human sin built the first human power hierarchy...Patriarchy wasn't what God wanted; patriarchy was a result of human sin" (Barr, 29).<sup>170</sup> While this is not the space to unpack a detailed apologetic of the faulty theology inherent in patriarchal systems, nor to necessarily dismiss all complementarian hierarchical leadership structures outright, it is my growing conviction that Mathews and Barr not only have a strong and compelling biblical case, they possess the moral authority to argue against an unequal system. Holistic justice and a renewed vision for repair between genders as co-equal Image-Bearers must take place. For from a clear biblical mandate in Genesis 1:26-27,<sup>171</sup> God, the 'Triune Community of Love,'<sup>172</sup> created *both man and woman as co-equal Image-Bearers*. Together in mutual partnership and transparent relational intimacy, dependent upon God and inter-

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<sup>169</sup> Alice Mathews. *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 43-47.

<sup>170</sup> Beth Allison Barr. *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021).

<sup>171</sup> In Genesis 1:26-27, it is written "Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground. So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them'" (Gen 1:26-27, NLT, italics mine).

Dr. Tim Mackie, co-founder of Bible Project, once translated "reign over" in this passage as "to steward well." That phrase encapsulates what I am arguing for biblically in this section. Men and women are to *steward well* the divinely created order, as co-equal Image-Bearers of God.

<sup>172</sup> The 'Triune Community of Love' is my relationally descriptive term for the community that God shares.

dependent with one another, humanity was to steward all of creation into holistic fullness and love. Of course, as we all have experienced, this shared human vocation crumbled inward as man and woman turned against one another, locked in a perpetual struggle for power and control. Throughout history, women have consistently found themselves on the losing end of this fight. The unjust, deeply hurtful imbalance of power and hierarchical relationships that outright favors men must be remade in the communal manner that God originally intended humanity to flourish within. Our world, in every way, must be made new.

As stated before<sup>173</sup>, statistical data supports this theological claim. In the United States, for example, women consistently earn less income than men, as evidenced for example by Black women every September 21st, which is known as "Black Women's Equal Pay Day."<sup>174</sup> "Black Women's Equal Pay Day" is the average day each year that Black women catch-up to men in earnings *from the previous calendar year*. Faring even more poorly, Native women in the United States have their equal pay day each November, and Latina women annually each December! In other words, these women never catch-up, perpetually behind the systemic curve of inequality in economic comparison to men. Although a continued focus on financial realities is a crucial but incomplete perspective of a much more complicated picture, it is illustrative of a fundamental theological belief for many Christ-followers: *In this fallen world, men possess the main responsibility to provide financially for their families, while women are tasked with child-bearing and broader care for their families*. The roles are split, and rarely the two shall mix.

Why do we struggle to even ask if this is how the system was initially created by God to function? Are human beings to flourish through fierce competition for power with the opposite gender? Or is something else at play entirely that must be confronted; with a renewed, courageous vision of *life eternally abundant*, being planted once more?

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<sup>173</sup> See earlier footnote on Gina Zurlo. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-future-of-the-worlds-largest-religion-is-female-and-african-178358>

<sup>174</sup> <https://time.com/6215269/black-womans-equal-pay-day/>.

Gina Zurlo, the Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity<sup>175</sup> at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, published an article in March 2022 for The Conversation entitled "Why the future of the world's largest religion is female – and African."<sup>176</sup> It was an article summation that reported the central findings of a much more detailed piece in the International Bulletin of Mission Research,<sup>177</sup> as a part of the World Christian Database. A few of Zurlo's central conclusions in the article give tangible support to the growing reality that *the steward of the global Christian movement is a young African woman*. For example, 52% of global Christians are female, a figure that is surely under-represented in reality. Zurlo writes, "More and more Christians live outside Europe and North America, especially in Africa – and women are central to that story."<sup>178</sup> Women are more likely than men to attend weekly church services, pray every day, and consider their faith a vital part of their daily lives. As the center of Christianity continues to move to the global south, by 2050, almost 40% of Christians will live on the continent of Africa alone. Within sub-Saharan Africa, these Christians (again, the majority of which are African women) will have a median age of 19!

Who increasingly stewards the global Christian movement? *Young African women*. Whose influence and leadership will only continue to deepen in the next three decades? *Young African women*. In my project's context, is this true? Yes! The central participants, and most committed members, of the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort, were young African women from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. What appeared at first to be a mixture of happenstance, and a lack of commitment from local African male leaders, actually turns out to reflect the reality of the global

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<sup>175</sup> <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/>.

<sup>176</sup> Gina Zurlo. *Why the future of the world's largest religion is female – and African* (Universities of the Witwatersrand and Western Cape: The Conversation, 2022). Full article URL: <https://theconversation.com/why-the-future-of-the-worlds-largest-religion-is-female-and-african-178358>.

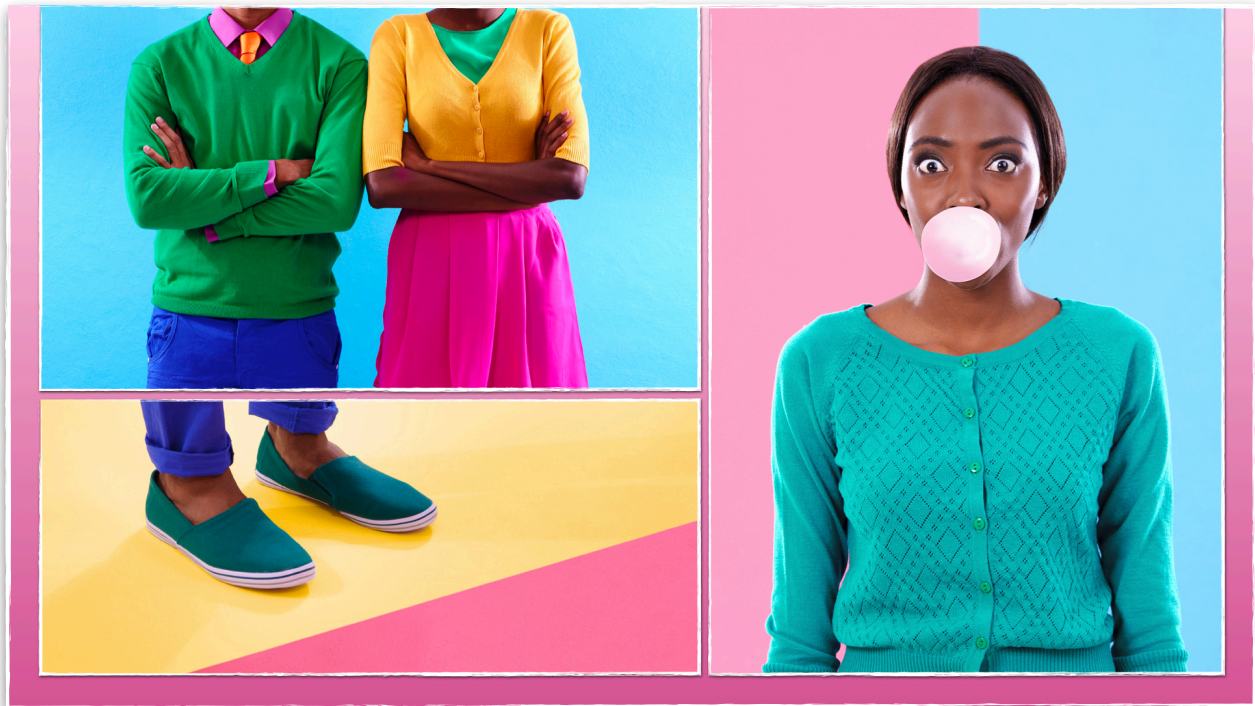
<sup>177</sup> Gina Zurlo. "World Christianity and Religions 2022: A Complicated Relationship." *International bulletin of mission research*. 46, no. 1 (2022).

Please note that I was unable to access Sage Publications through George Fox University, even as a doctoral student, to secure a full-text copy of this article, and not without great effort, including requesting an inter-library loan. The previously footnoted article summation in *The Conversation* is the best data available to me as of this writing.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

church in 2022. The small group of young African leaders that gathered in my home are not peripheral to the global church movement. Not at all. *My friends steward the global Christian movement - as young African women.*

If this is my place, what posture must follow?



*Increasingly in the next few decades, in particular within the Global South, the stewards of the global Christian movement will look like this image above: Young African women. How do we - people of privilege, power, and resources - really listen well to these leaders? That is the challenge and invitation of God before us.*

## 2. Assessment Notes<sup>179</sup> with Three Core Kouga Leadership Cohort Female Participants

### *Assessment Interview 1: Blessings L.<sup>180</sup>*

This [cohort] has been a place for me to share the things I am going through in my personal walk with God, and also with whatever is happening around me in ministry and relationships, and with my health. It's been a place where I can share things I am going through that I haven't been able to share in any other platform. This was a place where I could be myself and share positive and negative things I am going through, 'Burden-lifting things.'

Last year I didn't have spaces like this – at the Leadership Experience we usually create those spaces for others. Pastor George [the head of LXP] would normally create those spaces of staff support for us. Moosa [another key leader within LXP] also wasn't around this year, and so there was a lack of a consistency. [As a result], I was so busy this past year, and Pastor George [the head of LXP] was so busy himself, that there was no creation of spaces like this. With Pastor George, there are things that we don't speak to him about personally.

By contrast, this is a group of people sharing life together. It was a place where I received encouragement from others in sharing openly. I could be vulnerable and share freely. An environment was created that made me feel free to share honestly. I could see this in others as well. I was not alone. There was something about [us all realizing together] that we could share our brokenness together. It is powerful about when leaders can share in vulnerability and freedom. I was very open to receive encouragement and prayer from others.

You, Chris, are concerned for us, and so you make us feel comfortable by asking good questions. Out of these questions, we are free and comfortable to share in vulnerability. We could be vulnerable in a shared space.

I loved [spatial] lectio divina – it taught me how to read the scriptures slowly, to meditate on them in a specific manner, and to pray through a specific scripture. To see scripture in a

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<sup>179</sup> These assessment notes have been lightly edited with parenthetical editorial comments added in brackets for the sake of readability. The overall meaning and tenor of the interviews remains as they were communicated.

<sup>180</sup> Notes with Blessings L. were taken during her interview assessment dialogue on January 26th, 2022.

different light was transformational. [The practice of] imaginative prayer was a highlight for me – this showed how serious I can be about scripture. It made me realize that we need to spend more time [within the scriptures]. Being able to hear scripture over and over helped me to listen better, creating a pathway in my brain to create a picture of what was actually happening.

Practicing lectio divina helped me understand the value of creating a space for someone. It's like when you are walking somewhere on a pathway – when more people walk there, it becomes a path that is created together. Some folks are imaginative; others are more literal. We are different in how we interpret scripture, and so this practice gave language to how people understand scripture differently (e.g. visually, auditory, through reading and studying). There was more space to truly hear each other and to consider other people's perspectives in an honest way.

This encourages everyone to feel a part of this group, to feel included in our group. No one dominated the space. We are all part of this as co-equals. In so many spaces we side with the dominant personality or leader in the group (*"This is the only way"*). But when people's mindsets are opened to this practice, they are able to be free, and encouraged to say "I can listen to you, and hear your perspective." It's the difference between an open and closed mindset.

I also experienced a huge difference in my prayer life through this group – it changed the way I pray. Something significant was added through reading scripture in lectio divina. We are having a conversation with God, which is so relaxing and freeing. This is a practice I want to adopt into my own personal life. It is a missing part for us – the missing part is the process of prayer. There is a process of reading, quiet, meditation, listening to God – this process or approach is different and missing in most of the spaces I am in. Prayer is not monologue – this is mostly the problem in my world. We don't have choices to ask "Is the Lord hearing me, is there a connection with my real life and what I am praying about?"



*Blessings L. has played soccer on a national level for a variety of women's professional teams. Blessings is one of the most open and willing leaders I have ever met. She already is transforming South Africa.*

*Assessment Interview 2: Beatrice M.<sup>181</sup>*

I loved the idea of exploring the structure [of a group] in a different way, as we visualized the Scriptures, [experimented with] prayer, etc. It could be a way to study scripture – so imaginative prayer was significant. I've never thought of my imaginative mind [engaging in] a form of prayer and study. In this group, I gave myself permission to visualize the stories, and not go into the realm of being outside of scripture. Instead, using my imagination brought the stories home. This practice gave it a real life experience – you can relate to the text; it's not just a story that

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<sup>181</sup> Notes with Beatrice M. were taken during her interview assessment dialogue on January 27th, 2022.



happened. There was great value in doing this collectively – someone else’s picture is different than mine.

The space and place [we gathered together] matters, as every environment has its own cultural norms. Whether spoken out loud or not, they are there. There are expectations of what to do, and what not to do. For example, at the Leadership Experience, one value is transparency – your life is an open book and everybody should be able to answer where you are. [With this cohort], we were not going into an existing structure, but instead were part of creating what we wanted this space to be. Like clay without form, we were able to shape it and make it what we want it to be. I can contribute to making it what I want to be – safe, open, and free.

Chris, you invited this space through posing questions – ‘What do you think?’ was often my response as the one who asked questions. When you [entered this space] with questions, it allowed us to form our own answers. I felt *‘I thought about it, therefore I am a part of it.’*

Given how often I work with the other people [in our cohort], we don’t have shared space outside of work. Shared space is a work shared space. We all have our own life groups and churches. This is the first space outside of the work space that we have in common together. Coming into this shared space, we have tried to create a family space with work people – but often, the work follows you everywhere. It’s not 9am to 5pm only. When you are at my house (*Note: Both Blessings and Beatrice live at the LXP student house*), a part of my consciousness knows that students are always present in the house with me. At your (Chris’s) house, I am outside of my space – students don’t know where I am. This is deeply good.

Sharing a meal together consistently (and the shared responsibility of providing this for each other) is important. Knowing that there is a cost value to what is being provided, shared, and offered in hospitality [makes our meal together more significant]. There is a dignity in eating together – I’m neither receiving nor giving, I am in a co-equal space. When I speak, I am valued. I am not disadvantaged. I need to create spaces to help me grow, to push me outside of my comfort zone and force me to think outside of the norm. I need a variety of minds to do this.



*Beatrice M. is originally from Zambia, and has served as a key program leader for LXP for many years. She is simultaneously one of the smartest and most contemplative African leaders I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Her leadership gifting is immense.*

*Assessment Interview 3: Zaida M.<sup>182</sup>*

Our first cohort was so good for me. This learning chapter at Victory4All has to begin. This second cohort, particularly the setup of the whole environment – playing with your kids, cooking a meal together, interacting as friends – invited me to bring my true self.

As we opened ourselves to what is in front of us, we can learn and grow deeply. When we are relaxed, our spirit is open – and then God can speak to our spirit loudly. In the peaceful manner of how we gathered, my spirit was open to God and my own soul.

A church environment is very different – for one thing, the entire congregation is there with you. It is a big space. Here [in this cohort] we are no more than ten people, in one small room. This little space is far better than in a big church facility. We are not speaking to a crowd, but seeing personally what is happening to one another. There is more deliberate intimacy in being in

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<sup>182</sup> Notes with Zaida M. were taken during her interview assessment dialogue on January 27th, 2022. Zaida also participated in an earlier iteration of the Kouga Leadership Cohort through Victory4All, a Christian community development organization in Jeffrey's Bay that my wife Maxie works for. On top of this unique perspective, Zaida was raised in a Muslim family, and has chosen to follow Jesus as an adult at great cultural cost.

the same [shared] space. I can read someone's facial expression, see their engagement, and know a person is with you. This spatial third place creates intimacy within relationship with one another.

In the past<sup>183</sup>, my prayers did not come from the heart. They were rote. When I first met Jesus, I could simply weep and feel God's presence. Every single minute I have a new prayer, and I can call on God. So, the rhythm of lectio divina was so freeing to me. There are requirements in the Muslim culture of how to read, where to read, and when to read [the Koran]. In this structure, the freedom refreshes and revives me. This was something I grew immensely in, in even two seconds.

I think more people need to know about this sort of practice – there is growth in a mighty way in this sort of formational practice. People are in their own comfort zone, and they need to be invited deeper.



*My beta attempt in the last few months of 2020 at a leadership cohort for key Christian leaders within Victory4All, the community development organization my wife Maxie (Bottom right, in the blue dress) helps to lead. Zaida, speaking with Maxie, is the Catering Manager for Victory4All. She is a gem. I am so proud of her growth in God.*

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<sup>183</sup> Zaida M. is referring to being raised Muslim here.

*A Postscript to My Assessment Interviews: Seven Months Later, A Whatsapp Voice Note*

Seven months to the day (August 27th, 2022) after I interviewed Blessings L., my wife Maxie ran into her at a school rugby match she had taken our girls to, while I slogged along in this project, deeply discouraged. Blessings was also at the match, supporting students that she worked with at LXP. They had a long and wonderful chat, and Blessings repeatedly mentioned to Maxie how impactful the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort was for her. A few hours later, she sent me a Whatsapp voice note sharing some of her reflections. Below is a short transcript<sup>184</sup> of her message.

I spoke to Maxie today. I was just expressing myself of how last year's meetings were so impactful for us. I was mentioning to her that I don't think Chris might have even realized the depth of where we were at. Most of us were burnt out, were struggling with our health – it was a spiritual battle! It was so hard, so tough on every side. But during the meetings, it was so encouraging, having that fellowship and interaction, as well as experiencing you [Chris] as a person that is a real shepherd that cares and loves people. It wasn't so much about 'Oh, the program,' but rather it was about helping [us grow].

I was explaining [to Maxie] how much of a blessing it was. We were busy with ministry, and so when we came to our meetings, it was a place of rest, you know? Sometimes I even used to feel guilty in my heart, like 'Yoh! I don't even know how Chris is receiving us'<sup>185</sup>, because we are just like dead donkeys, dead horses.'

It is so important to have these kinds of experiences. You went to school, and you have the kind of knowledge that most of us need in order for us to continue to be effective in ministry, and how much that [experience] helps us. We have experienced a lot of things 'down there,' and of course we have some knowledge to some extent. But the more we receive knowledge, the more we become effective and also healthy at the same time as a result of these kinds of [formational] experiences.

This experience was really good, Chris, and I wonder what the Lord is doing with you, because I know you have so much that many people out there would need. And so I pray for you, that the Lord will continue to guide you and direct you.

Let me not forget to say thank you so much for helping us. It was really good, and you might never really fully understand the gravity of what it was for some of us. For me, I can say that this [cohort] was really, really good. I want to say thank you!"

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<sup>184</sup> As with my assessment notes, this Whatsapp Voice Message has been lightly edited with parenthetical editorial comments added in brackets for the sake of readability. The overall meaning and tenor of the Whatsapp Voice Note Blessings L. Sent me remains as she communicated it to me.

<sup>185</sup> I have taught and facilitated formational space for groups of people for many years. This is the joy of being a teacher with tired students!

### 3. Full Keynote Slide Presentation of My Spatial Lectio Divina Model

Although the majority of the images in this Keynote slide presentation are found sprinkled throughout this project, I desired to put the whole thing together in a different order for several reasons. Firstly, doing so serves to visually illustrate the core components of this model of 'spatial lectio divina' in a graphically-rich, clearly-communicated, easily digestible format. I desire to introduce, refine, and deepen this model over time, in particular with under-resourced Christian leaders that are primarily auditory and visual learners. In other words, the perfect beta testing community to explore a historical, deeply formational practice that is rooted in an auditory, embodied, communal experience – that of lectio divina practiced together in a particular social location. To do so, I need to delineate visually how 'spatial lectio divina' is distinct from the typical practice of lectio divina by being rooted in a particular social location and cultural context. I am well aware that this desire begs further research, deep-level thinking, and reflective listening among future cohort groups that I facilitate.

Secondly, I plan to use this Keynote slide deck as a fundraising tool to secure needed finances to empower these leaders in a sustainable manner. I am not sure what this will entail at this point, and don't want to be overly programmatic or hasty in my approach. I want to listen deeply, learn thoroughly, and facilitate safe, sacred spaces for under-resourced leaders to practice transformation together. Financial support will come in time, I am certain, if it is needed.

The following pages are filled with two slides per page. Please zoom in to read finer details if you wish. Lastly, a full version of this Keynote is available by emailing me at [chris@restorevoice.com](mailto:chris@restorevoice.com), which is an email address I will have for perpetuity.



Slide 1: Title slide.



Slide 2: My final NPO statement.





Slide 3: Key theological quotation that grounds my project in a place.



Slide 4: The cultural context of my project's social location.



Slide 5: The Eastern Cape, my home, has the highest unemployment rate in South Africa.



Slide 6: Across South Africa, black African women are most likely to stay unemployed.





Slide 7: Further detail regarding black African women as the most vulnerable population.



Slide 8: As a result of this, families are scattered across the country, forced to survive.

**“FAMILIES SHOULD NOT HAVE TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES TO EARN A LIVING. THEY MUST BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD THEIR LIVES, RAISE THEIR FAMILIES AND **PUT DOWN DEEP ROOTS** IN THE PROVINCE OF THEIR BIRTH.”**

**BOBBY STEVENSON, DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MUNICIPAL PROVINCE LEADER FOR EASTERN CAPE**

Slide 9: My project's response to this need: Kouga Leadership Cohorts.

“There is a noticeable hunger and growing desire in Jeffreys Bay, South Africa, for a **safe, vulnerable, honest, mutually-supportive formational cohort for African Christian leaders** (Henceforth known as ‘ACLs’). With rare exceptions, ACLs who pour out their lives sacrificially for others are not taken care of or sustainably supported. ACLs are frequently under-resourced in the formational development of their own inner world, thrust into adulthood with the developmental maturity of a younger child. If they are adequately resourced, it is typically focused on survival necessities (food, shelter, bare-bones education and skill development) or a largely disembodied Christian theology. There is a significant disconnect between the spiritual practices of most ACLs and the honest realities of their actual lives within the places they inhabit. I desire to help bridge this gap by **empowering leaders to develop and mature their inner worlds through the formational practice of a new model of ‘spatial lectio divina’ within the ‘Community of Creation’\*** that is unfolding within my hometown.”

— Excerpt from my Doctoral Program Description, 1 of 2

# KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

Image: “Togetherness Lights the Way,” © Scott Erickson | @scotthepainter  
\*Randy Woodley’s descriptive term for the Kingdom of God in Shalom and the Community of Creation.

Slide 10: A brief description of what Kouga Leadership Cohorts entail in a beta format.

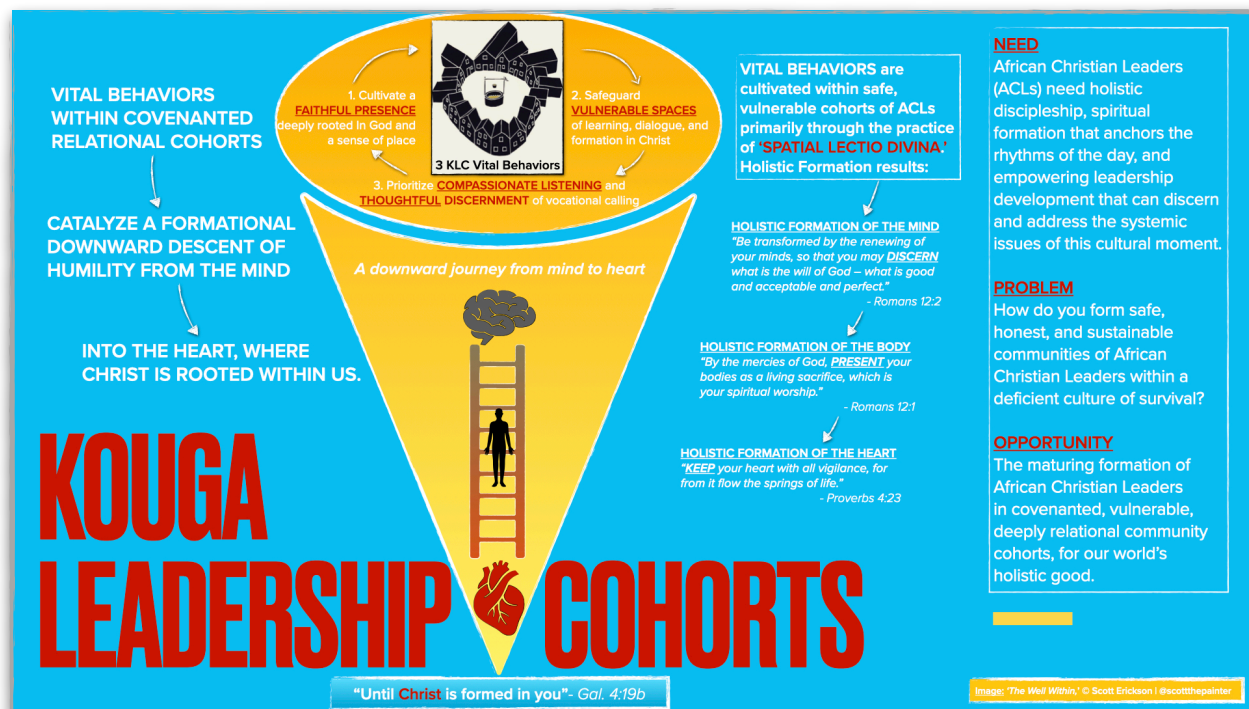
“A beta formational cohort where African Christian leaders can flourish naturally in a practice-based community that shares a common rule of life, a commitment to growing healthy in their inner world, and group discernment of one’s vocational calling rooted within a local place feels like the **“natural ecology of my life,”** as Parker Palmer defines the vocational environment in which a person flourishes most deeply. Palmer writes, “As I learn more about the seed of true self that was planted when I was born, I also learn more about the ecosystem in which I was planted – the network of communal relations in which I am called to live responsively, accountably, and joyfully with beings of every sort. Only when I know both seed and system, self and community, can I embody the great commandment to love both my neighbor and myself.”\* I am quietly hopeful that the formational practice of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented way within small, safe communities of African Christian leaders, will be an increasing focus of my vocational calling in this coming season.”

— Excerpt from my Doctoral Program Description, 2 of 2

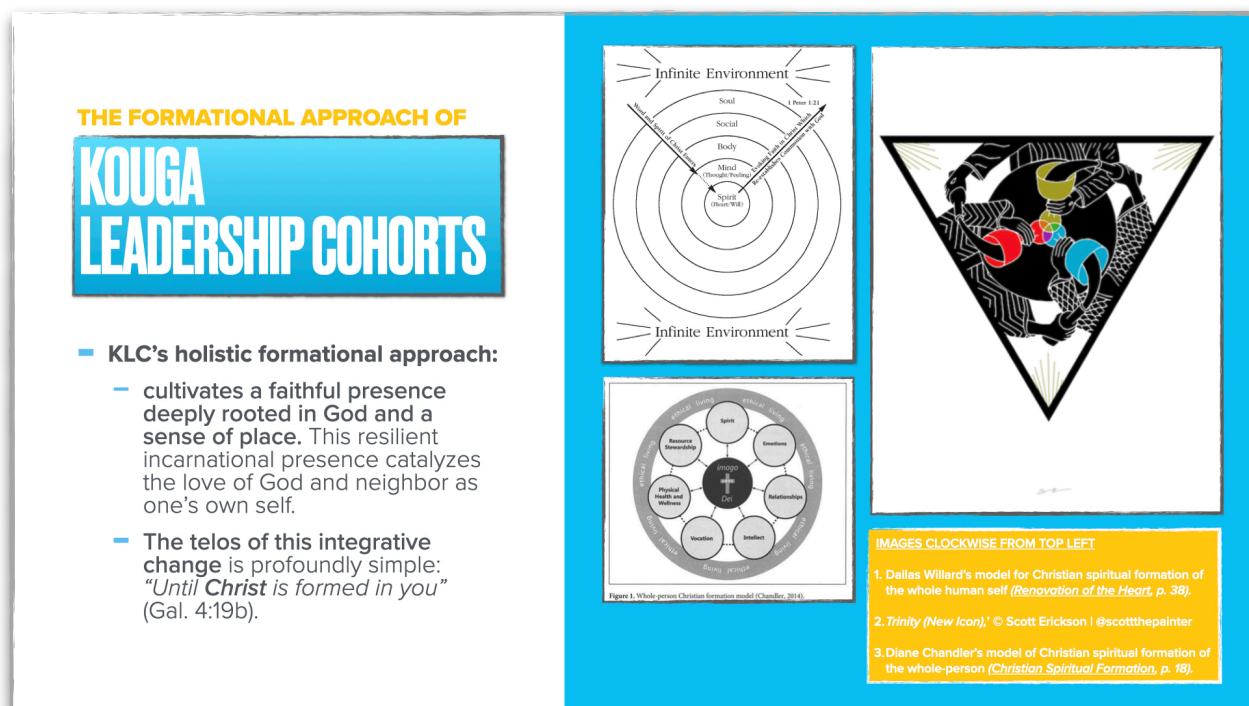
# KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

Image: “The Well Within,” © Scott Erickson | @scotthepainter  
\*Parker Palmer, Let Your Life Speak.

Slide 11: The vision and vital behaviors of Kouga Leadership Cohorts.



Slide 12: The holistic formational approach of Kouga Leadership Cohorts.





Slide 13: The reasoning behind the vital behaviors that define Kouga Leadership Cohorts.

### THE FORMATIONAL BEHAVIORS OF

## KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

#### — KLC's vital behaviors seek to:

- reform deficient developmental needs through safeguarding vulnerable spaces of learning, dialogue, and formation in Christ *while simultaneously*
- maturing vocational growth needs through prioritizing compassionate listening and thoughtful discernment of an under-resourced leader's vocational calling rooted in a particular sense of place.

### MASLOW'S MOTIVATION MODEL

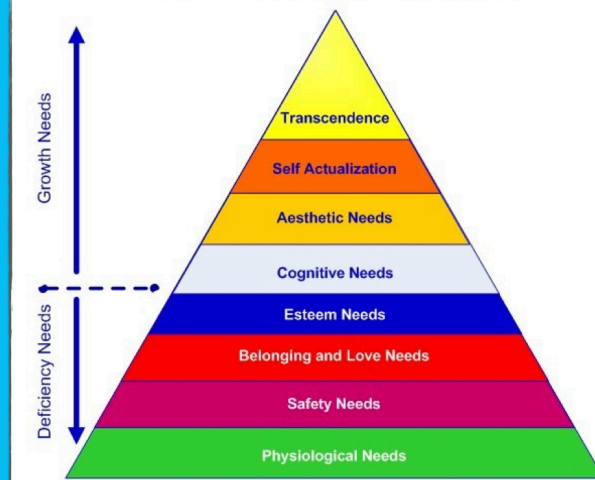


Image: "Maslow's Motivation Model," © Abraham Maslow, 1970

Slide 14: The clear, measurable result of a year spent in Kouga Leadership Cohorts.

### THE FORMATIONAL RESULT OF

## KOUGA LEADERSHIP COHORTS

#### — KLC's clear, measurable result:

- Through a year-long relational covenant with a small cohort of under-resourced leaders — across ethnicity, gender, leadership role, denomination, and age — *in a safe, vulnerable community that practices 'spatial lectio divina' consistently with one another,*
- African Christian leaders will be re-formed, matured, and empowered into their most natural selves as they live out their vocational calling in community for the good of the world.



Slide 15: An introduction to the formational practice of lectio divina.

## WHAT IS THE PRACTICE OF LECTIO DIVINA?

"Although it is often treated as a technique, lectio divina is not really a procedure or even a method – at least not a single method. **It is more an approach and an expectation.** It arises out of a desire to not simply hear the words of Scriptures but also encounter the Word behind the words. At other times and in other ways of engaging with Scriptures we may seek insights, eternal truths and precepts for living. **But in lectio divina what we seek is not information or motivation but communion and union. We seek nothing less than God.** We attend to the Word as a way of opening ourselves to God and listen for God's living word to us. Lectio divina treats Scriptures not as a test to be studied or a set of truths to be grasped, but as the living Word – always alive and active, always fresh and new."

– David Benner, *Opening to God*, p. 40

Slide 16: The role of listening for the voice of God as one engages the scriptural text.

## WHAT IS THE PRACTICE OF LECTIO DIVINA?

"**It is therefore, not so much a way of reading as a way of listening.** The listening posture that it encourages is more passive than active. Reading Scriptures in this way is reading (and listening) with heart and spirit open. Don't try to find something or make anything out of the passage. Wait for the gift that God has for you in it. Read slowly and reverentially, savoring for what you hear and gently listening for the still, small voice of God that says, 'This is my word for you today.' **It is listening for the voice of God, communicated through Scriptures and revealed by the Spirit. It is, therefore, prayer because it is an opening of self to God.**"

– David Benner, *Opening to God*, p. 40

Slide 17: A new formational model embodied in place: Introducing 'spatial lectio divina.'



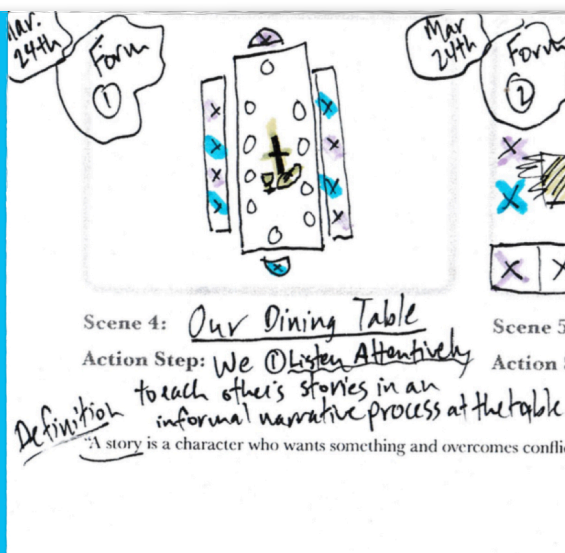
“Building off of Benner’s expansive concept of lectio divina, my prototype will use four spaces (rooms) within my house as a formational progression into the heart of a leader’s inner world. The four spaces will be created to invite the heart more deeply into a communal experience of the love of God, our friend. They will mirror the classic historical steps of lectio divina in its formational essence.”

— My initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: My first sketch of a model of 'spatial lectio divina,' made during a call with my Project Faculty & Peer Group!

Slide 18: Attentive listening to each other’s stories at a common table begins the process.



“We will begin at (1) our dining table, as we listen attentively to each other’s stories, in an informal narrative process of shared dialogue as we welcome one another to be present to God, each other, and our own souls, around a common table. Food and drink will be shared as we gather together as one community.”

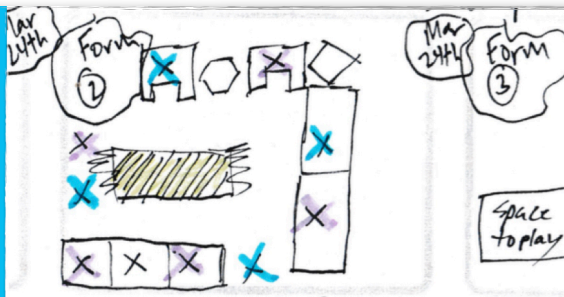
— My initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: My sketch of our dining table, where we listen attentively to God and one another.



Slide 19: As we listen, the dialogue deepens in wonder as we ponder in our living room.



Mar 24th Form (2)

Mar 24th Form (3)

space to play

Scene 5: Our Living Room

chy Action Step: We sit together for a focused period of meditation upon God, (2) pondering deeply a guiding concept.

Scene 6: Crisis Decision

Defini

“We will then sit down in (2) our living room, for the purpose of a more focused period of meditating upon the presence of God, and the Triune Community of Love’s active work within our midst in this current moment. We will ponder deeply a guiding, formational concept that frames our shared space for this time.”

— My initial description of ‘spatial lectio divina’ in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF ‘SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA’

Image: My sketch of our living room, where we ponder deeply a central truth about God’s work in our midst.

Slide 20: A communal response of worship, prayer, and play bursts forth in our playroom.



in an honest community sharing life in safe spaces.

space to play

TV/music

Scene 6: Our Girls' Playroom

Decision: We respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, + play, dialoguing in honesty.

Definition: “The central choice of the protagonist who has come face-to-face with the most powerful struggle of his/her life, leading to a story’s climax.” (March 2021)

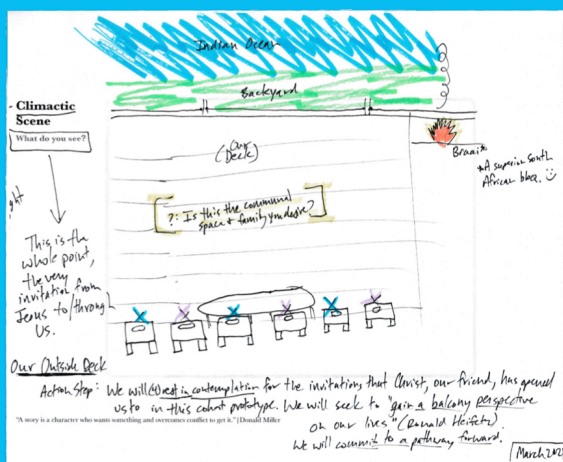
“Next, we will literally descend down our stairs to (3) our girls’ playroom, (doubling as our family room), as a metaphor for the formational journey downward and inward, from the mind to the heart, which is a core inward movement within the contemplative inner world of a leader. Once there, with a unified childlike spirit, we will respond in shared worship, prayer, confession, and play, as we dialogue more deeply with the Spirit of God, our inner hearts, and each other in honesty.”

— My initial description of ‘spatial lectio divina’ in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF ‘SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA’

Image: My sketch of our girls’ playroom, where we respond to God in communal worship, prayer, and play.

Slide 21: The 'spatial lectio divina' process ends in contemplative rest on our deck.



"Lastly, we will ascend outside to (4) **our outside deck**, which provides a beautifully expansive view of the Indian Ocean less than a kilometer away. As our gaze lifts upwards and outward, we will **rest in contemplation** of the formational invitations that Christ, our friend, has opened our hearts to throughout this short experience. We will seek to **'gain a balcony perspective on our lives,'** to borrow a critical leadership practice from Ronald Heifetz. Together, we will commit to an accountable pathway forward to walk in community, as we mature unto Christ."

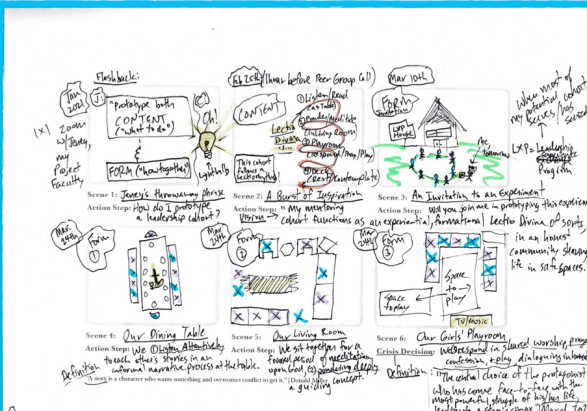
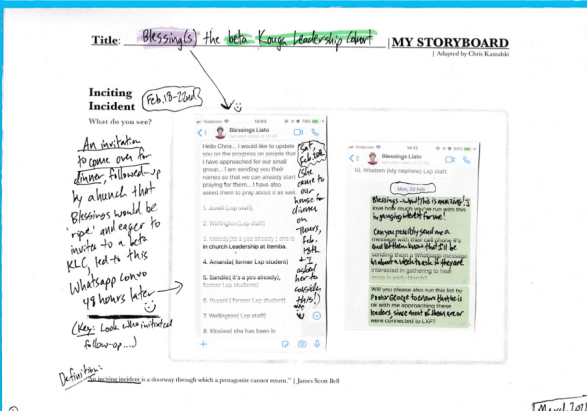
— My initial description of 'spatial lectio divina' in my Prototype Iteration Report (May 2021)

## A MODEL OF 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: My sketch of our outside deck, where we rest in contemplative silence at the invitation of God in our lives.

Slide 22: A new holistic formational model, 'spatial lectio divina,' initially defined.

**'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA':** THE FORMATIONAL PRACTICE OF REFLECTIVELY LISTENING TO AND ACTIVELY RESPONDING TO GOD, OUR FRIEND, AS A DIVERSE 'COMMUNITY OF CREATION' THAT IS ROOTED IN A PARTICULAR PLACE, FOR A SPECIFIC SEASON.



## STORYBOARDING 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'

Image: The first half of my visual storyboarding process as I began to dream and envision my NPO project.



Slide 23: The second half of the overall model, illustrated in storyboard form.

**'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'** THE FORMATIONAL PRACTICE OF REFLECTIVELY LISTENING TO AND ACTIVELY RESPONDING TO GOD, OUR FRIEND, AS A DIVERSE 'COMMUNITY OF CREATION' THAT IS ROOTED IN A PARTICULAR PLACE, FOR A SPECIFIC SEASON.

**Storyboard Details:**

- Left Panel:**
  - Definition:** "Choose the height of the story, any where the main conflict is brought into resolution."
  - Climactic Scene:** "What do you see?"
  - Background:** "Indian River"
  - Scene:** "Is this the communal space & family tradition?"
  - Resolution:** "This is the whole point, the very invitation from Jesus to throw us."
  - Action Step:** "We will (or) is contemplation for the invitation that Christ, our friend, has given us to in this calm prototype. We will seek to 'gain a balancing perspective on our lives' (Donald Miller). We will commit to a pathway forward."
  - Date:** March 2021
- Right Panel:**
  - Definition:** "The place where the protagonist is left once the climax of the story has been resolved."
  - Resolution:** "What do you see?"
  - Timeline:**
    - Apr (Start):** "I'm all in!"
    - May:** "I'm all in!"
    - Jun:** "I'm all in!"
    - Jul:** "I'm all in!"
    - Aug:** "I'm all in!"
    - Sep:** "I'm all in!"
    - Oct:** "I'm all in!"
    - Nov:** "I'm all in!"
    - Dec:** "I'm all in!"
  - Reflections:**
    - Apr:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - May:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Jun:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Jul:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Aug:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Sep:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Oct:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Nov:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
    - Dec:** "Reflect & Evaluate"
  - Action Step:** "We will commit to walk together in honest relationship for a beta trial process of 12 months, April-December 2021, Spirit of God is up to it."
  - Date:** March 2021

**STORYBOARDING 'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA'**

Image: The second half of my visual storyboarding process as I began to dream and envision my NPO project.

Slide 24: A vision of 'spatial lectio divina:' an under-resourced African Christian leader's maturing inner heart for the world, flourishing outwardly in every area of their life.

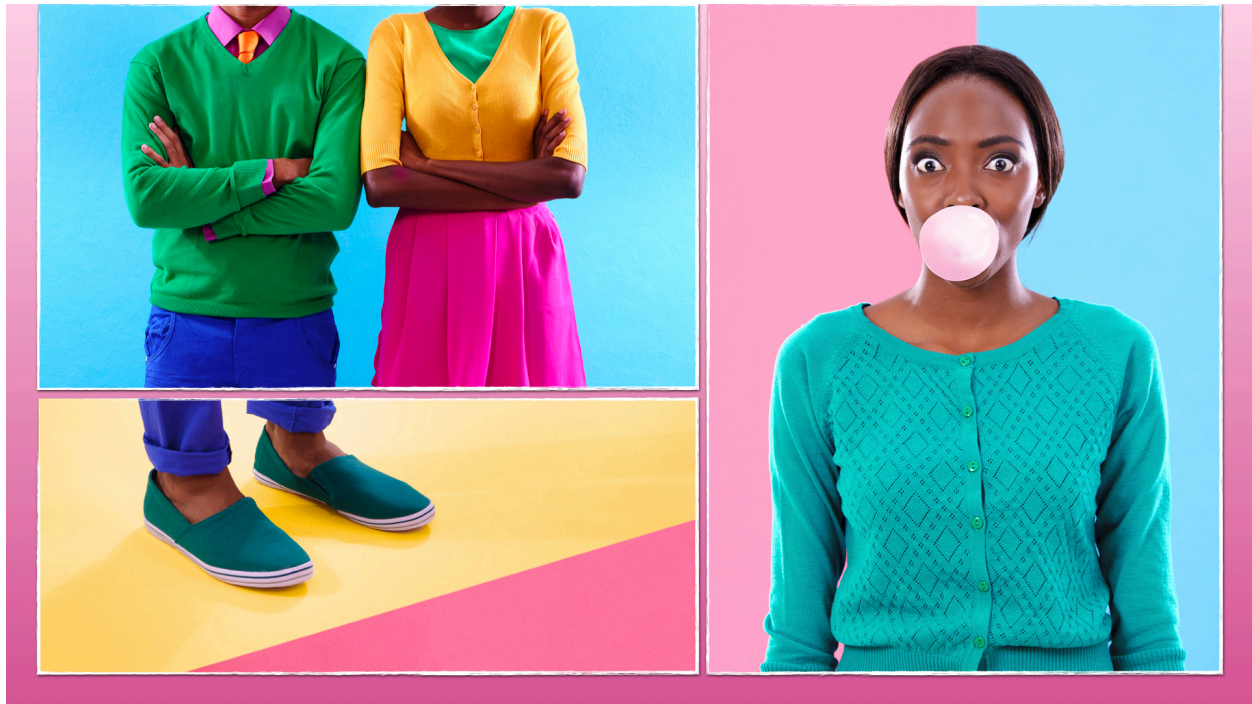
**'SPATIAL LECTIO DIVINA: A VISION'**

**Quotes:**

- "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all-seeing, within you."
  - Theophan the Recluse
- ...
- "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."
  - Paul in Ephesians 1:18-19

Image: © Scott Erickson | @scotttheprinter

Slide 25: The stewards of the global Christian movement: *Young African females*.



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The full introductory Keynote slide presentation for *“Place Informs Posture: A Spatial Lectio Divina Model for Under-Resourced African Christian Leaders”* can be also found at [this link](#),<sup>186</sup> as well as all resources related to this project ([YouTube playlist links](#), scope and sequence, video transcripts, spatial lectio divine liturgies, etc.). If you desire to utilize these resources for personal formational use, please email Chris Kamalski at the following address, which will remain active in perpetuity: [chris@restorevoice.com](mailto:chris@restorevoice.com).

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<sup>186</sup> Google Drive folder will be live and available for as long as possible.

#### 4. Kouga Leadership 'Beta' Cohort – Scope and Sequence of Practice

The following table contains a record of the beta Kouga Leadership Cohort gathering dates that we met together, either at our home for a full dinner and shared practice of spatial lectio divina, or at the Leadership Experience (LXP) house, where we served light snacks, coffee, and tea, plus engaged in our regular formational practice. Over the course of several months in the Fall of 2021, we met together as a cohort on 8 Monday evenings, usually from around 18:00pm – 20:30pm, with additional time for dinner preparation and transportation pick-ups and drop-offs. Two additional cohort gathering times, one in March 2021 as a part of my Design Prototyping work, and a final series of one-on-one assessment interviews in January 2022 that were scheduled to give core cohort participants a chance to evaluate this experience for its formational value. In total, we gathered together for 10 sessions, roughly 2-3 times a month.

Several additional gatherings were planned but then scrapped due to COVID-19 sickness, other illness, or the need to travel out of town for the December 2021 holidays. Honestly, meeting weekly with consistency was a challenge for all, myself included, given the systemic realities of life in an environment of survival for under-resourced African Christian leaders. Upon reflection on these challenges, educator Leslie Hart's words provide a needed adjustment of my expectations: "Even if the theory that now exists were perfect, most of us in education have never before worked from theory to practice...We cannot expect the theory itself to solve our problems. The understanding has to be applied. Deciding what is to be abandoned is crucial...and letting go is often much harder than taking hold."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Leslie Hart, Human Brain, Human Learning, (London: Longman Publishing, 1983), quoted in Teaching Around the 4Mat Cycle, written by Bernice and Dennis McCarthy. Citation information below.

Bernice McCarthy and Dennis McCarthy, Teaching Around the 4Mat Cycle: Designing Instruction for Diverse Learners with Diverse Learning Styles. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006), 4.

<b>COHORT GATHERING DATES</b> (Sept. 2021 – Jan. 2022) ~ Mondays, 18:00pm – 20:30pm	<b>COHORT GATHERING SCOPE &amp; SEQUENCE</b> <i>A Communal Practice of 'Spatial Lectio Divina' in Our Homes</i>
<b>KLC Prototype Gathering</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wednesday, March 24th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fertile Soil: A Parable of Deep Roots</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Question</u>: What type of soil is your heart rooted within in this current season?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Mark 4:1-20 (NLT); Matthew 13 (Paraphrase)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: Intro to 'Spatial Lectio Divina'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, September 06th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Returning to 'Fertile Soil: A Parable of Deep Roots'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Question</u>: How is the soil of your heart healthy or unhealthy in this current season (6 months later)?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Mark 4:1-20 (NLT); Matthew 13 (Paraphrase)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: Reflective listening, and prayer of examen</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, September 13th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Starving Baker: A Visual Picture for Leaders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Idea</u>: "The lesson of the Starving Baker? As selfish as it may sound, the best way leaders can serve and grow their people is to tend to their own growth first."</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Ecclesiastes 10:10 (Various translations)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: Reflective journaling, dialogue, and prayer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, September 20th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: LXP house</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Formational Rhythm: Intro to 'Lectio Divina'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Question</u>: How is Jesus, the Living Word (Jn. 1), opening your heart to God's presence in the Scripture text, through the ancient practice of lectio divina?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Galatians 4:19 (NIV)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: The classic 4-steps of Lectio Divina, practiced in transparent community in our homes: (1) Lectio (Reading/Listening), (2) Meditatio (Meditate/Pondering), (3) Oratio (Responsive Prayer), (4) Contemplatio (Contemplation/Reflective Rest)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>COHORT GATHERING DATES</b> (Sept. 2021 – Jan. 2022) ~ Mondays, 18:00pm – 20:30pm	<b>COHORT GATHERING SCOPE &amp; SEQUENCE</b> <i>A Communal Practice of 'Spatial Lectio Divina' in Our Homes</i>
<b>KLC Gathering #4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, October 11th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: LXP house</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ignatian Contemplation: Intro to Imaginative Prayer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Question</u>: How can your holy imagination invite you more deeply into an experience of visual meditation and sensory prayer within the Scriptural narrative?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Matthew 14:28-31 (NLT)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: Ignatian Contemplation in the gospel biographies of Jesus as sensory form of 'spatial lectio divina'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, October 18th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Practicing Imaginative Prayer // Mid-Cohort Assessment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Idea</u>: A mid-cohort assessment dialogue led by Maxie Kamalski (Chris's wife) on how this beta cohort experiment is going (in Chris' absence)</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: A second passage in the Gospels (Maxie leads)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: Returning to Imaginative Prayer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, November 15th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Parable of the 3 Prodigals: <i>The Younger Brother</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Questions</u>: What should this story be entitled? How many prodigals are present within its narrative? How do you relate to the younger brother's prodigal journey?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Luke 15:11-32 (Jesus Storybook Bible – a "child-centered" reading)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: A "spatial model of lectio divina"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<b>COHORT GATHERING DATES</b> (Sept. 2021 – Jan. 2022) ~ Mondays, 18:00pm – 20:30pm	<b>COHORT GATHERING SCOPE &amp; SEQUENCE</b> <i>A Communal Practice of 'Spatial Lectio Divina' in Our Homes</i>
<b>KLC Gathering #7</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, November 22nd, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: LXP house</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Parable of the 3 Prodigals: <i>The Elder Brother</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Questions</u>: Who does the elder brother represent in this parable? How does he take a prodigal journey that is more inward in nature? How am I Pharisaical?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Luke 15:11-32 (NRSV – a “literal” reading)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: A “spatial model of lectio divina”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Gathering #8</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, November 29th, 2021               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Location</u>: Kamalski home</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Parable of the 3 Prodigals: <i>The Father</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Focus Questions</u>: How does the action of the father redefine the nature of being a prodigal? How does this reflect the heart of God towards humanity? What does it look like to rest in the truth that ‘Everything [God] has is yours’?</li> <li><u>Scripture</u>: Luke 15:11-32 (NLT – a “personal” reading)</li> <li><u>Formational Practice</u>: A “spatial model of lectio divina”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>KLC Assessment Interviews</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wednesday, January 26th &amp; Thursday, January 27th, 2022               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Locations</u>: LXP office (Interviews with Blessings and Beatrice); Victory4All Skills Centre (Interview with Zaida)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1-on-1 Assessment Interviews: <i>Female ACLs Feedback</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Assessment Questions</u>: (1) What worked? What didn't work? (2) What was the most significant parts of these cohort gatherings to you? (3) How did our practice of 'spatial lectio divina' impact your formational growth with God and yourself? (4) What are the unique challenges that you face in this cultural context as an African Christian leader who is also female? (5) Should we continue to gather as a cohort in the future?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

5. Full Transcript<sup>188</sup> of Movement 1 - Learning in the Office: Intro to Spatial Lectio Divina



Hello. My name is Chris Kamalski and I want to welcome you to this extemporaneous introduction to the parables, as well as to the practice of Lectio Divina in a spatially-oriented way. I have a lot of thoughts about Lectio Divina, a lot of thoughts about the scriptures, in particular about the parables and the stories that Jesus tells.

But the first thing that I want to say in this brief introduction is that parables can be simply defined as “alongside stories that have a point.” So in the larger sweep of the biographical gospels in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we have numerous instances in all of the gospels of Jesus telling stories as other things were happening - other teachings that he had, other points that he was trying to make - things that were happening with his disciples, or as he was simply in the normal flow of life - where it seemed like, whatever the conversation that was happening, a point wasn’t being grasped. [Because of this], often Jesus would break into short

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<sup>188</sup> Where necessary, a short bracketed section has been added, or a slight edit in word choice has been made, to clarify in written form what I was facilitating verbally. The general tenor remains the same.



stories – we call them parables – to illustrate whatever he was trying to get across in a larger and deeper sense.

Now, we often think of parables in a modern sense as being something like “a story with a moral or a fable.” [As modern readers], we dive into a story [in the gospels] and don’t get swept into the flow of the story. Of course we don’t hear it as the initial audience would have heard it or reacted to it. Rather, we jump to the end and go to where the lesson is. When I was growing up, there was a number of kids cartoons that we would watch, and I remember in particular one of them, G.I. Joe, would be this thirty-minute action spectacle for kids of military might and American exceptionalism. Right at the end of the cartoon, the soldiers that had just been battling the evil people would turn and talk to the screen – these are cartoons, mind you – and they would pull a lesson out of what was just a silly kids cartoon. I always found it weird and kind of grating because they were bring a moral out of something that didn’t really fit. G.I. Joe wasn’t this kind of story.

Parables are different. They do have a point. They have a point that is supposed to be thought about and meditated upon, wrestled with, debated, discussed, gone away with and come back to. And so in that sense, when you marry the practice of *Lectio Divina* in a spatially-oriented way to the with the scriptural reading [of the parables of Jesus] in a slow, meditative way, what you often get is a profound experience with the God of the scriptures – the living word as Hebrew 4 describes it.

And so, I want to introduce a four-part parable that we will use as a centerpiece of my NPO project, [which discusses] socially-located spiritual formation. We are going to look at perhaps the most famous parable of all, the parable of the prodigal son as found in Luke 15:11-32. We are going to look at it through a number of different cultural lenses as well as biblical translations. You will see in this series of video recordings that [I will] move around the normal confines of our house to illustrate how *Lectio Divina* has a spatial component to it that mirrors the movement downward as we move with the Spirit of God down into the center of our heart. [We] meet God there, in a sense, in the place where God really dwells within us as our friend.

So, let me begin by saying this. Let me make two comments about the parables by reading a couple of excerpts. Then, I'll actually introduce Lectio Divina and the first reading of the scripture, the plain reading if you will, from Luke 15. Kenneth Bailey, in his masterwork Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels, writes this about the parables. I think it is an amazing and prescient comment. Speaking about a parable in Matthew 20 that he has re-titled "The Parable of the Compassionate Employer," he writes this:

This parable has long been called the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Such a title assumes that the workers are the focus of the parable. The same confusion reigns with the parable in Luke 15:11-32, which has traditionally been called the parable of the prodigal son, as if the wayward younger son were the central figure in the parable rather than the father. The central focus of this story is the amazing compassion and grace of [the father, rather than the reaction, or lack thereof, of his sons].<sup>189</sup>

Wow! It's almost as if Kenneth Bailey would re-title the parable of the prodigal son as something like "The Parable of the Compassionate and Loving Father." Amazing!

N.T. Wright and Michael Bird, in their recent masterwork entitled The New Testament in Its World, speak at length about the parable of the prodigal son. Obviously, their work is so much better than mine, and so it is worth quoting them at some length in relation to this parable. They write:

Among the dozens of things people regularly and often rightly say about the 'prodigal son,' one thing is missed by most, though it would be blindingly obvious to most first-century Jewish listeners. A story about a scoundrel young son who goes off into a faraway pagan country and is then astonishingly welcomed back home is – of course! – the story of exile and restoration. It was the story Jesus' contemporaries wanted to hear. And Jesus told the story to make the point that the return from exile was happening in and through his own work. The parable was not a general illustration of the timeless truth of God's forgiveness for the sinner, though of course it can be translated into that. It was a sharp-eyed, context-specific message about what was happening in Jesus' ministry. More specifically, as Luke insists in his framing of it (Lk. 15:1), it was about what was happening through Jesus' welcome of outcasts, his eating with sinners. It was an explanation of why the party was thoroughly appropriate. The 'party' – Jesus' apparently scandalous habit of dining with people regarded as 'sinners' – was a central characteristic of Jesus' public career. Wherever he went, there seems to be a celebration; the accounts of festive meals, at which Jesus welcomed all and sundry, is one of the most

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<sup>189</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 355.

Please note that I have modified the bracketed portion of this quotation to refer to the parable in Luke 15.

securely established features of almost all recent scholarly portraits of his work. This naturally provoked those who had very different visions of what it would look like if God's kingdom were to break in.<sup>190</sup>

I'll add a sort of parenthetical comment here. If you look at the reaction of those to whom Jesus was speaking his parables to, you'll often see what feels to us as the reader like an overreaction, or subsequently the opposite of that, an under-reaction or no reaction. Well, we have to remember that these stories were written, and spoken, and told, and re-told, and ultimately transcribed to a very different cultural world than ours. And so, of course, who was Jesus speaking to when he was talking about the three parables that we find in Luke 15? He was speaking to his disciples, of course, but he was also speaking to the Pharisees, who were plotting at that moment to kill him because Jesus had an alternative vision of the Kingdom of God and how it was coming to pass. Of course Jesus would tell stories that poked at them, and sought to prove a response. Wouldn't you?

Continuing with Wright and Bird's incredible insight:

Through his actions, Jesus gained the reputation for being 'a glutton and a drunkard and a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.' How could this Jesus fellow, a clever rabbi, a mighty healer, and even a prophet by all accounts, stoop to the level of keeping company with folk who were morally wretched and ceremonially impure? Wasn't Jesus concerned about his reputation or with his own personal purity, which Israel's worship demanded? Ought not a prophet to be rebuking and admonishing people like these? Jesus' answer was that it wasn't the healthy who needed a physician, but the sick. God had always been in the business of welcoming prodigal children home.<sup>191</sup>

Again, N.T. Wright and Michael Bird conclude this exegesis of Luke 15 by saying, which they rightly place in the context of it being about the listeners' [of Jesus' parable teaching] longing for the restoration of Israel, right? The exile and restoration of Israel? This parable, in a sense, is about the disobedience of the people of God, and how God is still welcoming them

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<sup>190</sup> N.T. Wright and Michael Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 204-205.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, pp. 205-206.

home. Again, they rightly conclude their commentary of this passage by saying, "God has always been in the business of welcoming prodigal children home."<sup>192</sup>

God has always been in the business of welcoming prodigal children home, which leads me to our reading. I'm going to be reading from the NIV because it is such a familiar translation to us.

Remember: Lectio Divina is one of the most ancient spiritual formation practices found in the church writ large - across the world, across culture, across denomination, or the way that you practice your faith in community. It was initially developed in some sense to create space for people that were largely illiterate or impoverished to hear the word of God, because the printing press wasn't even [invented yet], let alone [having] access to scripture that you could hold in your hand. And so, how did you receive the word of God? You heard it. You heard it read.

[Lectio Divina] is a four-step process, which [is comprised of] Step 1: *Lectio* (Reading/Listening). I like to refer to it as listening because you are listening to reading being read [aloud]. Step 2: *Meditatio* (Meditation/Pondering). Here you are reflecting upon and digging into [the scriptural text], asking some cultural questions that cause you to ponder things deeply. Meditation means to chew or to ponder deeply, like you are chewing a really good piece of steak. Step 3: *Oratio* (Responsive Prayer) is where you move into response yourself. The Latin translation for Step 3 is *oratio*, or prayer where you are literally responding to God out of your [posture of] listening - what you have heard and what has stood out to you - and your meditation - what you are chewing and reflecting upon as you ponder. Now, you are responding to God. Your movement is back to the Living Word of God. Finally, Step 4 in the process is *Contemplatio* (Contemplation/Rest)). I like to translate that word in a different context and call it 'Reflective Rest.' This is the idea that we come back to a place where God is present with us, dwelling inside of us, incarnating us through his Spirit. We are dwelling in God, in the 'Triune Community of Love,' and we are resting in what we have heard, and resolving our self towards what we are being called to do hereforth.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

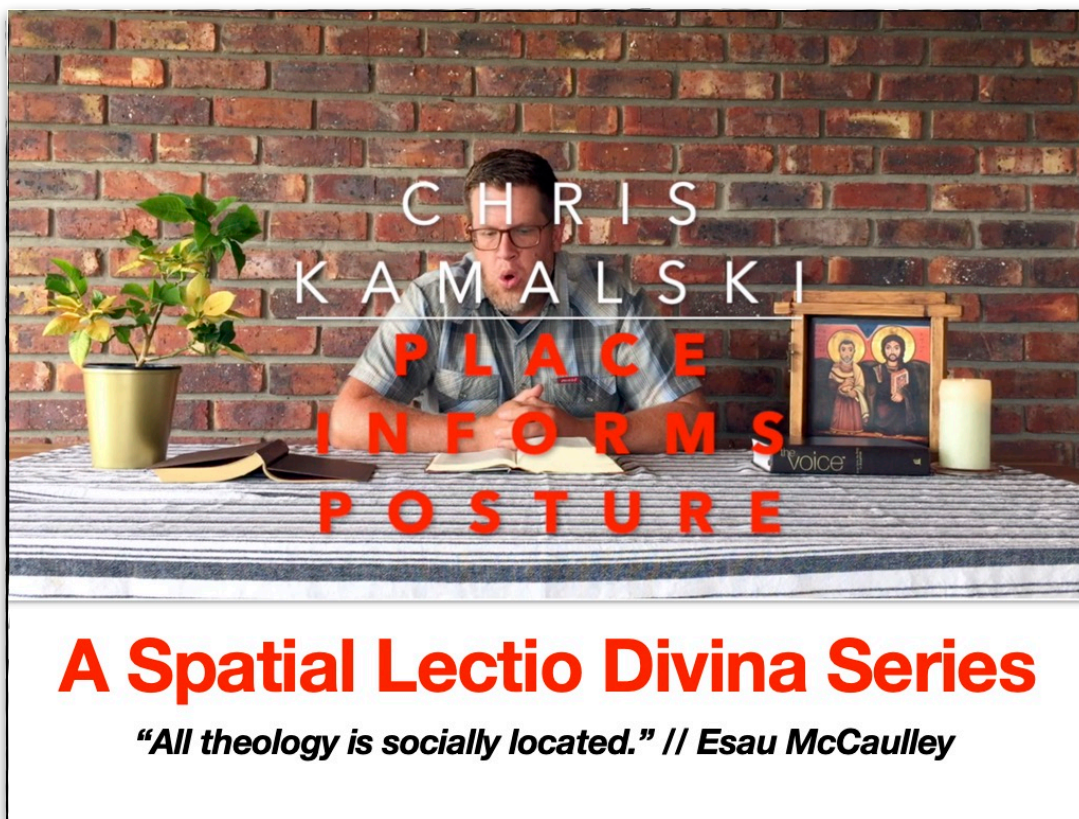
And so, a plain reading of the text. As you are watching this short video, even as I read this [parable], Luke 15:11-32, will you listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you? Will you allow an overly familiar story to startle you? Will you pay attention to what word or phrase leaps out at you, and what perhaps, the Spirit of God – the Living Word, might be saying to you for this day and moment that you find yourself in? Luke 15:11-32, read from the NIV:

11 Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13 Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. 25 Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

May the hearing of the word of the Lord settle deeply and simply in the mind, and ultimately in the heart, of all who hear or watch this short reading.

What do you hear? What do you see? What do you imagine? What is the Spirit of God, who lives in you, inviting you to do with this word? A question for you to ponder as I end this short

meditation and introduction is, 'What should this story actually be entitled?' Moreover, how many prodigals are actually present in the story itself? One definition of the word prodigal can be defined as something like "being wastefully extravagant" (Apple Dictionary, 2019 MacBook Air). If that is the conception of what prodigal is in this context, well, who is the prodigal? Ultimately, if the father is the prodigal, who is being prodigious? Who is being wastefully extravagant in love? How many prodigals are in this story? How are you a prodigal? How is the Spirit of God inviting you to lovingly act in a prodigal way to your neighbors around you? Let those who have ears to hear, hear. Let those who have eyes to see, see. May it be so.

6. Place Informs Posture: A Spatial Lectio Divina Series – Video Screenshots Details Overview

## 01 Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina – Learning in the Office



**"Alongside stories that have a point"**

Definition of Parable



**"A story with a moral or fable"**

How we typically think of parables in a modern sense



**"Parables have a point that are to be meditated upon"**

The formational practice of Lectio Divina invites a rhythm of listening, wrestling, dialoguing, and resting.



**"You heard it read"**

How a largely illiterate audience received the word of God for centuries



## 01 Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina – Learning in the Office



**"A profound experience with the God of the Scriptures"**

The result of practicing lectio divina in a spatially oriented way



**"Mirrors the movement downward with the Spirit"**

The spatial component of lectio divina, descending from the mind to the heart



**"Lectio is an ancient spiritual practice"**

Found across the world, culture, and Christian denomination writ large



**"Developed to create space for people to hear God"**

Particularly, those who were illiterate or impoverished within Christian communities

## 01 Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina – Learning in the Office



**STEP 1: LECTIO (Reading / Listening)**

The Scriptural text is listened to as it is read aloud within a group setting.



**STEP 2: MEDITATIO (Meditating / Pondering)**

The Scriptural text is reflected upon and dialogued over in a wondering manner.



**STEP 3: ORATIO (Responsive Prayer)**

The Scriptural text invites a response in prayer to God from what you have heard.



**STEP 4: CONTEMPLATIO (Contemplation / Rest)**

Finally, the Scriptural text invites us to reflectively rest in God, the Community of Love.

## 01 Introduction to Spatial Lectio Divina – Learning in the Office



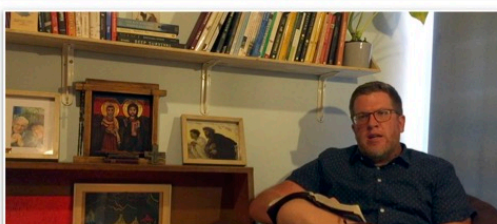
### Lectio #1: Luke 15:11-32 (NIV)

A plain reading from the text



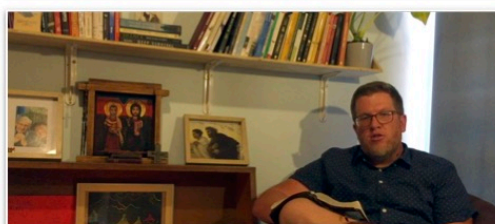
### "The central figure in the parable [is] the father"

The need to rename the parable in Luke 15:11-32 to focus one's attention correctly



### Prodigal: "Being wastefully extravagant"

Apple Dictionary (2019 MacBook Air)



### What should this story actually be entitled?

A question to ponder about this parable

## 02 Lectio (Reading) – Listening at the Dining Table



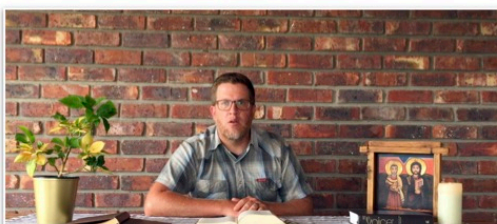
### The Lectio process begins at the table

Welcoming one another through a shared meal and conversation invites a listening posture.



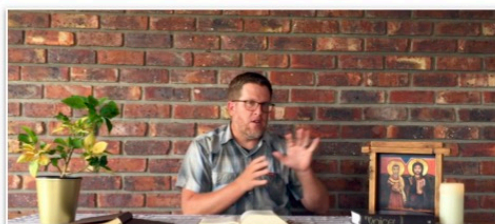
### A space to listen, share, connect, and eat

The spatial purpose of a shared table



### Lectio: The public reading of Scripture out loud

Historically, Lectio Divina emphasizes the communal, auditory nature of the Word.

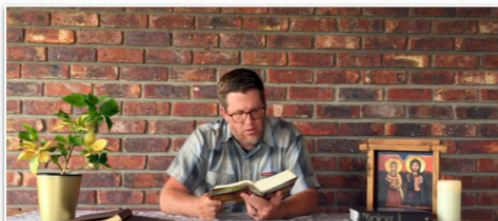


### The prodigal sons are invited to the father's table

The table is a place where justice and reconciliation are sorted out.

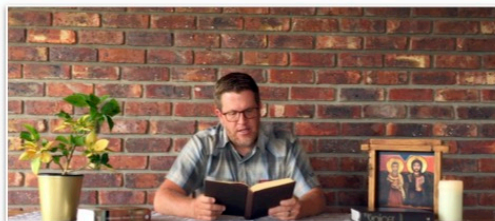


## 02 Lectio (Reading) – Listening at the Dining Table



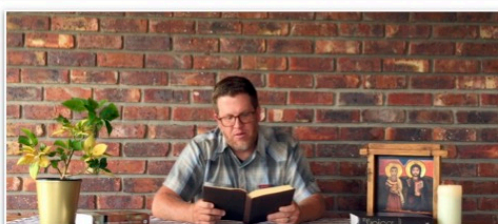
### LECTIO #2: LUKE 15:11-32 (MSG)

A second plain reading from the text



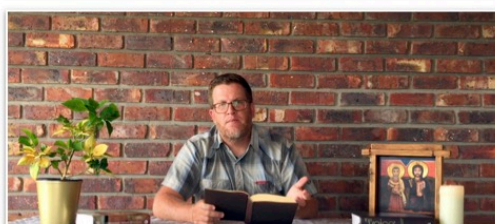
### The table is a place of shared hunger

The table is not a place to fight, defend, prove, nor conquer one another.



### The table is the great equalizer

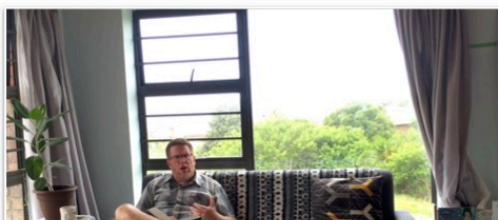
We bring our need, our fragility, and our humanity to a shared table.



### "If the home is a body, the table is the heart"

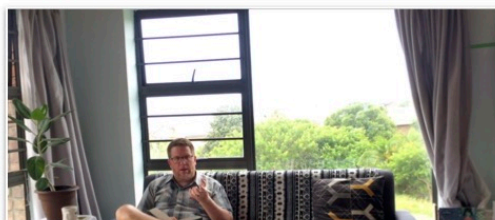
Shauna Niequist, Bread & Wine

## 03 Meditatio (Meditating) – Pondering in the Living Room



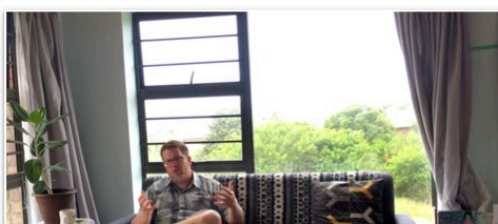
### A welcoming space where dialogue happens

The Living Room is the space where 'Meditatio' (Pondering in Dialogue) thrives.



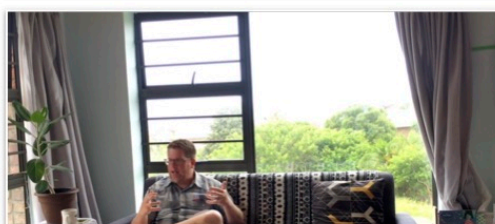
### Christian meditation is about Someone.

It centers the presence of God within a particular scriptural text.



### 'Meditatio' involves a group dialogue

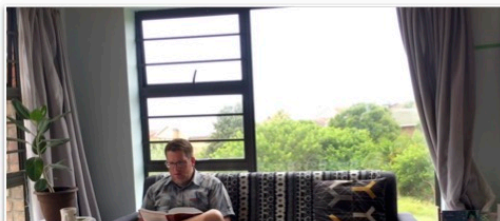
Frequently, there is space within this step to share a phrase that stood out.



### The Living Room is not a classroom nor a pulpit.

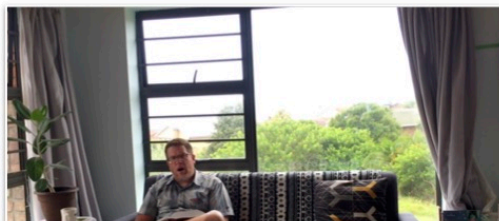
Pondering in dialogue requires a communal choice to listen deeply to one another as co-equals.

### 03 Meditatio (Meditating) – Pondering in the Living Room



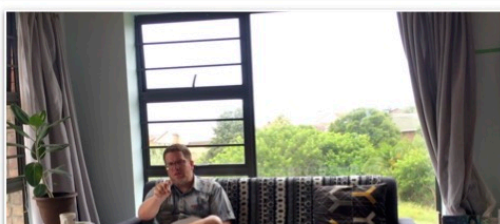
#### LECTIO #3: LUKE 15:11-32 (NRSV)

A third, more literal, reading from the text



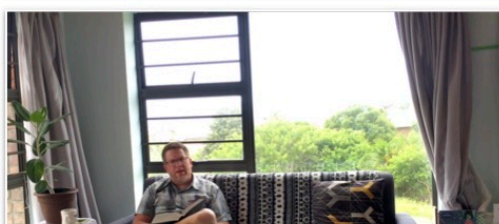
#### Meditatio invites listening to the Holy Spirit.

In this parable, we ask 'How does the character of the elder brother resemble my own heart towards God?'



#### The elder son 'disowns' his own brother.

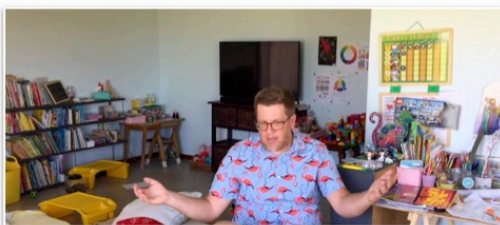
Ironically, he was responding from the heart as a prodigal son towards his own family.



#### "The final response of the elder brother is never stated." (Keener)

Jesus ends with a cliffhanger to provoke the Pharisees into response.

### 04 Oratio (Praying) – Responding in Prayer in the Playroom



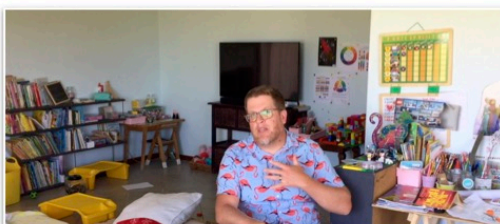
#### A space of play, creativity, and freedom

The formational intention in 'Oratio,' Step 3 of the spatial lectio divina process



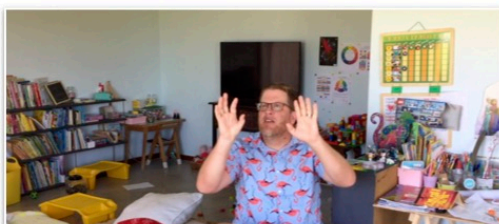
#### The place of childhood imagination

A child's playroom is the perfect space to explore what it is like to respond to God in prayer.



#### The playroom represents our deepest self.

God loves us in the mess of our deepest, most raw self.

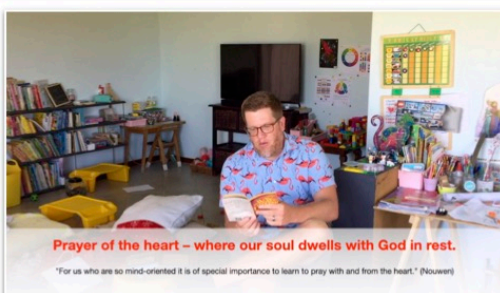
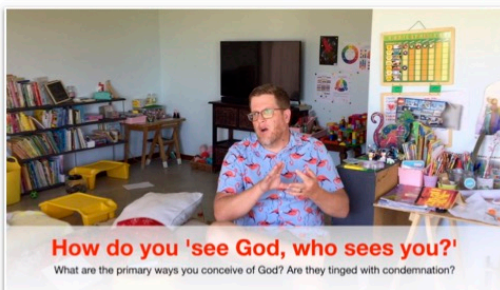


#### "Behold God, beholding you, and smiling."

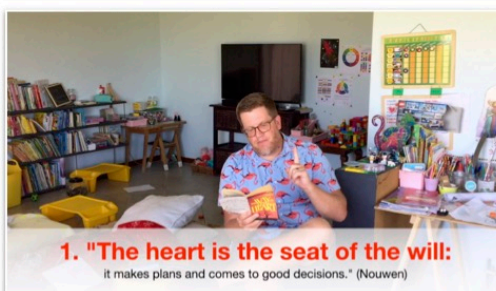
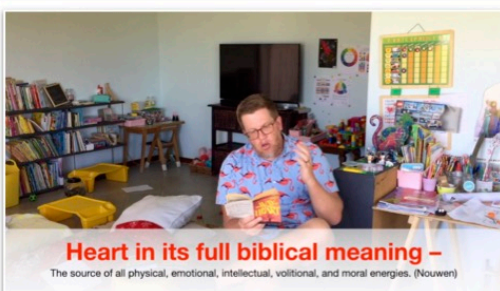
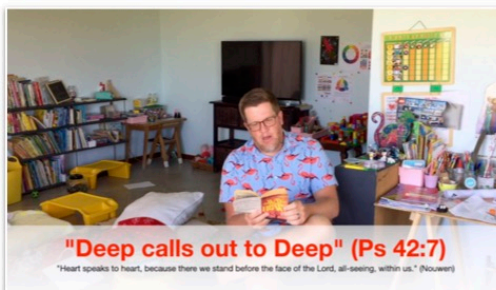
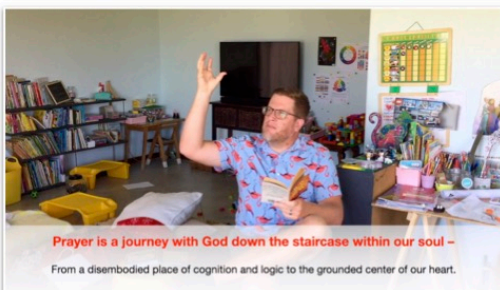
Anthony de Mello, on the responsive nature of prayer in beholding God and self.



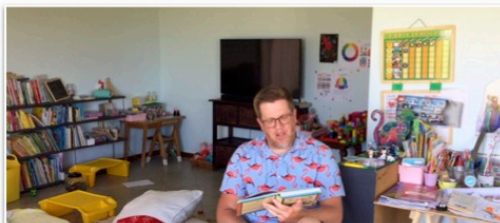
## 04 Oratio (Praying) – Responding in Prayer in the Playroom



## 04 Oratio (Praying) – Responding in Prayer in the Playroom



## 04 Oratio (Praying) – Responding in Prayer in the Playroom



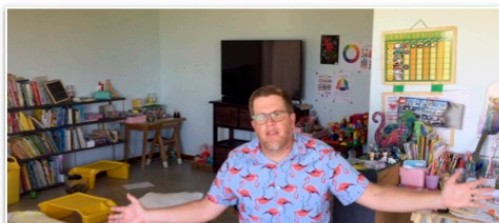
### LECTIO #4: LUKE 15:11-32 (THE JESUS STORYBOOK BIBLE)

A children's narrative re-telling of the parable, entitled, "Running Away"



### The main character in the story is the father

"Behold God, beholding you, and smiling." (Anthony de Mello)



### We respond to God out of the mess of our lives.

In a spirit of vulnerable play, as a child would, we come home.

## 05 Contemplatio (Contemplation) – Reflective Rest on the Deck



### Our Deck is a space of life for our family.

The Spatial Lectio Divina process ends in a reflective, restful place, similar to our family's deck.



### Our Deck is an elevated space with a view.

What is it about these kinds of spaces that draws the human soul?



### Our Deck invites me into a natural, quiet beauty.

I become aware once again that I exist within a larger created world.



### On our Deck, there is a reflective stillness.

God dwells everywhere, but places like these invite God to speak more freely. It feels.



## 05 Contemplatio (Contemplation) – Reflective Rest on the Deck



**"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark,**

Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." (Mk 1:35)



**Jesus had to get away to regain perspective.**

Quiet, solitary, reflective spaces offer us a similar space to return to.



**The Deck is the natural space for Lectio to end.**

Lectio ends with contemplation, or reflective rest. Our Deck facilitates this space.



**How do we observe our lives while in motion?**

Discerning what is right to do is impossible if we never stop moving.

## 05 Contemplatio (Contemplation) – Reflective Rest on the Deck



**"Leadership is both active and reflective."**

"One has to alternate between participating and observing." (Ronald Heifetz)



**"Motion makes observation difficult."**

"To discern the larger patterns...we have to stop moving and get to the balcony." (Ronald Heifetz)



**"The right questions can help one**

get far enough above the fray to see the key patterns." (Ronald Heifetz)





## 05 Contemplatio (Contemplation) – Reflective Rest on the Deck



### 1. IDENTIFY THE ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE

What is bothering us? What is heavy on our hearts in this leadership moment?



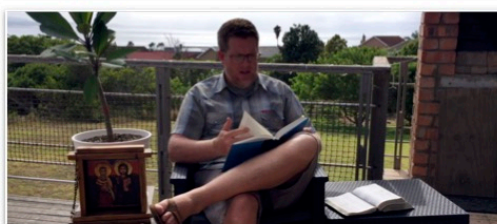
### 2. REGULATE DISTRESS

Give directed attention to the stress and disequilibrium felt in conflict.



### 3. DIRECT DISCIPLINED ATTENTION TO THE ISSUES

Discern what is actually taking place at a root, sub-surface level. Name reality.



### 4. GIVE WORK BACK TO THE PEOPLE

Empower all you are leading to engage and solve the problem you are facing.

## 05 Contemplatio (Contemplation) – Reflective Rest on the Deck



### "Diagnosis is meant to enable action." (Heifetz)

The strategic purpose – and ultimate end – of both the balcony process, and spatial lectio divina.



### LECTIO #5: LUKE 15:11-32 (NLT)

A final reading from this text that is most personally formational to my soul



### "Everything I have is yours." (Lk. 15:31)

What would it look like to rest, and then move out into the deep waters, from this reality?



CHRIS  
KAMALSKI  
PLACE  
INFORMS  
POSTURE

## 7. Previous Iterations of My NPO, Project Scope, and Benchmarks

<u>DMIN ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>NPO STATEMENT</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMIN 950 Project Delivery Plan v1.0 (October 08th, 2021)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders grow into the most transformative environment for a person to be formed and empowered holistically?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMIN 851 Project Iteration Plan (March 09th, 2021)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a small, covenanted, safe community of African Christian leaders – across churches, NGO's, and leadership organizations in a local area – the most transformative vehicle for a leader to be formed holistically and honestly empowered?*</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note: For this assignment, we were asked to define our central research question, which is a slightly different, but related point of view on my NPO statement. This research question helped me decide the prototype that I ultimately developed as my MVP.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMIN 850 Design Workshop Report (December 12th, 2020)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God rediscover their uniquely African voice within a safe, transparent, formational cohort?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMIN 751 Semester Learning Plan (February 24th, 2020)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do maturing African leaders living out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of God (their most natural selves) rediscover their uniquely African voice?</li> </ul>

DMIN ASSIGNMENT	NPO STATEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMIN 750 NPO Discovery Plan v.2.0 (November 21st, 2019)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual preface to NPO statement: <p>“The global Church has a significant opportunity to form, equip, mature, and release seasoned African leaders who are coming alive into their holistic vocational calling. These African leaders are persistently under-served, ill-resourced, and mis-developed as Christian leaders. As the Church, we have a unique responsibility to restore human vocation to its intended core meaning within the life of an African leader: that of a maturing leader, rooted in the identity of one’s unique voice as designed by God, coming fully alive into their most natural self as an Image-Bearer of our infinitely Creative God.”</p> </li> <li>• In light of this opportunity, the question that frames my NPO is as follows: <p>“How does the global Church form, equip, mature, and release seasoned African leaders who live out their vocational calling as Image-Bearers of an infinitely creative God (i.e. their most natural selves) within systemic systems of poverty, racial injustice, gender inequality, unemployment, and sustained economic disadvantage?”*</p> <p><i>*Note: Yes, I am aware that this contextual preface and NPO question is still overly wordy.</i></p> </li> </ul>

DMIN ASSIGNMENT	NPO STATEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMIN 750 NPO Discovery Plan v.1.0 (October 03rd, 2019)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual preface to NPO statement: "The global Church has a significant opportunity to form, equip, mature, and release seasoned African leaders who are coming alive into their holistic vocational calling.</li> </ul> <p>The following questions were first written as a portion of my essay responses in applying for this program [in June 2019], and speak to the broader framework I will approach my NPO with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>The theoretical/big idea version undergirding my NPO</u>: How do we restore human vocation to its intended core meaning: that of a maturing leader, rooted in the identity of one's unique voice as designed by God, coming fully alive into their most natural self as an Image-Bearer of our infinitely Creative God?</li> <li>• <u>The contextual version of this question that would frame my NPO</u>: Given the global reality of persistently under-served, ill-resourced, and mis-developed Christian leaders, how does the global Church form, equip, mature, and release seasoned leaders who live and minister within systemic systems of poverty, injustice, unemployment, inequality, economic disadvantage, and structural problems of race, gender, and inequality?</li> <li>• <u>Stated plainly in light of my own vocational calling</u>: How do we form and empower African leaders to come alive again (and for the first time) as they grow into who God has always intended them to be, living out their vocational calling for the good of the world?"*</li> <li>• <i>*Note: Yes, I am aware that this reads as an NPO essay penned by Paul himself, a fellow run-on sentence fan. It is far too long and ambiguous, let alone way too invested in my own sense of self-importance. I'm glad it has sharpened in time.</i></li> </ul>

**VERSION 4.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Fourth version submitted January 25th, 2022)*

**v. 4.0 PROJECT "FORM"**

- **Practice:** The 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort will gather weekly on Monday nights for 5 months, from September 6th, 2021 through January 17th, 2022. During September and October, we will build community in our homes, listen to each other's stories, and begin to familiarize ourselves with the formational rhythm of Lectio Divina practiced in small community. Throughout November, the cohort scope and sequence will follow the four-step rhythm of a Lectio Divina (1. Lectio/Listen, 2. Meditatio/Ponder, 3. Oratio/Respond, and 4. Contemplatio/Rest), in order to practice as a cohort community on the 'spatial lectio divina' cohort model. In December, we will break for Christmas holidays, which is a traditional year-end rhythm for Africans to visit and return to their family homes. In January, we will assess and evaluate this model as the foundational rhythm by which a small cohort of African Christian leaders will mature and develop as together.
- **Pragmatic Structure:** We will gather from 18:00pm-20:30pm on Monday nights several times each month, beginning with a shared common meal/snacks, community dialogue, and then entrance into the 'spatial Lectio Divina' process. Hosting duties will rotate between the Kamalski home (monthly), where a full dinner will be served, and the LXP house (1-2x month), where a lighter meal/snack will be served. Reflective work, prayer projects, reading, and journaling prompts will be given weekly to prepare in advance for the next week's group lectio. A collection of 'spatial lectio divinas' will be developed as a record of the weekly formational practice we have engaged in together. In the final Project Portfolio, I will seek to annotate brief notes remarking on what worked in this first iterative process as a cohort.

## VERSION 4.0 PROJECT SCOPE (Fourth version submitted January 25th, 2022)

### v. 4.0 PROJECT "CONTENT"

- **Content Components:** I envision a multi-faceted project developing a model of '*spatial lectio divina*' which includes the following:
  1. The first component will develop a '*spatial lectio divina*' model of praxis for the embodied formation of African Christian leaders in under-resourced communities to transform together in a safe, honest environment of holistic learning. This central portion of writing will address 'how' ACLs will be formed using this practice.
    - Word Count: ~5,000 words; Primary focus of project writing.
  2. The second component will illustrate and summarize the core components of this '*spatial lectio divina*' model in a graphically-rich, clearly-communicated Keynote slide deck. This Keynote will serve two main purposes: (1) simplify and focus how '*spatial lectio divina*' is distinct from the normal formative practice of lectio divina, and (2) an easily accessible introduction to the entire concept of my project itself, serving as a front door to this work.
    - Length: One Keynote slide deck; Additive introductory visual component.
  3. The third component will comprise of a five-part video and audio series entitled "Place Informs Posture," where the practice of '*spatial lectio divina*' using the parable of the 3 prodigals will be unpacked at length. An introduction to the parable itself, and the 4-step process of lectio divina in a spatially-oriented manner, will set up the other four parts. Each short video reflection will feature a step of the lectio divina process in a different room of my house as a visual metaphor of the type of internal soul work that takes place in this portion of the lectio practice. The goal is to illustrate the nature of the inner soul work that I am seeking to facilitate for this beta cohort of African Christian leaders.
    - Length: 12-20 minutes per each of the 5-part series; Annotated video transcripts of portions of each part will be provided. Audio only segments will be provided to facilitate participation for leaders who do not have accessible data or Wifi access.
  4. The fourth component will document the scope and sequence of the lectio divina process that was practiced throughout the four months that the beta cohort of ACL's met in person. Several examples of reflective exercises, formational prayer practices, group liturgies, and the four-part spatial lectio divina series that was developed will be included in this section.
    - Length: Undetermined.
  5. A brief but important appendix will introduce a future critical focus that has arisen throughout this project development: *The felt needs within the formational leadership development journey of African Christian female leaders, in particular those who come from under-resourced communities where trauma is rampant and survival is paramount.* Specifically, I want to address the systemic and structural challenges inherent within the inner world of under-developed leaders within communities of survival by dialoguing with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This brief introduction will address critical underlying reasons 'why' ACLs are often under-formed.
    - Word Count: ~500 to 1,000 words; Future focus in project development.

**VERSION 4.0 PROJECT BENCHMARKS** (Fourth version submitted January 25th, 2022)

**v. 4.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING SUCCESS**

1. 75% of initial 8 'beta' cohort members engage in the full 4-step '*spatial lectio divina*' formational rhythm, as indicated by their participation in at least 2 of 3 Monday gatherings throughout November 2021.
2. As a beta cohort, a communal decision will be made in January 2022 to discern whether to continue throughout 2022 as a cohort. The democratic, unified nature of this desire to proceed deeper in covenanted relational formation will indicate whether this cohort is bearing promise and quality in its early life stage.

**v. 4.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING QUALITY**

1. A 4-step '*spatial lectio divina*' model of praxis is developed in both form and content (see Project Scope) that can serve as a potential template for future cohorts of African Christian leaders to practice in a spatially-significant manner within their communities. This model will be assessed for its effectiveness throughout the project, as indicated by final interviews with key cohort participants in January 2022.
2. Given the reality that 75% of my initial 'beta' cohort members are African female Christian leaders, including 100% of my weekly participants, I will listen to and annotate the systemic and personal challenges faced by these African female Christian leaders in developing their inner world. This listening and annotation process will take place through personal 1-on-1 interviews with at least 3 female cohort participants by February 1st, 2022.



**VERSION 3.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Third version submitted November 25th, 2021)*

**v. 3.0 PROJECT "FORM"**

- **Practice:** The 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort will gather weekly on Monday nights for 5 months, from September 6th, 2021 through February 7th, 2022. During September and October, we will build community in our homes, listen to each other's stories, and begin to familiarize ourselves with the formational rhythm of Lectio Divina practiced in small community. Throughout the month of November, the cohort scope and sequence will follow the four-step rhythm of a Lectio Divina (1. Lectio/Listen, 2. Meditatio/Ponder, 3. Oratio/Respond, and 4. Contemplatio/Rest), in order to gather feedback on the value of the 'spatial lectio divina' cohort model. In December, we will break for Christmas holidays, but cohort participants will be tasked with following this 4-step process on a personal level in their family homes. In January, we will gather again to assess and evaluate this model as the foundational rhythm by which a small cohort of African Christian leaders will live together.
- **Pragmatic Structure:** We will gather from 18:00pm-20:30pm on Monday nights at least three weeks each month, beginning with a shared common meal/snacks, community dialogue, and then entrance into the 'spatial Lectio Divina' process. Hosting duties will rotate between the Kamalski home (monthly), where a full dinner will be served, and the LXP house (3x month), where a lighter meal/snack will be served. Reflective work, prayer projects, reading, and journaling prompts will be given weekly to prepare in advance for the next week's group lectio. A collection of 'spatial lectio divinas' will be developed as a record of the weekly formational practice we have engaged in together. In the final Project Portfolio, I will seek to annotate brief notes remarking on what worked in this first iterative process as a cohort.

**VERSION 3.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Third version submitted November 25th, 2021)*

**v. 3.0 PROJECT "CONTENT"**

- **Writing:** I envision a significant writing project of roughly 7,500 words, comprised of two components undergirding my NPO project:
  1. The first component will seek to develop a '*spatial lectio divina*' model of praxis for the embodied formation of African Christian leaders in under-resourced communities to transform together in a safe, honest environment of holistic learning. This central portion of writing will address '*how to*' form ACLs most effectively.
    - Word Count: ~5,000 words; *Primary focus of NPO Project writing.*
  2. The second component will give research focus to initial exploration of the felt needs within the formational leadership development journey of African Christian leaders, in particular those who come from under-resourced communities where trauma is rampant and survival is paramount. Specifically, I want to address the systemic and structural challenges inherent within the inner world of under-developed leaders within communities of survival by dialoguing with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This writing portion will address critical underlying reasons '*why*' ACLs are often under-formed, especially within their inner-world.
    - Word Count: ~2,500 words; *Secondary focus of NPO Project writing.*

**VERSION 3.0 PROJECT BENCHMARKS** (Third version submitted November 25th, 2021)

**v. 3.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING SUCCESS**

1. 75% of initial 8 'beta' cohort members engage in the full 4-step '*spatial lectio divina*' formational rhythm, as indicated by their participation in at least 2 of 3 Monday gatherings in November 2021.
2. 50% of initial 8 'beta' cohort members complete personal engagement, reflection, and evaluation of the '*spatial lectio divina*' model on their own throughout the December holidays, as indicated by their completed journal reflections and readiness to evaluate honestly with one another during our first cohort gathering of 2022, on January 17th.

**v. 3.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING QUALITY**

1. As a beta cohort, a communal decision will be made in January 2022 using the Quaker spiritual practice of a clearness committee to discern whether to continue throughout 2022 as a cohort. The unified nature of this desire to proceed deeper in covenanted relational formation will indicate whether this cohort is bearing promise and quality in its early life stage.
2. Given the reality that 75% of my initial 'beta' cohort members are African female Christian leaders, including 100% of my weekly participants, I will seek to listen to and annotate the systemic and structural challenges faced by these African female Christian leaders in developing their inner world. This listening and annotation process will take place through personal 1-on-1 interviews with at least 3 female cohort participants by February 1st, 2022.

**VERSION 2.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Second version submitted October 22nd, 2021)*

**v. 2.0 PROJECT "FORM"**

- **Practice:** The 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort will gather weekly on Monday nights for 5 months, from September 6th, 2021 through February 7th, 2022. During September and October, we will build community in our homes, listen to each other's stories, and begin to familiarize ourselves with the formational rhythm of Lectio Divina practiced in small community. Throughout the month of November, the cohort scope and sequence will follow the four-step rhythm of a Lectio Divina (1. Lectio/Listen, 2. Meditatio/Ponder, 3. Oratio/Respond, and 4. Contemplatio/Rest), in order to gather feedback on the value of the 'spatial lectio divina' cohort model. In December, we will break for Christmas holidays, but cohort participants will be tasked with following this 4-step process on a personal level in their family homes. In January, we will gather again to assess and evaluate this model as the foundational rhythm by which a small cohort of African Christian leaders will live together.
- **Pragmatic Structure:** We will gather from 17:30pm-20:30pm weekly, beginning with a shared common meal/snacks, community dialogue, and then entrance into the 'spatial Lectio Divina' process. Hosting duties will rotate between the Kamalski home (monthly), where a full dinner will be served, and the LXP house (3x month), where a lighter meal/snack will be served. Reflective work, prayer projects, reading, and journaling prompts will be given weekly to prepare in advance for the next week's group lectio. A collection of 'spatial lectio divinas' will be collected as a record of the weekly formational practice we have engaged in together.

**VERSION 2.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Second version submitted October 22nd, 2021)*

**v. 2.0 PROJECT "CONTENT"**

- **Writing:** I envision a significant writing project of roughly 7,500 words, comprised of two components undergirding my NPO project:
  1. The first component will seek to develop a '*spatial lectio divina*' model of praxis for the embodied formation of African Christian leaders in under-resourced communities to transform together in a safe, honest environment of holistic learning. This central portion of writing will address '*how to*' form ACLs most effectively. (~5,000 words; *Primary focus*).
  2. The second component will give research focus to initial exploration of the felt needs within the formational leadership development journey of African Christian leaders, in particular those who come from under-resourced communities where trauma is rampant and survival is paramount. Specifically, I want to address the systemic and structural challenges inherent within the inner world of under-developed leaders within communities of survival by dialoguing with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This writing portion will address critical underlying reasons '*why*' ACLs are often under-formed, especially within their inner-world. (~2,500 words; *Secondary focus*).

**VERSION 2.0 PROJECT BENCHMARKS** *(Second version submitted October 22nd, 2021)*

**v. 2.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING SUCCESS**

1. 75% of initial 'beta' cohort members engage in the full 4-step spatial Lectio Divina formational rhythm, as indicated by their participation in all 4 Monday gatherings in November 2021.
2. 50% of initial 'beta' cohort members complete personal reflection and evaluation of the 'spatial lectio divina' model on their own throughout the December holiday period, as indicated by their readiness to share honestly with one another during our first cohort gathering of 2022, on January 17th.

**v. 2.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING QUALITY**

1. As a beta cohort, a communal decision will be made in January 2022 using the Quaker spiritual practice of a clearness committee to discern whether to continue throughout 2022 as a covenanted cohort. The unified nature of this desire to proceed deeper in covenanted relational formation will indicate whether this cohort is bearing promise and quality in its early life stage.

**VERSION 1.0 PROJECT SCOPE** *(Initial version submitted October 08th, 2021)*

**v. 1.0 PROJECT "FORM"**

- Practice:** The 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort will gather weekly on Monday nights for 5 months, from September 6th, 2021 through February 7th, 2022. The cohort scope and sequence is still being finalized, but will roughly follow the four-step rhythm of a Lectio Divina (1. Lectio/Listen, 2. Meditatio/Ponder, 3. Oratio/Respond, and 4. Contemplatio/Rest). We will gather from 17:30pm-20:30pm, beginning with a shared common meal/snacks, community dialogue, and then entrance into the 'spatial Lectio Divina' process. Hosting duties will rotate between the Kamalski home (monthly), where a full dinner will be served, and the LXP house (3x month), where a lighter meal/snack will be served. Reflective work, prayer projects, reading, and journaling prompts will be given weekly to prepare in advance for the next week's group lectio. A collection of shared liturgies/lectio divinas will be collected as a record of the weekly formational practice we have engaged in together.
- Cohort Scope and Sequence:** A full scope and sequence of the 'Beta' Kouga Leadership Cohort will be submitted as a part of my project portfolio, with relevant cohort guiding questions, core content material, sample Keynote lessons, reading, and reflective exercises, in the form of a replicable, reproducible cohort model for under-resourced African Christian leaders. This scope and sequence will be expanded into a full-year cohort experience, which will unfold in a second 'Beta' cohort throughout much of 2022. Rough sketches of year 2 and 3 of this cohort model will be included as well, as a full-picture of the 3-year cohort formational experience. Additionally, we will explore how and where to 'host' this content: A mixture of a website, a Whatsapp group, and printed journaling material are all viable options.
- Assessment:** Discerning and experimenting with how to collect and measure substantial feedback from cohort participants will be a significant challenge to address over the next several months. ACL's from under-resourced communities typically communicate in a very different manner than leaders from Western, postmodern, industrialized nations. Learning how to best source honest and open feedback, in particular when I am a White American male who is afforded wide authority as a Christian leader, will be critical. As of this writing, I will seek 3 ongoing, primary means of assessment of my critical success factors and relevant benchmarks: (1) Initial group coaching and discernment of personal goals for this beta cohort experience, annotated afterwards; (2) monthly group dialogue, collective examen, and an informal interview process whereby I seek additional feedback and refinement of the cohort form and content; and (3) weekly personal journaling, perhaps via Whatsapp messages or voice notes, where cohort participants respond briefly to 1-3 reflective questions in a private manner. The general but pressing question of how to benchmark a formational, relationally intimate experience such as this cohort for ACLs will be addressed.
- Launch Plan - Vision and Strategy:** Addressing questions such as, how is this 'spatial lectio divina' cohort of African Christian leaders replicable globally in different contexts, particularly in under-resourced areas where leaders fight to survive at best? Additional questions to consider include: What is the unique South African identity of this cohort for ACLs, and what are the specific challenges that said cohort will bump up against within this particular cultural context? Is this project financially viable, both for those facilitating it (myself and other core leadership), and those who are participating in it (perhaps at the expense of additional time they could give to paid work to support their families)? How should African leadership of ACLs be identified, empowered, and released from the beginning? To what degree is God inviting co-creation of this initiative within my life and scope of ministry?



**VERSION 1.0 PROJECT BENCHMARKS** *(Initial version submitted October 08th, 2021)*

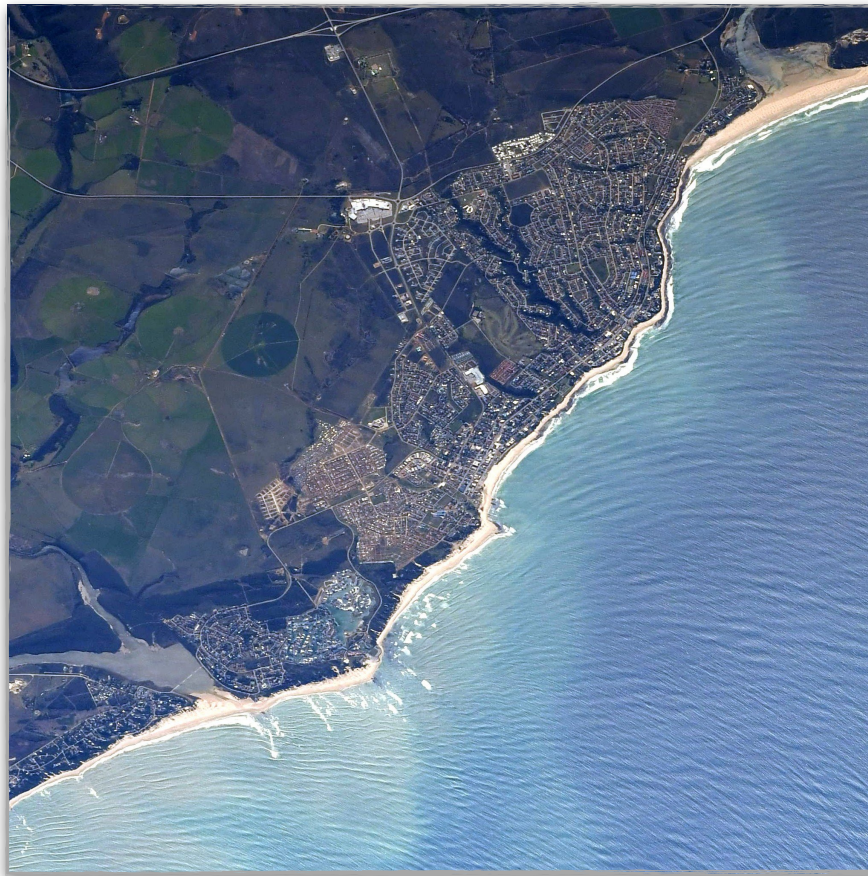
**v. 1.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING SUCCESS**

1. 75% of initial covenanted 'beta' cohort members participate in 75% of the weekly cohort practice gatherings. *(I anticipate 10-12 reflective gatherings together between October 11th, 2021 and February 7th, 2022).*
2. 50% of initial covenanted 'beta' cohort members complete reflection upon 4 additional 'spatial lectio divina' formational rhythms on their own throughout the December holiday period, to be shared in accountability with one another during our first cohort gathering of 2022, on January 17th.
3. 100% of initial covenanted 'beta' cohort members facilitate sharing a portion of the Lectio Divina formational rhythm before the end of our first season of gathering together, and then assess the value of their experience in doing so.

**v. 1.0 BENCHMARKS MEASURING QUALITY**

1. By our final cohort gathering (February 7th, 2022) of this season, cohort members will articulate a personal identity statement as the Imago Dei, and discern an emerging vision for their vocational calling within the Kingdom of God in this next season of their lives.
2. As a collective beta cohort, a communal decision will be made using the Quaker spiritual practice of a clearness committee/group spiritual discernment model to discern whether to continue throughout 2022 as a covenanted cohort.

Returning once more to Art & Fear, Bayles and Orland conclude that "A finished piece is, in effect, a test of correspondence between imagination and execution. And perhaps surprisingly, the more common obstacle to achieving that correspondence is not undisciplined execution, but undisciplined imagination...As Stanley Kunitz once commented, 'The poem in your head is always perfect. Resistance begins when you try to convert it into language.'" <sup>193</sup> Reflecting on these previous iterations of my project, I want to lament the roads not taken, at least not yet. *Instead, growing in confidence, I press forward on the the path I am walking, open to God, grateful for what is already in my hands, expectant of the goodness that is coming next.*



*Jeffreys Bay, closeup from the International Space Station. © Christina Koch, Surfer/Astronaut. I bodyboard these waters and walk these beaches every week. How should this place - my home - inform my posture into the future?*

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<sup>193</sup> Bayles and Orland, *Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking*, 17.

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