

4-2023

# Reading Creation: Listening to the Spirit of God Through Engaging the Natural World

Benjamin L. Black  
bblack16@georgefox.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin>

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Black, Benjamin L., "Reading Creation: Listening to the Spirit of God Through Engaging the Natural World" (2023). *Doctor of Ministry*. 596.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/596>

This Project Portfolio is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

READING CREATION

LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD THROUGH ENGAGING THE NATURAL WORLD



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

BENJAMIN L BLACK

PROJECT FACULTY:

EKATERINA LOMPERIS

PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 2023



## CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

---

This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Benjamin L. Black

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: Ekaterina Lomperis, PhD

Second Project Faculty: Jacqueline Bland, DMin

Lead Mentor: MaryKate Morse, PhD

Evaluation Committee Referee: Clifford Berger, DMin

Copyright © 2023 by Benjamin L. Black

All rights reserved

# Dedication

To my family, friends, teachers, and students,

Thank You.

# Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures .....	vi
List of Tables .....	vi
Research Method.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Introduction .....	1
Doctoral Project .....	7
Project Introduction .....	8
Opening Thoughts.....	9
Section I: The Big Picture.....	11
Chapter One: Creation and Christianity .....	12
Chapter Two: A Philosophical Model .....	17
Section II: Strategies, Programs, & Experiences.....	28
Chapter Three: Personal Experiences.....	29
Chapter Four: Communal Experiences .....	33
Chapter Five: Experiences with the Spirit & Scripture .....	39
Chapter Six: Experiences with Creation & Place.....	49
Chapter Seven: Sabbath Experiences .....	54
Chapter Eight: The Experience of Reading Creation.....	59
Section III: Retreat Logistics .....	69
Chapter Nine: Retreat Overview .....	70
Chapter Ten: Program Content & Curriculum .....	82
Chapter Eleven: Participant Material and Handouts.....	144
Chapter Twelve: Venue, Services, & Budget .....	159
Concluding Thoughts.....	163

Assessment.....	164
Project Launch Plan .....	166
Appendix A— Milestone 1 The NPO Charter .....	170
Appendix B— Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay.....	197
Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report.....	217
Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report.....	277
Bibliography .....	327

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Frankena's Philosophy of Education Model.....	18
Figure 2: Palmer's Objectivist Myth of Knowing.....	35
Figure 3: Palmer's Community of Truth.....	36

## List of Tables

TABLE 1: RETREAT STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURES.....	71
TABLE 2: COURSE AND SESSION ALIGNMENT .....	82
TABLE 3: EXAMPLE BUDGET .....	160
TABLE 4: BUDGET PLANNING TOOL .....	161

## Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called ‘Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts’. In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using ‘just enough’ feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

## Abstract

We live in a world consumed by commotion. The eyes of most are constantly focused on screens and our attention is often fixated on things of least importance. But what if the church had a means to encourage folks to set aside daily distractions, pay attention to the world, and intentionally listen to the Spirit of God? The following pages are devoted to the idea that:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the natural world.

As this idea was refined, a primary insight rose to the forefront: organized structure seems to be beneficial to engaging the Spirit and experiencing connection with God. Though overprogramming can be detrimental, ordered practices, such as *Lectio Divina*, provide a framework for guidance, support, and knowledge of the Spirit. Along with traditional research, two vocational experiences contributed to this study. I currently serve in both staff and faculty roles at a Christian University. Prior to this, I worked for nearly a decade at a faith-based conference center facilitating outdoor formational programs for guests and staff. Both experiences have influenced the following project.

The subsequent project is a facilitators handbook outlining a retreat that utilizes an adaptation of *Lectio Divina* (i.e., *Lectio Creatio*) to foster observation, reflection, and engagement with God (i.e., contemplation) in the context of natural space. The facilitators handbook provides theoretical, experiential, and practical information that could be utilized to facilitate the proposed retreat or adapted and employed in other contexts to encourage spiritual growth. The ensuing work, therefore, is not only the handbook, but also the unique experiences developed through the use of the handbook.

## Introduction

At the culmination of three years is a work dedicated to the creation of experiences. The subsequent *project* is a handbook for the facilitation of retreats and experiences that appreciate and employ the created world as a venue for engaging God. But why the need for such a work?

As the end of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century draws near, we discover a world, paradoxically, connected and disconnected. Through smart phones, social media, and streaming platforms, people know what is going on in the lives of their friends and families, as well as what is happening around the world. At any time and in any place, a person can contact another half a world away. We live in an era linked by technology and innovation. Yet, this connection is in many ways a façade. We *share* and *like* posts, believing our actions are relational, yet knowing our needs are unmet. Technology provides quick and broad interactions, but unfortunately, true connection is often the opposite of such experiences. Connection is often a slow process, experienced with a few in the midst of deep work. And it is desired by many, particularly in the aftermath of the political upheaval of the last several years and the isolation borne of the COVID-19 Pandemic. These events have left many feeling unmoored, insecure, and uncertain, not only in relation to friends and family, but also with God.

Though not necessarily a new means, retreat offers a pathway to a world struggling with disconnection. And when tied to intentional practices retreat and outdoor experience became a renewed way of learning how to connect. The subsequent project has been created as a means of leaning into an *opportunity* and a belief that God desires to interact with the Creation, both human and other-than-human, and through those interactions provide opportunities for connection and spiritual growth. Ultimately, the project is a response to the following NPO (Need, Problem, or Opportunity) Statement:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the natural world.

There are many possible means of approaching and responding to this statement, but the experience of retreat, codified as a handbook, was ultimately chosen. Retreats are *intentional*. They can be *outdoor-focused*. *Observation* and *reflection* are easily incorporated. And most importantly, they provide space for *engagement* and *connection*. The retreat structure is an intuitive approach of accomplishing the opportunity presented. Organizing and delivering this content as a handbook was chosen because the format provides a means of not only presenting the retreat experience, but also providing rationale to others concerning why the specific elements chosen and included are important. A handbook serves as a depository of information. It is a resource that others can easily access and utilize as they adapt and create similar programs.

## A Journey of Discovery

The creation of this project began in the midst of a unique setting: the COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to the circumstance, I had no current vocational context. Like many others, I had been laid-off and was currently searching for my next vocational experience. With no current context, I looked to my past experiences for

inspiration concerning where to begin. I had served for almost a decade at a camp and conference center in Colorado. A primary aspect of my role had been leading and facilitating spiritual programming in outdoor settings. With that as a *context* I chose to begin my discovery journey by acknowledging an *opportunity* that I had observed over the years:

In relation to Christian adults, creation/nature/outdoor focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation (i.e., debriefs, journaling, reflection, etc.), seem to create opportunities for a deeper sense of connection with God and self.

With this initial NPO statement established, I began assembling a group of stakeholders who could help clarify the opportunity. Participants included various voices from around the world: a youth pastor, an executive pastor, a former YMCA camp director, A Christian camp professional, a stay-at-home father, a missionary, and a business professor. These individuals brought to the table a plethora of life experiences and insights concerning faith, vocation, and practice. Due to the pandemic, we met online and, using brainstorming games, discussed the NPO Statement. Following the workshop, I invited three additional voices into the conversation: the founder/director of a creation-care non-profit, the director of an outdoor center, and an associate pastor. I sent the results of the workshop to these folks and then spent some time with each through Zoom discussing and receiving their insights. As the first round of research came to an end, the NPO statement was reworked:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, has the potential to create opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

With the NPO Statement revised, I initiated bibliographic research concerning the topic. From this research came several important ideas. First, three theological themes emerged: (1) the interconnection of all things, (2) an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and (3) union with God as the ultimate goal of all creation. Research also included a dive into subjects such as eco-theology, Christian camping, and Christian education and introduced thinkers such as David Kolb, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Kurt Lewin. These subjects and voices led to the acknowledgment of three ideas: (1) formation as a life-long practice, (2) formation as an inclusive endeavor, and (3) formation as a holistic progression. A primary takeaway from this research was how interwoven these themes and ideas were. Basically, all of creation, human and other-than-human, is involved in the process of formation and at the core of this endeavor is the Holy Spirit.

Following bibliographic research, the design phase of the project began. This was initiated first by another modification of the NPO Statement:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

With this updated statement as a foundation, a second workshop was facilitated. Still in the midst of a pandemic, the workshop was once again conducted online. Like the first workshop, stakeholders ranged in vocation and experience. Participants included a youth minister, a pastor, a higher education professional, a

teacher, a horticulturalist, an outdoor professional, and a stay-at-home parent. Three interviews were also conducted following the workshop. Interviewees included a youth and outdoor ministries professor, a spiritual director who also operates a small farm and retreat center, and the director of a non-profit focused on contemplative spirituality. The first leg of the design phase resulted in a *definition of done* as well as three initial *concept pitches* for a project. Defining *done*, the stakeholders suggested that a successful project is one that invites participants to experience the natural world, and in doing so develop a sense of belonging and connection with it, others, and the Divine. To accomplish this, stakeholders developed concept ideas such as a community garden, outdoor meditation program, and a contemplative walking program. From these initial ideas, three concept pitches were developed: (1) a garden or farm that is worked and stewarded by the local faith community, (2) a progressive mediation program that encourages contemplative practices through observation of the creation in local parks and recreation areas, and (3) a travel or pilgrimage program that invites participants to experience thin places through local, regional, and remote expeditions.

Considering my previous experience and knowledge, I chose the second and third ideas as the launchpad for developing a project. The first program prototyped was the *Progressive Meditation Program*. This was a half day experience in a public park that introduced a modified version of Lectio Divina and invited participants to engage in solo meditative experiences. Overall, the prototyped program was successful and resulted in beneficial feedback, the most valuable being a recognition of the structure that was utilized. Participants suggested that the outline provided gave a structure to reflective experience that is often missing. The second program prototyped was the *Travel Program*. This program was tested using storyboards that illustrated experiences one might encounter while visiting *a new and novel place*. Stakeholders were shown the storyboards and then interviewed concerning their thoughts toward the proposed idea. A benefit discovered during the interviews was the wholistic concept of the program. Stakeholders appreciated that the program engaged the whole person. To supplement prototype testing, further bibliographic research was conducted. This research considered ideas such as mystical experiences, pilgrimage, and neuroscience and focused on how experiences in creation influence Christian spirituality. The research helped tie together the concepts revealed through the prototypes. Early during the prototype development, it became apparent that the two programs had the potential to become one. In the end, the *most valuable prototype* was an amalgamation of the two. I determined that a travel-based retreat program that utilized an intentional structure would be the best project to create in consideration of the NPO Statement. Along with an established project to create, this phase ended with a final modification of the NPO Statement. The finalized iteration states:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the natural world.

Moving into the delivery phase, the question of documenting and presenting came to the forefront. What would be the best means of recording and sharing the project? Eventually, the idea of a handbook came to mind. What if the codified project was a text that outlined the various aspects of a proposed retreat and then provided detailed descriptions of those aspects? In the end, a facilitators handbook was developed. The Handbook consists of three sections. The first section provides a theoretical overview of the retreat. The

second section provides descriptions of the various aspects of the retreat. The final section provides practical and logistical information. To create a successful project, four benchmarks were established:

- The Handbook and Facilitators Guide will be written in a manner that is comprehensible for the intended audience (Christian Adult) as indicated by the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Report and the Flesch Reading Ease Report.
- The Retreat content and material provided in the Handbook and Facilitators Guide will be usable as is, yet also adaptable so that leaders may utilize and implement in various contexts (i.e., classrooms, camps, personal use, etc.) as indicated through feedback sessions after the project has been finalized.
- As a resource for Christian spirituality, the desire for the project is that it be theologically sound, yet also stretching. When read and used by others, the material should encourage engagement (i.e., a desire to practice *Lectio Creatio*), but also spark thoughtful questions as indicated by reviews of the material first during feedback sessions and later through requested peer reviews.
- As a resource for Christian spirituality intended for a popular audience, the desire is that Christians, both leaders and lay, would enjoy, utilize, and understand the material being presented. The hope is that it would be received in a positive manner by the public as indicated by (1) a score of 3.5 out of 5 on a public review board (e.g., Amazon) and (2) 80% of comments on the review board would be positive.

Early usage and testing of the material has occurred in classroom and local church contexts. Though the response has been positive, much more feedback is needed. If the project (both the handbook and the retreat) are to be successful, it will require continued refinement.

## Evaluation and Learnings

The most difficult aspect of this experience has been creating a project outside of an initial concrete context. This lack of initial context has resulted in a few issues throughout the creation of the project. I will share two examples. First, the stakeholders I utilized do not represent a specific community or group. As amazing and helpful as they were, I fear that the lack of connection to a permanent community may be detrimental to the success of the project. Secondly, during the second year of the project (i.e., the design phase) I entered into a new vocational context (i.e., higher education). This resulted in a shift in my day-to-day work and vocational thinking which, I suspect, impacted the outcome of the project. Ideally, I would have started the project in a specific vocational context and remained for the entirety of the project's development.

In terms of project shortcomings, one primary issue comes to mind. As I transitioned from prototyping to the creation of a presentable project, I revised how I intended to deliver the project; I shifted from a retreat to a facilitator's handbook. In some ways, I believe this was a good move. It provided a substantial means of documenting ideas. On the other hand, I had not prepared myself to create a book. I am not familiar with the ins and outs of writing a text for a popular audience, nor do I know how best to structure a work such as this. If the project is to move forward, it will need further revising and editing. Certain aspects that I have included (e.g., classroom materials) may need to be removed or reimagined.

Through the course of research, several different means of undertaking the NPO came to light. I think it is safe to say that there is a surplus of ways one might tackle the NPO. And I doubt there are any right or wrong ways. With that acknowledged, though I cannot mention every way of approaching the NPO that was brought to my attention, I will mention three overarching concepts and provide my thoughts:

- **Agriculture**—The use of farms and gardens was mentioned during the workshops, interviews and in various texts. It does not take much imagination to see how farming and gardening might be used to foster engagement with the natural world, leading to a sense of connection. The very act of growing food and then eating it is a type of metaphorical experience. The use of agricultural experiences could very successfully be used to approach the NPO. It would require resources, not only land and tools, but also human know-how, but should it be implemented, it could be a great experience.
- **Outdoor Adventure**—Outdoor Adventure programming is not a new concept. Like agriculture, it was mentioned during workshops, interviews, and in various forms of literature. Obviously, hiking, camping, climbing and other forms of adventure can be used to approach the NPO (it is one of the experiences/aspects mentioned in the project). I do believe intention must be a primary consideration when planning these events, though. Outdoor adventure programming is fun, and enjoyable. But it is easy to get wrapped up in the adventure and miss the point (assuming the point is engagement with creation and connection with God).
- **Technology**—The use of technology was mentioned a few times during the workshops. But, unlike agriculture and outdoor adventure, it was not embraced during the follow-up interviews, and I did not find it mentioned too much in the literature (though, it was not completely absent). There may be a place for technology in the context of outdoor-focused experience. I cannot help but think of activities such as geocaching, which encourages folks to get outside, but also requires the use of a GPS. Perhaps there is a future app to be created that will serve as a means of approaching the NPO through technology. I am not sure that is my project to create, but I look forward to using it someday.

Perhaps the most important learning I can contribute to the research process is the process itself. The *Discover, Design, Delivery* method of research and creation is a framework that I perceive will be useful in the foreseeable future. It is easy to think of research as a merely academic pursuit, and divorce it from the practical, or the local context. The advantage of this method is that it takes seriously collaboration; the church, the community, the colleges and universities, and the creative leader are all represented in the method of design, all have a voice in the process of discovery and are invited into act of delivery.

## Next Steps

Moving Forward, additional development will need to be undertaken. As already mentioned, the handbook itself will need to be further edited and prepared for release to a larger audience. Along with editing and professional preparation of the text, the content (i.e., the retreat and experiences associated with the retreat) of the text also needs to be further tested. Before a final draft of the project is released for public use several rehearsals of the retreat (or comparable experiences) need to be facilitated in order to receive feedback.

To accomplish this and launch the project several iterations of testing have been outlined to occur over the course of a number of seasons. Individual experiences (e.g., introductions to Lectio Divina, Sabbath, etc.) will initially be practiced in the context of a classroom. This will provide space for feedback and refinement of the experiences and handbook chapters. As the text is polished it will be shared with former stakeholders for additional feedback. After several iterations of the testing and feedback, the hope is to secure funding to provide multiple *Reading Creation* retreats. Following the retreats and final edits, the text will be released to the public as an open access resource.

## End of Journey Reflections

This journey has had its ups and downs. There have definitely been times when I have wondered why I chose to pursue this endeavor, especially the topic at hand. I have wondered if it really mattered. But then when I have had the opportunity to mention my topic to others and describe what I am attempting to create, I see the interest. There is something about the beauty of the world that draws us to God, and people understand that. Beyond appreciating the topic though, one thing that truly surprised me through the experience has been the desire folks had to participate in the research. Aside from for one or two exceptions, every person I reached out to concerning workshops, interviews, and prototype involvement was not only flattered to be asked to participate, but they also seemed to genuinely desire to be a part of the process. Human beings want to be a part of something good. We want to make our communities, churches, and worlds better places. Often times, all that is needed is an ask.

As mentioned earlier, perhaps the primary learning experience of the project has been the process itself (i.e., Discover, Design, and Deliver). I have already started imagining how this structure might be utilized in the near future. I have been asked to participate in a leadership cohort in my local community. As a cohort, we will be looking at issues that impact our region and asked how they might be addressed. My hope is to take what I have learned during this journey and share with those I will be serving with. The structure of the process provides a practical means of inviting collaboration within this new group of leaders and, hopefully, a means for creating good in our community.

As for the doctoral project itself, my hope is that it serves as a means of guiding folks toward the ultimate goal of participation and union with God. In the end, all the books read, workshops facilitated, interviews conducted, and words written were for that purpose. I hope my research, and my project, assists in that goal.

# Doctoral Project

## Project Introduction

The following work is a manuscript outlining the theoretical, experiential, and practical elements one might utilize in the facilitation of a creation/nature focused retreat program. This work has been codified as a book, but the goal of the project is the retreat experiences described throughout, and more precisely, the application of *Lectio Creatio*, an adaptation of Lectio Divina.

*How might creation serve as a catalyst for spiritual development?* This was the question that initiated the project at hand. This question resulted in many others and ultimately led to interactions with topics ranging in scope from education and human development to neuro, health, and environmental science to Christian mysticism and the practice of spiritual disciplines. All these areas of focus and the wisdom they brought to the table eventually funneled to a predominant idea: simply listening for God in the midst of the natural world. That is to say, when one silences themselves and pays attention, the Spirit can be observed. That is the crux of this project.

To accomplish this idea, two historical practices were brought to the forefront, Lectio Divina and Retreat. *What if one were to use the movements of Lectio Divina to read creation, or listen for the Spirit of God through creation? And what if one were to use the practice of retreat as a mode for introducing, teaching, and encouraging the experience?* These two questions led to the beginning developments of this project; a retreat developed around the suggested practice of Lectio Creatio (or Reading Creation). Two more questions would eventually shift the structure of the project: *how might this program be presented* and *who is the project ultimately for?* The question of audience led to the answer of *facilitator*. In the end, the project is structured and designed for those who desire to facilitate this program. I, and others who desire to facilitate outdoor experiences, are the intended audience. With that acknowledged, how the project is presented began to take form. Rather than just the logistical elements of the retreat, the project should focus on questions of *why* (theoretical) and *what* (experiential). *Why is this a reasonable program to implement* and *what are the important aspects of the program?* With these questions emerged the idea of a handbook, or facilitators guide. The project, in its final form, is structured as a small text for those interested in facilitating the proposed retreat. Along with logistical aspects, it provides a historical and philosophical background answering the *why* question as well as providing rational descriptions of potential parts of the proposed retreat, giving insight into *what* is important. As a result, this guide serves the potential facilitator in creating a potential program, but also functions as a reference guide that could be used in multiple venues and for various purposes, e.g., churches, classrooms, personal use, etc.

## Opening Thoughts

When I was in my early 20s, I spent a couple summers living and working as a rafting guide on the Ocoee River in southeast Tennessee. Those were fun days. I remember them fondly. They were not always easy days. There were some days that began early and ended late, and when you finished your body ached from the day's tasks, but they were exhilarating.

As a seasonal whitewater guide, I received housing on the rafting company's outpost. For the summer, I lived in a small, one room cabin that was not much more than an old, screened-in porch. Two of the walls of my cabin were half walls, the top halves being enclosed with screen. As a result, I was never *not* outside. One of the things I remember most about those summers is laying down on my bed, sore from the day's work, and hearing the sounds of nature as I drifted off. I remember falling asleep to the chirping of crickets and then waking up to the songs of birds.

There was something spiritual about that experience. There was something about the exclamations of creation that testified to something beyond this world, but also to something within the world, and within me. And I have experienced that same feeling at different times and in different places around the world. And I have heard others attest to the same encounter. When we slow down and pay attention, when we make ourselves observant to the beauty, goodness, and vitality of this world, we come into contact with the Source of this world. God is present in creation!

The purpose of this text is to assist others with that experience. The desire of this book is to provide information and knowledge for those interested in the *whys* and *hows* of the experience. To do so, the next several pages will discuss matters of theology and spirituality, as well as provide tools for spiritual growth. These elements should be helpful for the reader. They should provide some form of personal edification. But also, more importantly, this text will provide insight (and some direction) in how one might facilitate an experience for others. Ultimately, this is a guide, or facilitator's handbook. Hopefully, the information provided will be personally beneficial to the reader, but the goal is to take the information and use it to create an experience that serves others. For this reason, the intended reader of this book is the practitioner. It is envisioned for those with an appreciation of the created order, but more importantly, a passion for God, and the people of God.

There are many ways in which one might facilitate an experience of encountering God through creation. The method we are utilizing in this book is that of a retreat. The premise of everything moving forward is that through removing oneself from the day-to-day, and creating space to observe and pay attention, one can encounter the Divine. This manuscript will assist you in creating that space. It will do that by addressing three central ideas. First, it will look at the *Big Picture* concerning the topic. Chapters One and Two will focus on background and foundational concepts. The second central idea has to do with *Strategies, Programs, and Experiences*. Chapters Three through Eight will look at specific programmatic experience that might be incorporated in a potential retreat. The third central idea will be concerned with *Retreat Logistics*. Chapters Nine through Twelve will focus on some of the practical tools needed to facilitate the program.

Before moving on, I feel it is important to acknowledge our differences. We have all been influenced by various worldviews. We have all also had unique experiences, and our experiences have shaped how we understand the world. I, for example, grew up in Kentucky, went to college in Tennessee, was stationed in North Carolina

while serving in the military, went to graduate school in Illinois, and lived in a small mountain ski resort town in Colorado for almost a decade. I have been associated with Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Ecumenical faith communities and I have been influenced by Charismatic, Wesleyan, Orthodox, and Quaker theologies. Vocationally, I have served with churches, camps, and colleges and due to these opportunities, I have connected with people from every corner of the globe. All of these experiences have influenced how I understand the world, and therefore influence how I approach the topic at hand. I say this to acknowledge that there are many ways a retreat such as the one we are about to discuss could be accomplished. I encourage you to use the ideas presented in this book, but do not feel constrained by them. Let your experiences guide how you utilize this information. And let the Spirit guide your experiences as you serve those who God has placed in your care.

## Section I: The Big Picture

For any program to be accomplished well, it must be approached with intention. Intentionality is key to programmatic success. Without intention, or purposeful goals, a program, or class or event, will fail. And it will fail not due to a shortage of desire, or even a deficiency of ability, but due to a lack of destination. Intention helps us understand where we are going. It illuminates our ultimate goal. And closely, tied to understanding where we are going, is an appreciation of where we are, and where we've been. Programmatic intentionality begins with an examination of where the program desires to take those it serves while also understanding the background histories that inform the identity of the program.

The first couple chapters of this text will be concerned with programmatic intentionality, i.e., understanding *The Big Picture*. We will examine the *why* of the topic at hand (i.e., interacting with God through creation in the context of retreat). This will be accomplished by looking at the historical foundations of the topic and then the goals of the topic. Chapter One will take a brief look at how Christians have historically understood and interacted with nature and creation, practically, biblically, and theologically. Chapter Two will then concern itself with developing a philosophical model that helps us understand why we are doing what we are doing, and where we ultimately intend to arrive.

## Chapter One: Creation and Christianity

Why is it that people love visiting national parks, taking trips to beaches and spending weekends in small mountain towns? What is it about these places that draw folks to them? Of course, there is always the aspect of fun. Parks or tourist communities are always bursting with entertaining things to do. And there are unique foods to try and people to meet. But fun, food and people can always be found in larger metropolitan areas, or even in one's hometown. What is it about natural spaces that draws us to them?

There is something about nature, and what Christians would identify as the *creation*, that grabs our attention. If you have ever been to a beach or mountain community and simply observed, more than likely you have seen folks sitting and gazing. They gaze because within those landscapes they discover beauty and inspiration, but also a paradox. Within nature humanity often observes both transcendence and imminence. The vastness of the oceans and bigness of the mountains remind us that we are not the center of the universe, nor the ultimate authority. There is something larger than humanity out there. At the same time, those same panoramas give insight into how reliant we are on the larger world, and how the larger world is reliant on us. Humanity and nature are intimately connected, and as such, influence one another in a multitude of ways. Perhaps this is best stated by author and poet Wendell Berry when he says, "Everything in the Creation is related to everything else and dependent on everything else. The Creation is one. It is a uni-verse, a whole, the parts of which are all 'turned into one.'"<sup>1</sup>

This interdependence can be viewed through both an ecological and/or physiological lens. Human beings interact with nature and in doing so influence the systems of nature, e.g., watersheds, air quality, soil health, etc. At the same time, the systems of nature affect human health, quality of life, and mental well-being. Humanity's choices impact the created order, which in turn impacts human welfare. But the relationship is not just physical, mental, or ecological. There is also a spiritual connection between nature and humanity. And it is this spiritual connection that compels people to stop and behold when they witness an ocean stretching to the horizon or a mountain reaching to the heavens. J. Philip Newell, who served as the Warden at Iona Abbey, suggests that creation can be a *theophany*. A picture of God.<sup>2</sup> When one sees the vastness, or the beauty, or the life found within nature, they can see an image of the One who created all.

### The Biblical Narrative

In 2008 the *Green Bible* was introduced by Harper Collins Publishing. Similar to how many Bibles highlight the words of Christ using *red* letters, this unique edition uses green print to highlight the texts that speak of creation. To flip through the pages is to see hundreds of verses emphasized with green lettering, as well as an index of numerous creation-focused themes found throughout scripture.<sup>3</sup> This special version of the Bible

---

<sup>1</sup> Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*, Reprint edition (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015), 50.

<sup>2</sup> J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *The Green Bible*, Reprint edition (HarperOne, 2010).

emphasizes a truth not often mentioned. Nature is a principal topic found within the pages of scripture, and its story intertwines with the stories of God and God's people.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1 NLT). These familiar words begin the biblical account and the story of God's creative work. God creates all things in six days, declaring that each created thing is good, and then concludes the creation endeavor by resting on the seventh (Genesis 1:1-2:4). The second chapter of Genesis provides another, different perspective. The second chapter of the book describes God's creative act using the imagery of a potter. After creating the earth, God uses the soil and clay of the ground to shape and form humanity. After doing so, humanity is given the mandate to *tend* and *watch over* the earth (Genesis 2:7-15). In this second account, along with a described vocation, there is an intrinsic, profound bond revealed. Unfortunately, English fails us here. This bond is best understood when viewed through language of the original readers. The Hebrew word for humanity is *adam* and the word for ground or soil is *adamah*.<sup>4</sup> The original words help us see the unique and special connection between the natural and the human. The story of humanity's creation is a narrative of intimate relationship between human life and the earth.

Humankind does not exist without the earth. And the earth is meant to be cared for by human beings. There is a mutuality between human and non-human creation. And this connection extends to all life. Just like humanity, the animals are formed from the *adamah*, and the trees and plants are made to grow from the *adamah*. All things are intertwined. And this inter-connection means that the actions of one influence the existence of others, for both good and ill. When one member of the community of creation prospers, all experience gain. When one hurts or fails, all creation suffers. So, when Adam and Eve *miss the mark* set by God, just like all humanity, all creation is affected and broken (Genesis 3:17-18). As a result, creation, like its human partners, finds itself in a place where it presently seeks restoration and healing (Romans 8:18-23).

The story of all creation's restoration begins with the story of Abram. God says to Abram:

Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others.... All the families on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3 NLT).

God asks Abram to act in faith and trust. If he would do so, God would bless him. But this call is about more than personal blessing. God informs Abram that through him *all the families on earth* would be blessed. There is a grander plan happening. This command initiates a string of events that will include Abram's children, grandchildren, and a multitude of decedents. The lives and works of Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul all begin with this calling. And through their lives, generations and cultures around the world will be influenced. This is a story of restoration beginning, and being accomplished, through the lives and works of all the children of God.

---

<sup>4</sup> Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 29.

But it is not just the human children who are part of the plan. God calls Abram to go to a *new land*. Though it is easy to overlook, the *land* is a character in the story of restoration. Just as the creation was affected and broken by sin, creation is invited to play a part in the salvation of the world. The creation, i.e., land, would assist Israel in the formation of its identity, as well as its purpose. It would assist the people in knowing their God. The land would become a place of *holiness*.<sup>5</sup>

Many years after God's call of Abram, after generations of wandering, the people of Israel would find themselves on the border of what would become the land of promise. Before crossing the border Moses issues a challenge. He says, "Now listen! Today I am giving you a choice between life and death, between prosperity and disaster." (Deuteronomy 30:15 NLT). He then says:

"Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NLT).

The land promised was available, but there was a condition. The people had to choose to be God's people; they had to choose the way of *life* and *blessing*. And creation itself was called to be a witness to those choices. The way to restoration is the way of *holiness*. God calls the people to be Godlike, i.e., to be *holy as God is holy*. And the land is the place where that holiness will be learned and lived.

The New Testament also describes the creation as a place of learning. After his baptism, Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit of God (Luke 4:1-12). For forty days Jesus fasts, and as he fasts, He is tempted by the Devil. Yet, despite the temptations, Jesus is capable of prevailing against the tempter. It is easy to dismiss Jesus' accomplishments or deny the difficulty of the task through acknowledging his divinity, after all, Jesus was God. But to deny the accomplishment is to set aside the self-emptying of Christ (Philippians 2:7). When Jesus became like us, He set aside the glories of divinity to be fully, and simply, human. When the humanity of Christ is emphasized, and we understand that Jesus was a human being like any other, His accomplishment becomes both aspirational and attainable. Jesus defeated the tempter not as God, but as human being.

How was this possible? Luke says Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, but it also says Jesus was full of the Spirit. Perhaps the Spirit led Christ into the wilderness because the wilderness (i.e., creation) is a place where human beings, in their solitude, can better connect with the Spirit. Perhaps the Spirit didn't lead Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil, but to interact in and through the created world. It is hard to say affirmatively that that is what the Spirit was doing. We don't know. But we do know that Jesus would often go off by Himself in different wilderness settings (e.g., the desert, a mountain, the water, etc.). Despite how the

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael D. Coogan and Cynthia R. Chapman, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 128–29.

story is interpreted, it can be said with confidence that creation often served as a place of solitude and preparation for Christ. Creation was a venue where Jesus equipped Himself to engage the world.

A final passage to mention comes from the final book of the Bible. In Revelation John describes a *new heaven and new earth* (Revelation 21:1). Just as creation is an essential part of the beginning of the story, and just as creation plays a part in the world's restoration, the culmination of all things includes the created order. God does not intend to dismiss the creation. Just as humanity, through Christ, is invited to be made new through a restorative formation, the larger creation is invited to become new and whole, and as it was meant to be. What this restoration may look like is a much larger discussion. There is a sense, though, that it will include all the creation. All the world, human and other-than-human, will find restoration and completion, and at the core of it all will be the One who created it all.

The preceding is a very limited selection of passages representing the created order in the Biblical narrative. There are many other stories and examples that could have been shared, e.g., the story of the flood, the Levitical laws dealing with land and animals, the Psalms, Paul's writings, etc. The point to be made is that creation is a pivotal theme (and at times a character) within the larger Biblical tradition. Though not always explicit, Scripture describes engagement with nature as part of the spirituality of the community of faith.

## Contemporary Christianity's Engagement with Creation

Creation is a major theme (character) in scripture, but unfortunately conversations concerning engagement with creation are not that common. Particularly in the church. Most discussions are limited to the children's educational programs or the occasional Earth Day sermon. With that acknowledged, there are some places within Christian thought and practice that encourage engagement. One example has already been mentioned. The *Green Bible* is an exceptional resource that allows readers to easily survey scripture and visually recognize sacred texts that connect creation and faith. Along with resources such as the *Green Bible*, more parachurch and Christian non-profit organizations are also taking the reins. One of the primary voices connected to the *Green Bible*, Matthew Sleeth, is the founder of *Blessed Earth*. *Blessed Earth* is a ministry dedicated to environmental stewardship from a Christian perspective.<sup>6</sup> Non-profit organizations such as Blessed Earth are becoming more and more common. And from an academic and theological perspective, the discipline of Ecotheology is finding a wider audience in all Christian traditions.<sup>7</sup> This theological perspective invites critical thought concerning the relationships between faith, church, humanity, and creation.

All the expressions mentioned above deal primarily in the worlds of conservationism and environmental stewardship. This is one of two primary means by which the contemporary church engages creation. The other being through the world of discipleship and formation. Discipleship and formation through creation happens in a few different ways, but a primary activity is Christian Camping. Christian Camping grew out of the realm of

---

<sup>6</sup> "Blessed Earth," Blessed Earth, accessed December 26, 2022, <https://www.blessedearth.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 67–94.

Bible Conferences, which itself is an offspring of the camp meeting movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The evangelical focus on Bible knowledge, personal salvation, and Christian fellowship found through these experiences was married to the programs coming out of secular summer camps. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, churches and parachurches throughout the United States were sponsoring and promoting camp as a means of Christian growth. Camping, along with other Christian outdoor programs, recognize the benefits of using creation as a tool and venue for discipleship and growth. Rob Ribbe, director of Wheaton College's Outdoor Leadership Center, uses the image of a *laboratory* to describe this phenomenon. He says camping provides the space and elements for participants to *experiment* and practice what it means to be a follower of Christ.<sup>8</sup> Camping and other intentional outdoor pursuits serve as venues for faith development and growth.

To emphasize this idea, I want to share two examples of how outdoor-focused organizations have understood the creation as a *laboratory* for engagement. The first is HoneyRock, the outdoor center of Wheaton College. A slogan often repeated at HoneyRock is "A Place Apart." HoneyRock understands itself as a place where folks come to *disconnect* from their day-to-day worlds, i.e., work, school, home, social media, technology, etc. The goal in *disconnecting* from the day-to-day is to *connect* with something greater. The experience of camp, and being present in creation, provides a means for accomplishing this connection.<sup>9</sup> Creation serves as the venue for connection. The second organization is Snow Mountain Ranch, a large YMCA conference center in the Rocky Mountains. They understand their setting as a space where friends and families can come together in a place of beauty, away from the grind of the everyday. The setting becomes a place where people connect with one another.<sup>10</sup> Through providing space in beautiful places, people are given the opportunity to better know one another. The locations of the two organizations are very different (the Northwoods of Wisconsin and the Colorado Rockies). Their unique Christian worldviews (Evangelical and Mainline/Ecumenical) are also distinctive. Yet both organizations recognize that the spaces they occupy are ideal for promoting *connection*. Through being in creation, connection with others, God and self is made available.

Though varied, Christian reflection and practice has historically and contemporarily embraced the idea that the created order is a place of engagement and connection. Franciscan priest Richard Rohr says, "I would name salvation as simply the readiness, the capacity, and the willingness to stay in relationship."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the more we engage and connect with the created world, the more we find ourselves connecting to the relationships that are essential. And perhaps through connecting we learn a bit more about the plan God has for the world.

---

<sup>8</sup> Rob Ribbe, "Redefining Camp Ministry as Experiential Laboratory for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 145.

<sup>9</sup> *HoneyRock: A Place Set Apart*, 2021, <https://vimeo.com/564192391>.

<sup>10</sup> "YMCA of the Rockies Snow Mountain Ranch," accessed December 26, 2022, <https://ymcarockies.org/Locations/Snow-Mountain-Ranch>.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2016), 46.

## Chapter Two: A Philosophical Model

In the 1960s, William Frankena suggested that for education to be fruitful it must be thought-out “...carefully, informedly, and philosophically....”<sup>1</sup> To accomplish this important task, Frankena, who was an ethicist and philosopher, developed an outline for logically evaluating an educator’s methods of instruction. He suggested that a primary task of all educators was to identify the *excellences to be produced* within a student (i.e., what knowledge or skills does the student need to learn). To produce these *excellences*, or objectives, Frankena insisted that educators be informed by the social sciences and appropriate learning theory. Basically, he believed that when desired objectives are linked to solid educational theory and practice successful learning activities are produced. But before any of this could occur the objective needed to be established. And this was only possible through informed design. Objectives needed to be developed through thoughtful consideration of a definitive end goal as well as an understanding of *human nature, life, and the world*. In a way, Frankena understood *education* as a subsidiary of ethics. Any educational endeavor, therefore, should flow out of a desire to develop ethical human beings. This desire, in conversation with the how the teacher (and students) understood and approached culture, world, and community, would inform the *excellences to be produced*. Frankena diagramed this framework using a series of boxes and lines; Box A and Box B connect to and inform Box C which in turn, with Box D, connects to and informs Box E (See Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

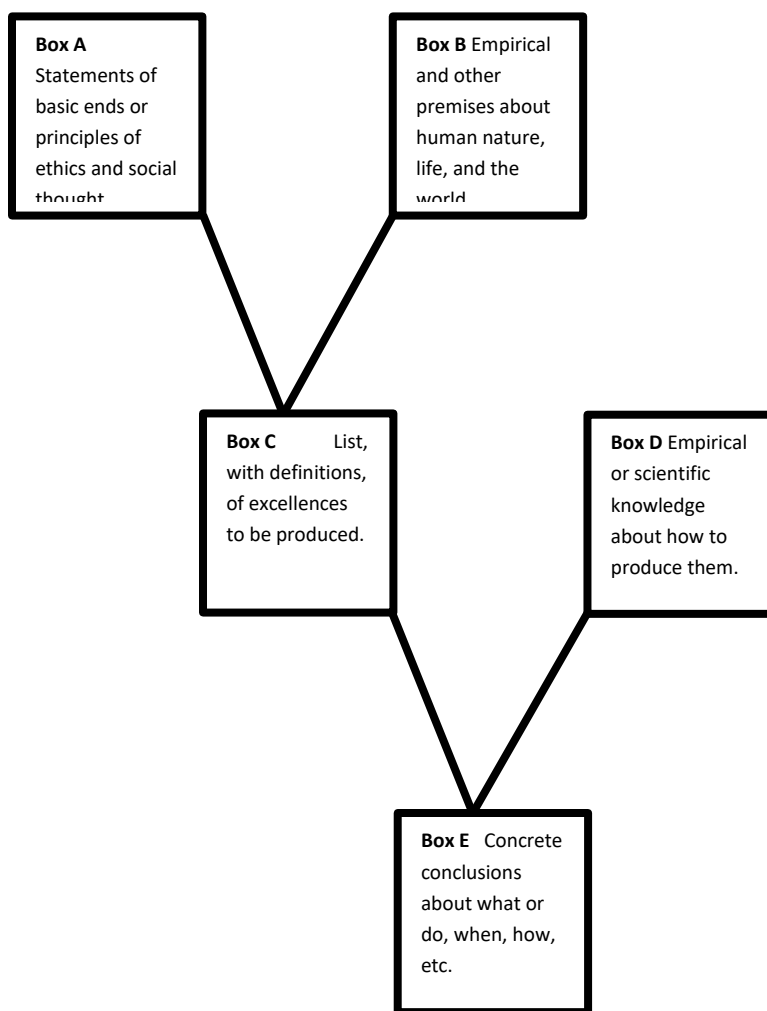
Though developed for the analysis of educational programs, Frankena’s model translates well into other disciplines, particularly those associated with faith-based programing. As a professor of Educational Ministries, Phillip Sell suggests that a *philosophy of ministry* guides an organization. It serves as a *rudder* as the organization creates programs, makes decisions, and chooses direction concerning the future. He proposes that Frankena’s model is ideal for both assessing and creating a philosophy for ministry contexts.<sup>3</sup> To facilitate this, Sell adapts Frankena’s diagram. He keeps the same basic structure but redefines the boxes using language and concepts better suited for a faith-based setting. Box A becomes the *mission box*, stating the *ultimate* purpose or goal of the organization/program. Box B provides space to define a *worldview* and articulate a theological foundation. Informed by Boxes A and B, Box C is concerned with creating a *profile* of those served by the organization. It is concerned with the qualities to be produced in those served and how those qualities are moving participants toward the ultimate goal. Box D is dedicated to discovering and

---

<sup>1</sup> William Frankena, “Introduction,” in *Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1965), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Frankena, 4–10.

<sup>3</sup> Phillip Sell, “A Map for Ministry: Constructing a Philosophy and Strategy of Ministry,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2003): 67–68.



**FIGURE 1: FRANKENA'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION MODEL**

articulating the best *methodological principles* for forming the qualities of Box C. And finally, understanding the qualities to be produced and the methods for producing them, Box E is all about *strategy*. Based on the ultimate goal, worldview, qualities to be produced, and the methods for producing them, what are the programs to be employed?<sup>4</sup>

Using Frankena as a foundation, Sell creates a framework that ensures ministry programs flow out of a greater purpose. Programs, classes, experiences, and services should be focused, leading participants toward *excellences* and an ultimate goal. Utilizing this framework, the remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to creating a philosophy for a proposed retreat-based program that is both thought-out and purposeful.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sell, 72–84.

## Box A: What is our Ultimate Goal

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.” (Genesis 1:1-26 NLT). Humanity is created in the image of God, the *imago Dei*. This is a foundational statement concerning who and what humankind is. It is from this statement that we determine our ultimate goal.

After God creates humanity, Genesis tells us that Adam and Eve lived in a garden called Eden. And though not specifically stated, the story, and our imaginations, lead us to a conceivable picture of God visiting and walking with Adam and Eve in the garden. Frequent strolls and shared conversations between humanity and the Creator. Intentional reflection leads our minds a little further. To a picture of God and humanity co-existing in a relational reality. The Creator God, who Christians would later identify as a relational Trinity, communes with the creation created in the Divine Image. To exist in relationship, to be in communion with God, was, perhaps, the primary vocation of humankind. Theologian Daniel Migliore says it like this: “The image of God is...like an image reflected in a mirror. That is, human beings are created for life in relationships that mirror or correspond to God’s own life in relationship.”<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, human beings chose to rebel against God. Humanity sinned and in doing so fractured the Divine-human communion. Though the image of God was not lost, something was distorted. Something was broken. The image or likeness was marred. Over centuries and generations of theological reflection, this distortion would be identified as something beyond human mending. Only the Creator who endowed humanity with the Divine Image would be able to restore the Divine Image. And only God would be to heal the fracture and reinstate a vocation of a relational reality. Discussing the salvific work of Christ, Theologian Clark Pinnock says, “...the goal is surely glorification and union with God.”<sup>6</sup> He goes on to say, “God intends to elevate humanity to life with God.... We are destined to find our true selves in God, in whom we live and move and have our being.”<sup>7</sup> Christ began the process of bringing broken humankind back into communion with the Creator.

The ultimate goal is union with God. It is to walk with God in the garden once again. It is to understand and realize our true vocation as beings created in the image of God. Our ultimate goal is to become Godlike. This is an idea that is echoed throughout scripture (e.g., the call to be holy as God is holy, to seek the justice and shalom of God, to follow Christ, and to be conformed to Christ).<sup>8</sup> Paul said, “...God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God...to become like his Son....” (Romans 8:28-29 NLT). New Testament

---

<sup>5</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 141.

<sup>6</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 150.

<sup>7</sup> Pinnock, 150.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Field, “I Believe in the Holy Earthy Church: Toward an Ecological Reinterpretation of the Holiness of the Church,” *Scriptura* 111, no. 3 (2012): 335–40.

Scholar Michael Gorman says, “To become Christlike is to become Godlike, for Christ is the image of God, the one in whom God’s fullness lives, the one in whom God has acted.”<sup>9</sup> Our ultimate goal is to *become* who God has created us to be as modeled by Jesus Christ. It is through being formed into the image of Christ that we rediscover our original vocation of *imago Dei*, our original vocation as those who walked with God.

## Box B: A Theological Worldview

Sell suggests that *Box B* is where one formulates their theology.<sup>10</sup> This is the space where an official doctrinal statement of belief might be developed. Unfortunately, to outline a full and orderly theology in the space of a few pages is a practical impossibility. Most systematic theology texts number in the hundreds (and occasionally, thousands) of pages and cover a multitude of topics. With that recognized, we are going to spend some time briefly discussing five theological concepts that are essential to informing the topic at hand.

### A RELATIONAL GOD

In the fourth century the leaders of the Church gathered, once in Nicaea and then again in Constantinople. At these two councils, the church declared its belief that God exists as a Trinity: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit coexist as one God. Hinted at in the Hebrew scriptures, anchored in the New Testament, and then formulated and conveyed by theologians, the Trinitarian doctrine is central to the Christian narrative.<sup>11</sup> At the essence of the Divine life, and Christian life, is a relational reality. This concept of Christian orthodoxy establishes a foundation for all theological reflection within the Christian tradition(s).

Migliore says the “...trinitarian doctrine describes God in terms of shared life and love....” He says, “God loves in freedom, lives in communion.... [and] is self-sharing, other-regarding, community-forming love.”<sup>12</sup> The God Christian’s worship is a God of eternal connection emanating as love. John’s first epistle says that when one loves, one knows God, because *God is love* (1 John 4:7-9). Love is the core, bond, and expression of the trinitarian reality. Love, therefore, is the primary attribute of the Divine. It is love that describes who God is, and it is through love that God creates and sustains all that is.

### HUMANITY AS THE IMAGE OF GOD

As already stated, the foundational Christian doctrine concerning humankind is the recognition that humanity is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). But what is the image of God? If the primary attribute of God is love, then perhaps love, relationality, and connection are how we are to best understand God’s image. Migliore

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 14.

<sup>10</sup> Sell, “A Map for Ministry,” 76.

<sup>11</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 68–69.

<sup>12</sup> Migliore, 73.

says, "...if God's being is in communion, then human life too is intended by God to be life in communion."<sup>13</sup> The story of the first human-beings portrays this multifaceted reality. Genesis 2 describes God creating the first person and declaring that it was *not good* that they were alone. To be human is to need others. The story also describes a type of reciprocal relationship with the created order. Humanity is called to care for the creation, and the creation in return provides the necessities essential to sustain human life. This call to care for the creation also provides humanity with a sense of purpose (i.e., work). There is an internal relational need (connection with self) that is somewhat met through humanity's call to steward the earth. Most importantly, there is an observed human-Divine connection. God forms humanity like clay being shaped into pottery and then breathes into the clay, sparking life. Life itself is humankind's intimate connection to the Divine. Like God, humanity is relational. And this relationality is fundamental to the human vocation. To be what God created humankind to be requires humanity to be a relational species. Built within our most primal selves is a longing for connection with others, the world, ourselves and, most importantly, God.

### THE OTHER-THAN-HUMAN CREATION

Alongside humanity, God also created the natural systems and kingdoms of the world. The mountain and seas, the mammals, fish, reptiles and birds, the trees, flowers and fungi, and every living and non-living entity are co-creations with the human creation. And just like humanity, the other-than-human creation is sustained by God. The psalmist says:

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. ...They all depend on you to give them food as they need it. When you supply it, they gather it. You open your hand to feed them, and they are richly satisfied. But if you turn away from them, they panic. When you take away their breath, they die and turn again to dust. When you give them your breath, life is created.... (Psalm 104:24-30 NLT).

Just as God sparked human life through breath (or Spirit), it is God's breath that initiates life in all created things. The Biblical text, proposes Migliore, "...presents nonhuman creatures as the inseparable companions of humanity in creation, reconciliation, and redemption."<sup>14</sup> Divine life, human life, and all created life are in some mysterious way interconnected. Just as God created humanity in the Divine image, the creation itself also reflects, in some ways, the Divine ambition of relationality.

### A FRACTURED WORLD

Where Genesis 1 describes God creating all things, and Genesis 2 emphasizes the universal need for connection, Genesis 3 describes a world broken by rebellion. The story of *the Fall* is well-known. God plants two trees, one tree leads to life while the other provides access to knowledge and power. A serpent approaches

---

<sup>13</sup> Migliore, 80.

<sup>14</sup> Migliore, 97.

and tempts Adam and Eve. They choose to go their own way and in doing so allow brokenness to enter the world.

We live in a fallen world. A world created to co-exist now endures in isolation. Richard Rohr says, "...beneath the ugly manifestation of our present evils...is our profound and painful sense of *disconnection*."<sup>15</sup> When Adam and Eve chose to rebel against the mandates of God, their actions created an existence contrary to how they (and the world) were created. Their actions created a *fracture*.<sup>16</sup> This fracture affects all connections, and we see this in the Genesis 3 story. Adam and Eve hide from God (the human-Divine connection is fractured). Adam and Eve experience shame (the internal connection with self is fractured). Adam blames Eve (the human-human connection is fractured). Thorns and thistles become part of the created order and work becomes associated with sweat and toil instead of purpose (the human-creation connection is fractured). Due to choices centered on self and ambition, a world created for relationality and connection has become characterized by fracture and disconnection.

### A TRINITARIAN RESTORATION

Just as he associates fallenness with disconnection, Rohr correlates connection with restoration.<sup>17</sup> If the image of God is what was distorted due to sin, and sin is ultimately tied to fracture and disconnection, then salvation is the healing of those fractures, leading to the restoration of the image of God. How does this healing and restoration occur? In his letter to the Romans, Paul contrasts Christ to Adam (Romans 5:12-18). Just as sin and brokenness enter the world through the first Adam, restoration and healing are initiated and modeled through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the second Adam.

One *classical* understanding of the work of Christ is the *moral influence theory* of the atonement. The *moral influence theory* suggests that Christ shows humanity how to live by demonstrating what it means to be human. Through the love demonstrated by Christ humanity is compelled to become something more, and whole.<sup>18</sup> As the incarnation of God, Jesus was the image of God in fullness. As a human person, and the second Adam, He, therefore, exemplified human life and vocation. Christ showed humanity how to be what it was created to be through living the life that Adam and Eve were created to live. Jesus connects in all manners that humanity is designed to connect. Christ communed with God often. Christ understood and accepted Himself. Christ had healthy relationships with others. Christ engaged creation and the larger world frequently and purposefully. By demonstrating to humanity what it was intended to be, Christ provided a pathway leading to restoration.

---

<sup>15</sup> Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2016), 39.

<sup>16</sup> In a class in 2016, I heard Bo Sanders use the term "fracture" to describe the results of the Fall. Up until then, I had used the word "disconnection." Fracture is more fitting. I am indebted to Bo for this word.

<sup>17</sup> Rohr and Morrell, *The Divine Dance*, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 185.

God's salvific work in the world, though, does not end with the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Where Christ modeled what humanity was to be, the Spirit of God guides humanity toward that goal. Working in and through all arenas of the world, the Spirit is always revealing to humanity the work of Christ.<sup>19</sup> The Spirit is the common factor in all life and, perhaps, it is the Spirit who facilitates the connection that bring about the image of God within each person. The Father sent the Son to demonstrate and model Divine love while also sending the Spirit to guide all of creation, human and other-than-human, into that love. The restoration of the world is a project of the Trinitarian God. The God who exists in a relational reality works together to invite all creation to participate in that experience.

### Box C: A Profile of Qualities

Considering the ultimate goal (Box A) and the theological lens through which the world is viewed (Box B), what qualities do we desire to see produced in those we are serving?

If the ultimate goal is union with God through a restoration of the image of God,  
 And if we understand God, humanity, and the creation as communal at their core,  
 And if we recognize that the relational reality of all creation has been fractured,  
 And if we accept that restoration is the healing of those relationships,  
 Then we can say that the qualities we desire to produce are relational in nature.

More specifically, the *qualities* we desire to produce are an increased sense of connection with God, oneself, others, and the natural world.

### COMMUNION WITH GOD

Movement toward union with God begins with a connection with God. Though a simple statement to make this objective is not a simple goal to define. Perhaps communion with God can be compared with what some traditions refer to as *contemplation*. Describing contemplation, Trappist monk and mystic Thomas Merton, says, "[It] is, above all, awareness of the reality of [the] Source."<sup>20</sup> As one becomes more conscious of the *Source*, i.e., God, one becomes aware of the presence of God in all things. Communion with God, stated most simply, is the increased ability to trust and rest in the knowledge that God is present with you. Again, this sounds straightforward, but it is something learned and developed over a lifetime of intentionality.

---

<sup>19</sup> Migliore, 234–35.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 1.

## UNDERSTANDING ONESELF

David Benner, known for work in psychology and spirituality, says, “There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self, and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.”<sup>21</sup> The movement toward union with God includes an internal journey of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of oneself. This goal is often marked with exciting opportunities of self-discovery, but also difficult necessities, such as confronting personal demons and past shames. Just as trust in God is a gradual actuality, so is self-understanding. The more one focuses on knowing themselves, the more they grow. Again, this a journey that takes a lifetime of revisiting and re-knowing of oneself.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Human relationships are complicated. They exist within many different social arenas. Every person brings their own personality. Power dynamics are often involved in how folks interact. Add the difficulties of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g., social media, cultural segmentation, etc.) and connecting with others is, simply stated, difficult. Yet, the need to connect is essential. It is through community and relationship that human beings discover wholeness and the people of faith move toward union with God. To be a follower of Christ is to be yoked to the larger community of Christ. We come before God collectively as one body. Without others we unable to be who we are created to be.<sup>22</sup>

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORLD

Creation itself is a stakeholder in the ultimate goal. Just as humanity was affected through its rebellion, so was the world in general. And just as humanity has a hope for restoration, so does the world. Men and women are called to engage the creation, and in doing so, invite it to participate in the story of restoration. Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware says, “...through the cultivation of the earth, through craftsmanship, through the writing of books and the painting of ikons—man gives material things a voice and renders the creation articulate in praise of God.”<sup>23</sup> Just as all material and life, human and other-than-human, are invited into connection with the Divine, all material and life are invited into connection with the other. To engage the world is to move toward a better understanding of what it means to be the *imago Dei*. Connecting with the natural world is a means of movement toward restoration and union.

---

<sup>21</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, Expanded edition (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015), 22.

<sup>22</sup> Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 77.

<sup>23</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised Edition (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 54.

## Box D: Methods and Theories

*Box D* is concerned with the concepts and theories behind how we guide people toward our stated objectives and goals. It asks the question: what do the researchers say concerning how to effectively facilitate *connections* and in doing so lead to a formational goal of *becoming* like Christ?

Before moving forward there are two things we must first consider. First, connection, or relationship, assumes an encounter. It is hard for two people to become friends if they never actually meet. The same can be said for each of the four objectives. They are not merely cognitive exercises. They require some form of practical experience. Secondly, experience(s) can be a catalyst toward spiritual growth (i.e., connection). Merton says, “Every moment of every event of every [person’s] life on earth plants something in [their] soul.”<sup>24</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, a Lutheran theologian and professor describes how this might be possible. He says, “Every experience of a creation of the Spirit is hence also an experience of the Spirit itself. And every true experience of the self becomes also an experience of the divine spirit of life in the human being.”<sup>25</sup> If the Spirit of God is present in all the world, then all experiences of the world can be spiritual experiences. Experience is how one engages the world (and others and self and God) and therefore experience itself is a primary method toward *becoming through connection*.

Utilizing the concepts of influential thinkers such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, *Experiential Learning Theory* is an educational model imagined by Educator David Kolb. As a theory, it strives to provide insight into how experiences might be used to foster personal development. It also seeks to create a structure that emphasizes dialogue between formal education, the learner, and the learner’s everyday occurrences.<sup>26</sup> To describe this approach, Kolb identifies six primary characteristics of experience-based learning:

- Learning Is Best Conceived as a Process, Not in Term of Outcome.
- Learning is a Continuous Process Grounded in Experience.
- The Process of Learning Requires the Resolution of Conflicts between Dialectically Opposed Modes of Adaptation to the World.
- Learning is an Holistic Process of Adaptation to the World.
- Learning Involves Transactions between Persons and the Environment.
- Learning is the Process of Creating Knowledge.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 127.

<sup>26</sup> David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Second edition. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2015), 4–15.

<sup>27</sup> Kolb, 37–49.

With these characteristics in mind, Kolb defines *experiential learning* as “...the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”<sup>28</sup> Kolb also provides what he calls *The Experiential Learning Cycle*. Learning occurs through the following four movements:

- Concrete Experience
- Reflective Observation
- Abstract Conceptualization
- Active Experimentation

Basically, when one *reflects* upon the *observations* they make during and/or after an *experience*, they can then extract *concepts*, ideas, and knowledge from the experience. This knowledge can then be *experimented* with in the context of new *experiences*.<sup>29</sup>

Much like *Box B*, it would be near impossible to discuss all aspects of *Experiential Learning Theory* in this space. With that in mind, I will mention three key ideas of experience-based learning. These concepts serve as helpful markers as we think about how to guide others toward *becoming through connection*.

First, experience-based learning and formation is a lifelong process. Learning occurs through experience, intentional reflection, and repetition over years. It is almost never a singular experience. That is to say, it takes time. It is also important to remember that experiences build upon other experiences. A specific occurrence may not be life changing, but it may be foundational. The aim of connecting with others (and the world, self, and God) is a gradual process that may occur over the course of many, many interactions. Therefore, this process should be considered when thinking through programmatic experiences.

Second, experience-based learning and formation is an inclusive endeavor. That is to say, experience itself is relational and invites others to participate. Despite the movement one finds themselves in during the *Experiential Learning Cycle*, more than likely it will involve others’ participation. Educators guide, peers contribute to, and the environment influences how one’s experiences and reflections happen. The very nature of an experience invites connection. Planned experiences should embrace this aspect of formational learning.

Third, experience-based learning and formation is a holistic progression. It is important to recognize that this growth is more than just a cognitive exercise. As humans we are physical, mental, spiritual, and social beings. All these aspects of the person, and more, are part of the formational endeavor. It’s already been mentioned that learning and formation is a lifelong process. As we develop over time, our concepts of faith and ethics develop as well as our understandings of what it means to interact and connect with others. Human beings are multi-faceted beings. Developmental programs must take this into account.

---

<sup>28</sup> Kolb, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Kolb, 51.

## Box E: Strategies, Programs, and Experiences

Describing this final box, Sell says it is about embracing all the knowledge that one has curated and employing it in the specific context.<sup>30</sup> The rest of this book will be focused on this programmatic goal. The purpose of this text is to serve as a guide in the implementation of an experience-based, creation-focused retreat. The goal of the retreat is twofold. First, the facilitation of multiple experiences that encourage engagement with nature. As mentioned in Chapter One, the natural world often serves as a locality for observing the presence of God. There is something about the beauty, vastness, and mystery of the created order that draws people toward the Divine. And there are some folks who feel especially drawn to those places and those experiences. This text (and retreat) is for those folks. Hopefully, those experiences lead participants to the second, and more important goal. The fostering of connections with God, others, the creation, and self, leading to formation into Christlikeness and participation with the Divine.

---

<sup>30</sup> Sell, "A Map for Ministry," 83.

## Section II: Strategies, Programs, & Experiences

The purpose of this text is to serve as a guide in the implementation of an experience-based, creation-focused retreat. And as mentioned in the previous section, the following pages will be focused on strategies that could be implemented and utilized to move a person toward the *Ultimate Goal* of union with God. The idea being that, when utilized in the context of the proposed retreat, the suggested experiences facilitate connection, leading to Christlikeness and the *Ultimate Goal*.

Understanding the identified context and audience, and the philosophy of ministry developed in Section I, Section II will be focused on *Strategies, Programs and Experiences*. This section will identify several experiences that could be implemented in the setting of an experience-based, creation-focused retreat and analyze the reasoning for their inclusion. The goal of these chapters will be to discuss the *why* of the experience. There will be some instruction of practice, but the intention is to understand why one would include these aspects in their program. Section II, therefore, will lean more toward theoretical and theological concepts, as opposed to practical application. The categories of experiences to be discussed include:

- Personal Experiences
- Communal Experiences
- Experiences with the Spirit and Scripture
- Experience with Creation and Place
- Sabbath Experiences
- The Experience of Reading Creation

The hope is that by understanding the ideas behind these experiences the practitioner will be better suited to implement them in whatever form serves best in their specific context. An underlying idea is that everything discussed in this text can be adapted and implemented in whatever context one finds themselves in. By being introduced to theory, you as the facilitator become empowered to adapt and implement as you see best.

## Chapter Three: Personal Experiences

J.R.R. Tolkien's epic, *The Lord of the Rings*, is, in many ways, a story about a journey, or perhaps multiple journeys. It is the story of a journey to accomplish an imperative mission. It is the journey of adventure and risk. There is a journey of selfless service. And perhaps hidden and entwined within all these aspects is a fundamental *journey*. Perhaps the most powerful journey described in Tolkien's story is the journey of self-discovery. At the heart of the story are various individuals who find themselves on an excursion toward knowing themselves. The Hobbits, and the other travelers, are given the opportunity to experience the full spectrum of what it means to live: friendship, courage, fear, kindness, betrayal, hope, and love. And through these experiences they are given the chance to learn, grow and become.

At one point during the story, Frodo, the protagonist, recalls the words his uncle used to share. He says, "It's a dangerous business...going out of your door.... You step into the Road, and...there is no knowing where you might be swept off to."<sup>1</sup> Every journey, big and small, planned and improvised, begins with a first step. The single initial decision that must be made before any other is the decision to *go out your door and step onto the Road*. But what might that first step look like?

The ultimate journey toward God, and becoming who God has created us to be, is a journey that involves multiple experiences, people, interactions, and choices. But the first step, or stage, of that journey is found in the realm of self-discovery and self-understanding. The journey toward God is one that requires connections with others, yet at the same time, it is a personal journey. This is a paradox at play. It is a journey that requires others, yet it is a journey of the self. To honestly know and engage others requires that one know and engage self. Consequently, it is through experiences with the self that one begins the journey toward connection.

### Self-Love

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of a journey such as this is the call to trust oneself. In the previous chapter it was suggested that at the core of the Divine reality is relationality, or love. If love is the primary attribute of God, and you and I are created in the image of God, then the call to love must be at our core. And that call to love begins with a love of oneself. It is almost cliché to mention, but when asked which commandment was greatest, Jesus replied, "...love the Lord your God...[and] Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39 NLT). Tied to love of God and love of neighbor is love of self. One can only love another to the proportion that they love themselves.

The social sciences echo the importance of self-affection. Brené Brown, coming from the world of Social Work, suggests that for love to be faithfully developed and shared between two people, it must first be experienced

---

<sup>1</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, One-Volume Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994), 72.

and possessed internally.<sup>2</sup> She says, “...we can only love others as much as we love ourselves.”<sup>3</sup> Brown goes on to describe how this is counterintuitive. It seems easier to love others. We often feel that we can express our affections toward those we love despite their faults and failures. To do the same for oneself—it is simply more difficult. Yet, when we learn the reality of *self-love* it allows us to become more present to others. *Self-love* leads to profounder expressions of love.<sup>4</sup> How we view ourselves sets the bar for how we relate to others. It influences how we approach, engage, and appreciate friends, family, and acquaintances, as well as the larger world, and perhaps even God. To love oneself, and the different aspects of oneself, is to love as God loves. And to love as God loves is the first step in a lifelong journey of discovery.

## Solitude

“To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas Merton writes these words in the middle of a chapter in which he discusses the practice of *solitude*.<sup>6</sup> Merton suggests that through purposeful solitude (not isolation) it is possible to learn to love God and others more fully.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this fullness of love is learned through the discipline of solitude because in solitude we learn to experience self-love. Known for writings concerning the Christian disciplines, Richard Foster describes solitude as an experience in which “...God frees us from our bondage to people and our own inner compulsions.”<sup>8</sup> In solitude we are given permission to not concern ourselves with comparisons or judgements. Solitude allows us to be who we truly are. This experience, coupled with a realization that we are loved by God, liberates and encourages affection for one’s true self.

It is important to recognize that solitude is not necessarily tied to physicality. It is, as Foster says, “...more a state of mind and heart than it is a place.”<sup>9</sup> The point of solitude is to be aware of one’s true self and one’s inner reality. It is to know oneself in a manner that is honest and unobscured, despite where one finds themselves. It is less about locality and more the ability to accept oneself in all situations. That said, the practice

---

<sup>2</sup> Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Avery, 2015), 105–6.

<sup>3</sup> Brown, 106.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, 106.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 60.

<sup>6</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 52–63.

<sup>7</sup> Merton, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992), 63.

<sup>9</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th Anniversary Edition, vol. Third Edition (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 96.

of physically removing oneself to be alone is an exercise that has been utilized for spiritual growth by many over the centuries, including Jesus. The gospels describe Christ as one who would often go into the desert. He would do this to escape the crowds, find seclusion, and connect with God. Tangibly going somewhere to be alone (or be with God) is both a practical exercise as well as a symbolic act that communicates to the world the importance of presence. It is an act of intention and purpose. And entwined in intention and purpose is expectation.

Solitude serves as a means of discovering oneself, but it also serves as a means of communing with God. And these two encounters are not unrelated. David Benner says, "...if we find our true self we find God, and if we find God, we find our most authentic self."<sup>10</sup> The more one learns to love and sit with oneself, the more they become comfortable with experiencing the presence and love of God, and vice versa. Foster suggests that this leads to a type of silence. As the voices of the world (and oneself) becomes softer, the *Divine Voice* becomes more audible.<sup>11</sup> Though we may enter solitude as a means of caring for ourselves, it can become a venue for hearing the voice of the Spirit.

## Personal Reflection

As a Professor of Religious Education, Elizabeth Conde-Fraser connects personal reflection with the experience of a personal journey. She says, "Experience without reflection is a happening, and no learning can be reaped from it."<sup>12</sup> For the journey of self-discovery to be successful it requires intentional consideration. And this consideration should be inclusive of the whole journey as well as its individual parts. It is through examining ourselves and our experiences (new and old) that we build upon what we know and create new categories for those things we do not know. But what might personal reflection look like?

A well-known tool for theological reflection that comes out of the Wesleyan traditions is the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral uses four categories for evaluating theological ideas: Scripture, Tradition, Logic/Reason, and Experience. These four categories can act as lenses or filters for engaging and/or evaluating theological or doctrinal ideas. Proponents of the tool suggest that viewing a concept through these categories provides a means of critiquing a concept from different perspectives. These perspectives allow one to consider how a particular idea aligns with Christian thought.

Though a person's individual journey is far removed from a theological debate, perhaps the categories of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral could be used for personal reflection. For example, assume someone, while engaged

---

<sup>10</sup> David G. Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*, Expanded edition (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Foster, *Prayer*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2004), 198.

in an experience of solitude, felt they heard the *Divine Voice*. Perhaps the following categories and questions could be used as a way to reflect on and critique what they experienced:

- Scripture
  - How does your experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture?
  - Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide contribution to your experience?
- Christian Tradition
  - How does Christian tradition inform your experience?
  - How does Christian history inform your experience?
  - How does Christian theology inform your experience?
- Logic/Reason
  - Do the outcomes of your experience make sense?
  - Do they seem reasonable?
- Personal Experience
  - How do your life experiences (or your story) enlighten what you have heard or felt?
  - How do the experiences or stories of those you trust enlighten what you have heard or felt?

Using these interpretive lenses as formational lenses, one is able to reflect on the experiences they have engaged in. As mentioned in earlier chapters, growth is a process that is continual and builds upon previous experiences. The journey of self-discovery is the same. It takes time and intention. Learning to love oneself and learning to sit with oneself are two practices toward that journey. Reflecting on those practices is a third. As one continues to observe, reflect, and move forward, growth will endure. The journey toward God, and self, begins in the experiences of self-discovery. It is a journey that truly never ends, yet never gets old. The road goes on forever, and ever, but it is a journey that is at the same time always more and more desired the longer one travels.

## Chapter Four: Communal Experiences

In the previous chapter, the journey of self-discovery was illustrated using Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. In the story, Frodo and his companions are each unknowingly invited to become themselves by partaking in a journey. But the hobbits did not depart on their journey alone.<sup>1</sup> Tolkien's story was one that emphasized the importance of community. It was a message describing a universal need for one another. A need lived out through experiences of trust, dependence, and perhaps most importantly, friendship.

Just as the hobbits needed others to complete their journey, we need others to complete ours. The success of our ultimate goal relies on the partnership of those we associate with. To journey toward participation with God is a goal that requires a *fellowship* of people journeying together. As Christian Educator Maria Harris says, "One Christian is no Christian; we go to God together or we do not go at all."<sup>2</sup>

In his classic text, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer equates *Christianity* to *Christian Community*. The experience of faith cannot be divorced from communal experience. He suggests that through Divine direction Christians are bound together. And through this Divine and communal experience Christ is revealed one to another. Each person serves as the body of Christ, therefore, to participate with a follower of Christ is to participate with Christ.<sup>3</sup> The work of Christ is accomplished through the people of God. Simply put—we need one another.

Unfortunately, this simple, yet essential, idea is often neglected in the world we live in, particularly in the church. Christian devotion has increasingly become individualized and segregated. This can be observed in how many understand worship and *church*. *Church* has been equated to the watching and consuming of "worship" productions. A rift has been made between presence and physicality. We have come to believe that we can be present without presence. Though experiencing a worship service is possible through social media and online streaming, how can connection and communal life truly be experienced without a tangible presence? If Christian community is, as Bonhoeffer suggests, solely founded on the person of Jesus Christ, then it must be, in some way, incarnational. Christian community requires that the church be embodied, and this embodiment conveys the importance of shared space and human interaction.

### Permanent vs Temporary Communities

Christian community requires an incarnational *life together*, and this experience should typically occur within the context of a stable and permanent community. Resonating the work of Bonhoeffer, Ruth Haley Barton writes about Christian community in her book titled *Life Together in Christ*. In this text she acknowledges one

---

<sup>1</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, One-Volume Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994), 268–69.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 77.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community*, trans. John Doberstein (New York: HarperOne, 1954), 21–24.

of the failures of the modern church. She says, “One of the reasons Christianity has become irrelevant in our culture is our inability to stay together.”<sup>4</sup> When a community is transient members are slow to participate and hesitant to invest in others. Permanence and stability are vital to the local church. They create the conditions for gradual, life-long growth leading toward the ultimate goal of Christlikeness and union with God.

With that understood, it is important to acknowledge what community might look like in a non-permanent context (e.g., a retreat setting). Discussing the theological foundations of Christian Camping, Bud Williams, an influential leader in the field, contrasts the idea of a *permanent community* with a *temporary community*. He suggests that where the *local church* embodies solidity as a *permanent community*, venues such as camps, conferences, and retreats serve as *temporary communities*. He argues that these provisional spaces provide a context where concentrated energy can be utilized to accomplish particular objectives for a particular group of people.<sup>5</sup> Whereas a *permanent community* must in some way appeal to and serve all members of a group, a *temporary community* allows for specialization and focused attention toward a common goal. Rob Ribbe adds to this by emphasizing the temporal aspect of the *temporary community*. He says, “Temporary experiences exist within and between most permanent systems. They are structures and experiences that have a clearly understood start and end time....”<sup>6</sup> It is transience with intention. Temporary community creates space for a unique group of people to gather for a specific amount of time and focus their attention on a particular goal. In doing so, they serve the local church (i.e., permanent community) by being a place of singular, definitive, individual purpose leading to rest, rejuvenation, and inspiration.

## The Objectivist Myth of Knowing vs The Community of Truth

Articulating a model of education and learning, Parker Palmer, known for his writings dealing with education, vocation, and spirituality, contrasts two paradigms. The first he refers to as the *Objectivist Myth of Knowing*. The *Objectivist Myth of Knowing* suggests that knowledge and information are disassociated from the relational experience(s) of a learner and/or instructor. Knowledge and information exist beyond those involved in the learning process, and therefore are uninfluenced by the experience of education. Learning, as a result, is simply the transfer of information. It occurs through transmission from a professional educator (e.g., teacher, pastor,

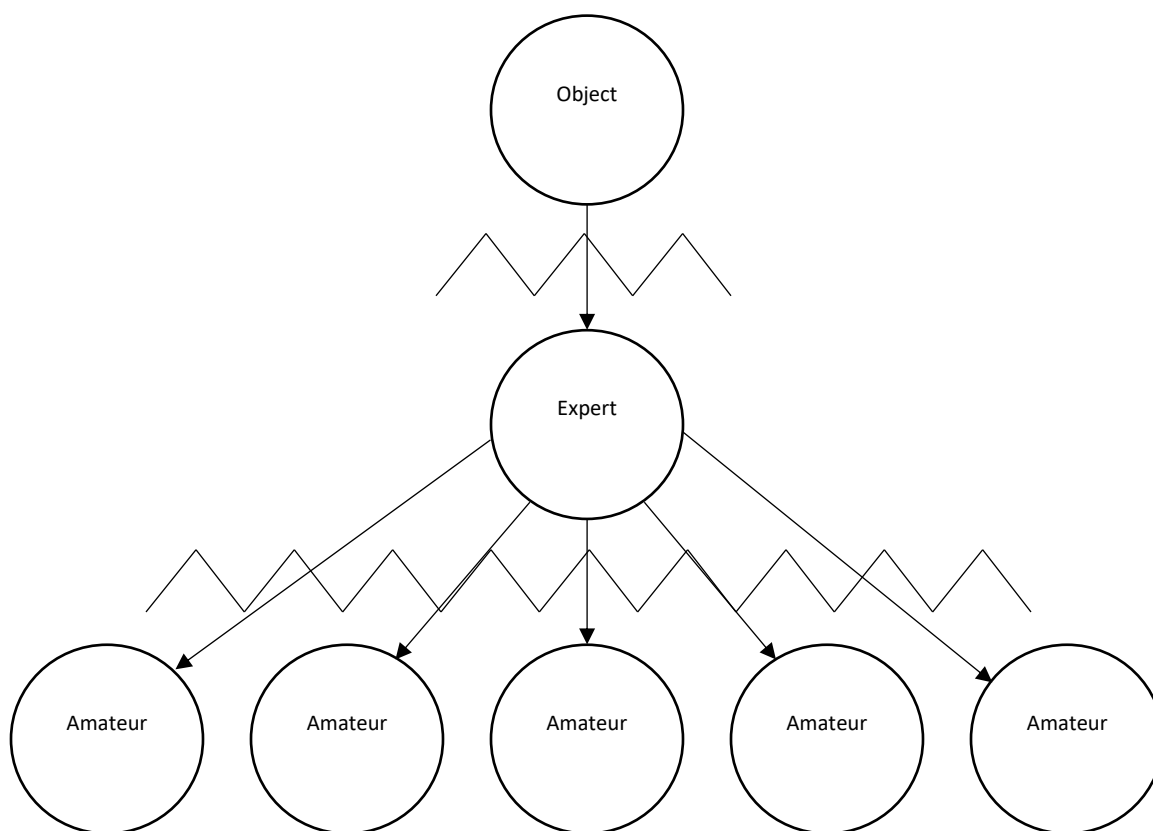
---

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2014), 133.

<sup>5</sup> Bud Williams, “Theological Perspectives on the Temporary Community/Camping and the Church” (Unpublished Paper, 2013), 5–9, [https://6cf42bdc-ccab-4227-8493-cad1f2d5d20a.filesusr.com/ugd/f01f78\\_b5140d09439b4ccab3b2ee163b66c9c3.pdf](https://6cf42bdc-ccab-4227-8493-cad1f2d5d20a.filesusr.com/ugd/f01f78_b5140d09439b4ccab3b2ee163b66c9c3.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Rob Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry as Experiential Laboratory for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 153.

leader, etc.) to a non-professional or inexperienced learner (e.g., student, parishioner, follower, etc.). Knowledge flows in one direction: *object* to *expert* to *amateur* (See Figure 2).<sup>7</sup>



**FIGURE 2: PALMER'S OBJECTIVIST MYTH OF KNOWING**

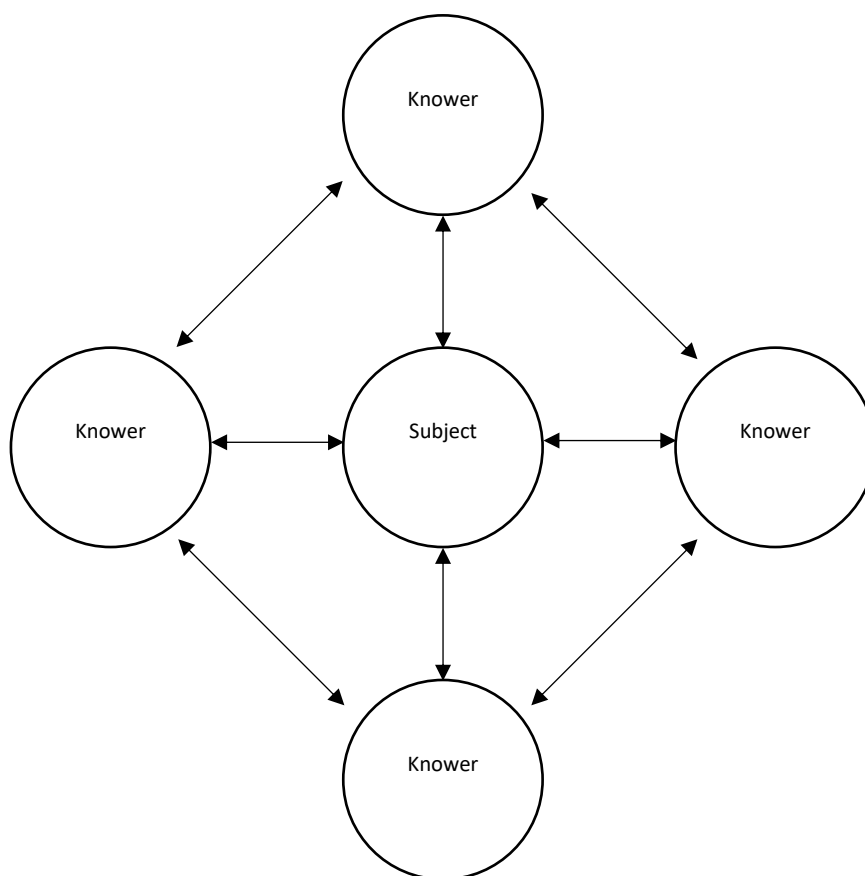
The second paradigm he calls *The Community of Truth*. The *Community of Truth*, as opposed to the *Objectivist Myth of Knowing*, proposes that knowledge is relational, including the educational *subject* at hand. All participants are members of the *community* and thereby are co-learners and co-knowers. All, therefore, are capable of interacting with one another and the *subject*, and the *subject* is capable of being influenced by the participants. This model understands *knowing* and learning as the communal interaction of the *subject* and all *knowers* (See Figure 3).<sup>8</sup> Describing the *Community of Truth*, Palmer says, "...as in real life, there are no pristine objects of knowledge and no ultimate authorities. ...truth does not reside primarily in propositions, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, 10th Anniversary Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 102–4.

<sup>8</sup> Palmer, 104–9.

education is more than delivering propositions about objects to passive auditors.”<sup>9</sup> Knowledge, information, and wisdom are discovered through dynamic engagement, not passively transferred from one to another.



**FIGURE 3: PALMER'S COMMUNITY OF TRUTH**

In the *Community of Truth*, learning and knowledge are more concerned with conversation and dialogue. The gaining of facts may happen, but that is not the purpose. The purpose is growth, and growth is initiated through the interactions of the community. Parker suggests that the community becomes its *finest form* through these interactions. *Diversity, ambiguity, creativity, honesty, humility, and freedom for all* are the results when a community of people chooses to engage and learn from one another.<sup>10</sup> The very act of learning as a community forms the community into something more virtuous.

A *Community of Truth* is something that would benefit all educational and development-focused venues. It is especially beneficial to those entering a space of *temporary community*. As already mentioned, temporary

---

<sup>9</sup> Palmer, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Palmer, 110–11.

community involves a unique group gathered for a specific time who are focused on a particular goal. When that unique group is encouraged to intentionally interact with others, as well as interact with their particular goal (i.e., the subject) conditions are created for a formational experience. A space developed and designed as a *temporary community of truth* becomes a place of formation.

## Curating a Temporary Community of Truth

How might one influence and facilitate a temporary community of truth? Though there are many practical elements that could be discussed, I want to mention four: community building, classroom space, meals, and community reflection. Attend almost any camp, conference, or retreat and one of the first things you will experience is an ice breaker or team building experience. These range in complexity from get-to-know-you games to expert-led challenge courses. At the heart of a team/community building experience is the development of trust. Trust is essential to cohesion and participation. A temporary community of truth asks each participant to be and perceive the other as a fellow *knower* and this communal request requires trust. A temporary community of truth must be a place of trust. One way to begin the process of developing trust is by creating space where folks are known. This may not happy fully with the time restraints of a temporary community, but it can be initiated. Playing games and having fun are a means of initiating *knowing* and developing a community of people who trust one another.

Second, physical spaces should be designed in a manner that encourages participation. Most classrooms, lecture halls, and churches are designed in a manner that reflect Palmer's *Objectivist Myth of Knowing*. They encourage passivity. This suggests that space and design matter. Through intentionally structuring physical educational spaces in a way that mirrors the theoretical, the temporary community of truth becomes more tangible and real. Does physical space guarantee that participants will actively engage in/with the community? No. Rearranging furniture does not guarantee participation. But it does provide visual affirmation and shows intention. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a connection between intention and expectation. When a space is curated with intention, the expectations of the community are influenced. The space we create help to influence the learning communities we lead.

Perhaps the most routine and least considered method for developing a temporary community of faith is the common meal. Everyone eats. And in most temporary community settings, folks are going to eat together. And typically, they are going to eat together multiple times per day. If a group is gathered for five days and they eat three meals per day, that is fifteen times the community is gathering for a common purpose—food and drink. Mealtimes provide occasions for the community to connect. Lisa Graham McMinn is a Spiritual Director who also provides space on her small farm for retreatants. Explaining the importance of shared meals she says, "Eating with others gives us the daily opportunities to engage ideas, troubleshoot conflicts, encourage, inspire, correct, love, and be loved—both in body and soul."<sup>11</sup> She later says:

Eating offers a pleasurable way of communing.... We are created with potential to enter each other's lives as we break bread together, to give and receive and enjoy pleasure as we partake

---

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Graham McMinn, *To the Table: A Spirituality of Food, Farming, and Community* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 21.

in food that keeps us alive. The mystery of communion is that we eat in order to live more fully. We eat with others, with Jesus in our midst, that we might live better, love better, and be grateful.<sup>12</sup>

Meals are an equalizer that encourages commonality. When folks share a meal, and when that meal is well prepared and the space is enjoyable, it becomes a place for the mingling of selves. There is a sense of attachment that happens when food and drink are shared. And it is in these unassuming times that great and powerful things occur. It was during His final meal with His disciples that Jesus prayed for the unity and union of the church. Jesus said, “I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one.... And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me” (John 17:21 NLT). Those who follow Christ are called to be one and it is in the context of a meal that we are shown how to move toward that goal. Mealtimes should not be overlooked. They may be the most important element in the facilitation of a temporary community of trust.

A final element to employ when creating and facilitating a temporary community of truth is communal reflection. The importance of reflection has been noted in previous chapters, but the significance of reflecting as a group should also be mentioned. Palmer suggests that to engage the *subject* at the center of the *Community of Truth* is to listen and hear what the *subject* has to say. Our engagement of *subject*, though, does not end with personal listening and hearing. There is also an aspect of sharing and critiquing.<sup>13</sup> The temporary community of truth is called to be a place where ideas are discussed and appraised. No individual exists in a vacuum. It is through community that we are kept theologically grounded in orthodoxy and it is through community that our intuitions are confirmed.

The journey toward Christlikeness and union with God is one that is not meant to be taken alone. Most times we journey with a stable and dedicated community, but occasionally we are called to be part of a temporary group, or *fellowship*. Like Frodo and his friends, we are sometimes invited to journey to a certain place, for a certain time, with certain people. And in doing so we experience connections that impact our lives, our permanent worlds, and who we know ourselves to be as children of God. May those experiences be powerful and life giving.

---

<sup>12</sup> McMinn, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 108.

## Chapter Five: Experiences with the Spirit & Scripture

Before diving into this chapter, it would be prudent to define two terms/subjects. First, *Pneumatology*. Pneumatology is the study of the Holy Spirit. Like in any study, or discipline, Pneumatology concerns itself with appreciating and knowing. Pneumatology, therefore, is interested in appreciating and knowing the Holy Spirit. It asks the questions: who is the Holy Spirit and how does Holy Spirit operate in the world? Discussing the attractions and challenges of pneumatology, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen suggests that ultimately it is about experiences. He places *experiences with the Spirit* as the driving force behind all pneumatological questions. Therefore, the job of pneumatology is ultimately thoughtful consideration of *experiences with the Spirit*.<sup>1</sup>

The second subject to define is *Practical Theology*. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, scholars at the University of Aberdeen, provide the following definition: “Practical Theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”<sup>2</sup> An obvious key word that shows up several times in that definition is *practices*. Practical Theology is concerned with the *practices* of the community of faith, the world, and God. It is concerned with how the church acts out its religious devotion in relation to God and society, as well as internally. Practical Theology, as a result, is generally more concerned with the church as opposed to the individual, communal experience as opposed to personal experience. The *practices* that Swinton and Mowat discuss are the expressions of the people of faith. They are experiences tied to the historical communities, stories, and expressions of the church.<sup>3</sup>

The following pages will be dedicated to the beginnings of a *Practical Pneumatology*. That is to say, the goal is to think, consider and reflect concerning the churches experiences with the Spirit of God. Recognizing the limited space, we will only begin the conversation here. Crafting a complete Practical Pneumatology would require many more pages. But, to begin the conversation, we will ask two questions, one theological and one practical: (1) Who is the Holy Spirit and (2) How do we Engage the Holy Spirit? The first question will be discussed through conversation with contemporary theologians and the second will be explored through the ancient practice of Lectio Divina.

---

<sup>1</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 13–14.

<sup>2</sup> John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Swinton and Mowat, 20–21.

## Who is the Spirit of God

### THE TRINITY

Before we can discuss the Spirit, perhaps we need to have a conversation concerning the Trinity. Who is the Triune God? Historic and orthodox Christian thought claims the existence of a Divine reality who exists as three distinct persons. Kallistos Ware says, “There is in God genuine diversity as well as true unity. The Christian God is not just a unit but a union, not just a unity but community.”<sup>4</sup> At the core essence of God is a type of relational existence. To describe this relationship, Early Christian thinkers would eventually use the term *perichoresis*, a word invoking the image of a circular communal dance. Articulated by Gregory of Nazianzus, perichoresis is an idea that suggests a Divine sociableness where members of the Godhead exist in an eternal act of mutual submission and service to one another.<sup>5</sup> The idea is that the members of the Trinity interact in a unified flow yet maintain individual distinction.

But what does this actually mean? Perhaps the most honest answer is, we don’t know. Christian thought and reflection have concluded that the Divine reality is a communal, Trinitarian reality, but in the end, the word *mystery* tends to be the best descriptor of the dogma. Ware, an Orthodox Bishop, says, “...it is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.”<sup>6</sup> And protestant theologian Clark Pinnock says that though not absurdity the “Trinity is mystery....”<sup>7</sup> And perhaps Roman Catholic mystic Richard Rohr says it best when he says:

Our speaking of God is a search for similes, analogies, and metaphors. All theological language is an approximation, offered tentatively in holy awe. That’s the best human language can achieve. We can say, ‘It’s like—it’s similar to...,’ but we can never say, ‘It is...’ because we are in the realm of beyond, of transcendence, of mystery.<sup>8</sup>

The Trinitarian *mystery* is an aspect of our faith that we may never fully grasp. The best the community of faith can do is reflect on what we have experienced and in doing so make faithful *approximations*. In that spirit,

---

<sup>4</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised Edition (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 79.

<sup>6</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 29.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Rohr and Mike Morrell, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2016), 27.

Daniel Migliore provides three *Restatements of the Meaning of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. He says that to embrace the trinitarian mystery is to recognize that:

- The eternal life of God is personal life in relationship.
- God exists in communion far deeper than the relationships and partnerships we know in our human experience.
- The life of God is essentially self-giving love whose strength embraces vulnerability.<sup>9</sup>

God is interpersonal and relational. And this radiates as love. When the church pronounces belief in a Trinitarian God it is saying that Christianity worships a deity that understands, expresses, and, at its very core, emanates love. Relational love is the essence of God. And if love is the essences of God, then God's interactions with the world (i.e., creation, incarnation, restoration, etc.) are manifestations of love. Love is at the core of all things

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Relational Trinitarian God is *Mysterious Love*. But who is the Holy Spirit specifically? The contemporary church tends to struggle with identifying the Spirit. When folks picture God they tend to think of the Father. The Father is the Creator and the Sovereign, the God of Israel, and the Father of Christ. And Jesus is the Son of God. He is God incarnate. The Savior who is simultaneously fully God and fully man. The Father and the Son are eternally co-equal and of the same substance. Historically, Christians are good at acknowledging the first two, but what about the third?

Who is the Spirit and how does the Spirit operate in the world? To tackle these two questions, we will look at two lists. The first list comes from Francis Chan. Serving as a pastor, Chan noticed an unfamiliarity with the Holy Spirit. In response, he wrote *Forgotten God*, a simple, practical book about the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Attempting to provide a modest introduction to the Holy Spirit, Chan provides the following descriptors. The Holy Spirit:

- Is a Person.
- Is God.
- Is eternal and holy.
- Has His own mind, and He prays for us.
- Has emotions.
- Has His own desires and will.
- Is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 74–82.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Chan and Yankoski, 69–74.

Again, this is a basic list, yet it provides a foundation. But the importance of Chan's list is not the exceptionality of each statement, but rather the familiarity. The most important insight one might take from this list is that every statement made about the Spirit also applies to the church's understanding of Christ. Christ is *person*, *God*, *eternal*, etc. To know who the Spirit is, one can begin by looking at Jesus.

Migliore, in agreement with Chan, argues that there has historically been a disregard for the Spirit. The established structures within the Church, for whatever reason, have tended to downplay or dismiss the workings of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Centuries of disregard has resulted in a community of faith who do not know how to approach the Spirit, primarily due to indifference, ignorance, and fear. This dismissal has the potential to lead to false understandings of not only God, but of humanity and the larger world.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the Church struggles much less to accept and embrace the workings of Christ (even attributing some of the works of the Spirit to Christ). Perhaps this is because it is easier to relate to Jesus. Because He was human, had a body, lived, and died, perhaps it is easier to acknowledge and approach the works of Christ. Chan's list does not necessarily solve the problem of relatability, but it does serve as a reminder that the attributes of the Son, and therefore the Father, also belong to the Spirit. The Spirit is God alongside the Father and Son. If we are able to acknowledge Jesus as person and Lord, we should be able to recognize the Spirit in the same way.

The second list comes from Clark Pinnock's book *Flame of Love*.<sup>14</sup> Pinnock structures his *Theology of the Holy Spirit* around seven topics. The first is a discussion of the Spirit as a member of the Trinity. The Spirit, as we have already discussed, is a member of the relational mystery of the Godhead. The final six topics each examine the operations of the Spirit in the world. Following are Pinnock's topics (chapter titles) as well as his brief synopsis of each:

- Spirit In Creation: The Spirit as Lord and giver of life, who touches creation and moves it toward completion.
- Spirit & Christology: The Spirit anointed Jesus of Nazareth to heal human brokenness from the inside and bring about atonement.
- Spirit & Church: The Spirit indwells the church and is present sacramentally and charismatically to endow it for mission.
- Spirit & Union: The goal of salvation is to live in loving union with God and to participate in the triune nature through the Spirit.
- Spirit & Universality: God desires all to be saved and is found graciously present with every person in every place by the Spirit.

---

<sup>12</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Migliore, 224.

<sup>14</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*.

- Spirit & Truth: The Spirit leads the church into truth along the path of mission, enabling it to be timely and fruitful in ministry.<sup>15</sup>

Whereas Chan's list provides a sense of commonality with Christ, Pinnock's list allows one to see the distinctions and specific works of the Spirit.

If Pinnock's list were to be distilled, perhaps two primary attributes would rise to top. First, the Spirit is the source and sustainer of all things. The world endures and life is maintained because of the Spirit. Second, the Spirit is the Presence of God within the world. To observe life, substance, and even space is to observe the existence and reality of the Spirit. Ware says, "Like the air, the Spirit is source of life, 'everywhere present and filling all things', always around us, always within us."<sup>16</sup> In creation, the life of Christ, the Church, and even in the goal of salvation it is the Spirit who is the source of existence, power, and purpose. The Spirit initiates life (initially natural life, but also new life) and in doing so initiates all things. It is the Spirit who sustains the world, allowing life to persist. It was by the Spirit that Christ was conceived, and it was the Spirit who guided Christ into the wilderness, commencing his ministry. It is the Spirit who sparks new life in the believer, empowers the church, and leads humanity toward union with God. And it is also the Spirit who is the constant Divine presence throughout the world.

As the *Sustaining Presence* within the world, it is the Spirit who draws, guides, speaks, and connects to humanity. Rohr says, "The Holy Spirit shows herself as the central and healing power of absolute newness and healing in our relationship with everything else."<sup>17</sup> As mentioned in earlier chapters, the result of sin is fracture. The relationships between people, God, the self, and the world have been broken. It is Christ who shows us how to mend those fractures, but it is the Spirit who leads us to Christ, brings about healing, and forms us into the people who we are created to be. It is the Spirit who is the presence of Divine love.

Who is the Spirit of God? The Spirit is the *Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love* found in and through all things. Ware says, "God is *in* all things yet also *beyond and above* all things. He is both 'greater than the great' and 'smaller than the small.'"<sup>18</sup> And as the *presence* of God, the Spirit is to be found wherever life abounds. Nature, beauty, art, theology, media, and scripture. All (and more) are the dwelling places of the Spirit. At the core of the Divine Reality is *relational love*, and humanity has been invited to participate in that experience. The Spirit is eager to guide and draw us in. And the presence of the Spirit is to be found in all areas of life, we just have to learn to be observant and open to the invitation.

---

<sup>15</sup> Pinnock, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 91.

<sup>17</sup> Rohr and Morrell, *The Divine Dance*, 186.

<sup>18</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 46.

## How Do We Engage the Spirit of God

There are many ways to engage the Holy Spirit. Some are structured, such as Lectio Divina, which we will be discussing in detail subsequently, while other methods provide more freedom and fluidity. Before moving on, it would be prudent to briefly mention a few of the many practices and disciplines that have emerged over the centuries that have been helpful to Christians as they have sought participation with the Spirit. In *A Guidebook to Prayer*, MaryKate Morse catalogues several modes of prayer that she ties to the workings and person of the Holy Spirit. Included in that collection is:

- Prayer Language—Tongues
- Conversational Prayer
- Breath Prayer
- Healing Prayer
- Meditative Prayer
- Discernment Prayer
- Watch Prayer
- Rejoice Prayer.<sup>19</sup>

Though these methods of prayer are not solely devoted to the Spirit, that is to say, they should lead us into communion with the Father and the Son as well, they may help us better understand how the Spirit works and operates in the life of the follower of Christ. Though she does not create a list dedicated to the Spirit, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, in her *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, provides many practices that might be used to interact with the Spirit. Calhoun suggests the spiritual disciplines, in general, provide room for the Spirit “...to brood over our souls.” She says, “Just as the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep at the dawn of creation, so he hovers over us today, birthing the ever-fresh Christ-life within.”<sup>20</sup> She goes on to acknowledge that no one practice serves all, and so each person must determine which discipline is best for them.<sup>21</sup> With that in mind, a selection of disciplines that she includes in her text, that might be useful in the task of engaging with the Spirit (and being formed into the image of Christ) include:

- Celebration
- Worship
- Contemplation
- Examen
- Rest

---

<sup>19</sup> MaryKate Morse, *A Guidebook to Prayer: 24 Ways to Walk with God* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013), 163–240.

<sup>20</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 19.

<sup>21</sup> Calhoun, 19.

- Simplicity
- Unplugging
- Silence
- Solitude
- Hospitality
- Meditation
- Contemplative Prayer
- Intercessory Prayer.<sup>22</sup>

This list is in no way exhaustive. It is simply a sampling of practices that might be helpful. Moving forward, we are going to look at one specific discipline, *Lectio Divina*, a structured discipline that has been utilized by the church for centuries.

### ENGAGING THE SPIRIT THROUGH LECTIO DIVINA

Calhoun describes *Lectio Divina* as a practice that “...exists to further divine companionship.” She says it “...invites [you] unto God’s presence to listen for his particular, loving word [to you] at [a] particular moment in time.”<sup>23</sup> Historically, *Lectio Divina* (Sacred/Divine Reading) is a method of reading the Bible, but it is also a means of experiencing the presence of God through the Word of God. According to Calhoun, one of the primary means by which Christians interacted with Scripture during the first millennia was through *Lectio Divina*. In times of high illiteracy, when few knew how to read and books were rare, it was a means for ordinary folk to hear and interact with the Word of God. Through listening to the words read aloud, the hearer was given the opportunity to internalize and connect the scripture to their life, and in doing so, enter into the presence of God.<sup>24</sup> If the Holy Spirit is the *Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love*, and if *Lectio Divina* is a practice that *invites us into the presence of God*, then perhaps *Lectio Divina* is an experience that primarily fosters engagement with the Spirit.

To understand how the practice of *Lectio Divina* serves as an experience of the Spirit, we must understand the process of the practice. *Lectio Divina* traditionally consists of four movements. The first movement is *lectio*, or reading. In this first movement, one reads aloud, multiple times, a short portion of scripture. The goal in reading is not to analyze or dissect the passage, but rather to identify a word, phrase, or idea that stands out. The objective is for one to hear and acknowledge what God might be saying to them. The second movement is *meditatio*, or meditation. Through mediation the reader/listener focuses their attention on the word, phrase or idea that stands out. The historic image associated with mediation is that of an animal that is grazing, eating, and constantly chewing. To internalize the word, phrase, or idea, one must spend time pondering and ruminating. Through thoughtful and faithful consideration, the reader/listener begins to better understand

---

<sup>22</sup> Calhoun, 7–8.

<sup>23</sup> Calhoun, 168.

<sup>24</sup> Calhoun, 168.

what that word means for them. The third movement is *oratio*, or prayer. Prayer is the opportunity for the reader/listener to express to God their thoughts and feelings concerning the experience. This may be a time of excitement, questioning, or even the acknowledgement of fear. Despite how one feels as a result of the experience, this is a time to seek God's wisdom concerning how to move forward. The final movement is *contemplatio*, or contemplation. For many, contemplation is both the core of the experience, as well as the goal. The image often used to describe contemplation is that of a child who crawls into her father or mother's lap. Her goal is not to do anything except sit and be with her parent. In the same way, contemplation is about simply being with and resting in God. The goal is not to do anything other than experience the presence of the Divine.

Along with the four traditional movements, other movements are occasionally added. Two to recognize are *silencio* and *actio*. Silence is sometimes added to the beginning of Lectio Divina. Calhoun suggests that silence is a time to "Come into God's presence...and intentionally release [any] chaos and noise...."<sup>25</sup> Silence at the beginning of Lectio Divina provides an opportunity to acknowledge any stress and let go of any anxiety before beginning the experience. It is a way to enter the space in preparation and trust. The second is action. Action might be added to the end of the Lectio Divina experience as a means of stating how one intends to put into practice what they have felt from God. Pope Benedict XVI stated, "We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity."<sup>26</sup> In this final movement the reader/listener is invited to ask themselves: who is God calling me to be as a result of this experience?

Lectio Divina is a method of pondering scripture, but truly it is a means for communing with the Spirit of God. It is also a means by which one is formed by the Spirit of God. Built into the process of sacred reading is the act of silencing the self in order to listen, hear, engage, and sit with the Divine. All with the purpose of fashioning and summoning the reader toward the act of love. These activities are the works of the Spirit. As the *Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love*, the Spirit is the one we release our anxieties to, the one we listen for, meditate with, pray to, and sit amongst. And it is the Spirit who forms us and sends us to be love in the world.

## ENGAGING THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE LARGER WORLD

The purpose of Lectio Divina is engagement with scripture, and through scripture the Spirit. But if the Spirit is the source of all life and is present in all things, then perhaps it is possible to engage the Spirit through other mediums. Professors Matthew Dickerson and David O'Hara, in their discussion of literature and fiction, suggest that through *myth* and story, we are frequently introduced to *truth*. Literature often serves as a window to the

---

<sup>25</sup> Calhoun, 168.

<sup>26</sup> "Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (30 September 2010) | BENEDICT XVI," The Holy See, accessed April 16, 2022, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html).

essence of humanity and the realities of our world. Fiction provides insights into the mysteries of life. The point being that *myth* and *truth* are not necessarily opposites. In the midst of *myth* and *fantasy*, they suggest it is possible to experience authenticity and, perhaps, glimpses of the Divine.<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, film critic Josh Larson proposes that movies can be forms of prayer.<sup>28</sup> He connects the emotional experience and response of watching a film to Paul's observation that sometimes we do not know what to pray, and so the Spirit prays for us (Romans 8:26). As a result, perhaps the act of watching a movie can become an interaction with the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Literature and film are two examples, but if the Spirit is present in all things, then all things should be potential vehicles by which one might engage the Spirit. Pinnock says, "God's breath is on the whole creation.... Because [the Spirit] is at the heart of things, it is possible to encounter God in, with, and beneath life's experiences."<sup>30</sup>

If all things are avenues toward interacting with God, then perhaps Lectio Divina can be utilized to foster that connection. Carolyn Jacobs, a social worker, describes how she uses Lectio Divina in a professional context. She describes utilizing the movements of Lectio Divina to interact with *art*, *music*, and even *case narratives*. Lectio Divina becomes a means of both receiving insight and expressing one's emotions. She suggests that this practice assists counselors and social workers in connecting with their spirituality, a connection that supports the vocation of helping others.<sup>31</sup> If Lectio Divina can be utilized in this manner, then perhaps it can be used to engage literature and movies and all the areas where the Spirit can be found. Lectio Divina is a tool that has been available to the church, and the world, for centuries. It has lasted because it is a recognized technique for engaging the Spirit. If adapted, this can become a method for engaging the Spirit in all the spaces of life.

Why a Practical Pneumatology? Why spend so much space reflecting on who the Spirit is, what the Spirit does, and the practices through which we might engage and experience the Spirit? Everything we are talking about in this book, all the chapters prior and all the chapters to come, are ultimately concerned with the Spirit and how we know the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives us life. It is the Spirit who guides us toward Christ. It is by the Spirit that we connect with God and others and the world and ourselves. And it is by the Spirit that we are formed into people who mirror Christ. Discussing *God as Creator*, Ware quotes an unidentified monk. The monk says, "God is at the core. God is other than the core. God is within the core, and all through the core, and beyond the core, closer to the core than the core."<sup>32</sup> In this statement, the monk is describing the Spirit. The

---

<sup>27</sup> Matthew T. Dickerson and David L. O'Hara, *From Homer to Harry Potter: A Handbook on Myth and Fantasy* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006), 34–36.

<sup>28</sup> Josh Larsen and Matt Zoller Seitz, *Movies Are Prayers: How Films Voice Our Deepest Longings* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2017), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Larsen and Seitz, 8–9.

<sup>30</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 61.

<sup>31</sup> Carolyn Jacobs, "Contemplative Spaces in Social Work Practice," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 49, no. 1 (January 2015): 152–53.

<sup>32</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 46.

Spirit is the primary reality of all creation, yet unique from creation. The Spirit is *within, throughout, beyond*, and *closer* to all things. And it is by knowing the Spirit that the world is led to its healing, restoration, and wholeness.

## Chapter Six: Experiences with Creation & Place

In his discussions of the church, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen quotes African theologian Kofi Aare Opoku:

If I gain my humanity by entering into a relationship with other members of the family, both living and dead, then it follows that my humanity comes to me as a gift....it is not something that I can acquire, or develop, by my own isolated power. I can only exercise or fulfill my humanity as long as I remain in touch with others, *for it is they who empower me*.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned in earlier chapters, our need for others is crucial to moving toward the ultimate goal of Christlikeness and union with God. It is through relationship that we learn what it means to be *like Christ*, and it is through connection with others that we begin to fathom Divine participation.

Connection often occurs in the context of a permanent local community, but also mentioned earlier, connection can occur in the context of *temporary community*. A Temporary Community includes the individuals who gather for a specific reason, but it also, in some ways, includes the local community where they gather. For example, if a group gathers for an event at a hotel, they are going to interact with the staff and other guests of the hotel. They are also going to interact with the people who live and work near the hotel. Through simple interaction, the local, permanent community becomes, for a space in time, members of the temporary community. But not only will the people become members of the temporary community, so will the places, traditions, values, and resources of the spaces where the group gathers. The people and places of an area implicitly become participants in the objective of the temporary community. Though an undeclared member, their voices (or presence) influence who the individual members of the community are becoming. People and Place, known and unknown, contribute to the *gift* of bestowing *humanity* onto others.

### Peoples: Past and Present

As Opoku suggests, our relationships are the *gifts* we give one another that assist each of us toward vocation. The reason to return to this concept is a small phrase Opoku uses to emphasize the idea. He suggests that we receive the *gift of humanity* from others, *both living and dead*.<sup>2</sup> Who we are becoming is influenced by our connections with others, but not only from those with us, also those who have passed. The generations of the past have something to offer those who are currently on their journeys toward God. This is not to suggest that Christians engage in ancestor worship or séance, but rather emphasize our need to acknowledge, honor, and learn from those who gone before. Discussing the observation of liturgical saint days, Joan Chittister, a Benedictine Sister and prominent voice in Catholic spirituality, suggests that when we honor and celebrate the

---

<sup>1</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Kärkkäinen, 197.

saints it is a means of recognizing that the goal of vocation is possible. Those who have passed remind us that it possible to enter into and commune, presently, with the Presence of God.<sup>3</sup>

Embedded in the traditions of Christian experience (i.e., feasts, memorials, etc.) is the remembrance (i.e., acknowledging, honoring, and learning) of those who have gone before. In the context of a temporary community this may be experienced in multiple ways. One way may be through the sharing of *spiritual biographies* and personal narratives. Every person has been influenced by parents and/or guardians. And those caretakers were influenced by the generations that came before them. Asking someone to recognize their pre-history and consider the generations who have influenced their spirituality (and personhood) is a means of honoring those who have gone before. Every person indirectly brings their families, friends, and coworkers to the spaces they occupy. They also bring their memories and histories. Purposely sharing one's story is a means of actively inviting those who are covertly present, and who have historically influenced, to be a part of the community.

A second means of honoring those who have gone before is learning about the place one is staying. Every place has a history. Consider, for example, the Appalachian Trail. If you were to walk the trail from Georgia to Main, you would pass through an abundance of towns, regions, and communities. Every stop along the trail has a history. Every stop has its own stories, traditions, and ways it understands the world. Though many will be similar, there will be nuance, particularly the further you get from beginning to end. Despite the context, all places have stories. Every place has its history and this history influences how the people of the place understand themselves, as well as how they understand faith and God. When a temporary community takes up residence in a particular place, the history and story of that place becomes part of the temporary community.

A final way of honoring, remembering, and learning from those who have gone before is the acknowledgement of the original peoples who inhabited the spaces we utilize. Along with verbal acknowledgements confessing land use, it is appropriate to take time to appreciate the customs and worldviews of those who originally lived in a region. When we give intention to historical and contemporary communities, we honor those who have gone before. We also create space where growth can occur. Randy Woodley, discussing Christian faith as an Indigenous practitioner, says, "Sometimes we don't understand what we are all about, and it takes someone who has developed a different perspective to tell us what we are about."<sup>4</sup> An initial introduction to a new *perspective* may provide a fresh lens for viewing what is being accomplished. Through learning about others and how they historically perceived the world we are offered a means of stretching our worldview and our understanding of the Divine. The goal is not to necessarily take on new spiritualities, but instead observe how

---

<sup>3</sup> Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 192.

<sup>4</sup> Randy Woodley, *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview: A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 24.

God worked in the lives of those who came before. In doing so, we are offered an insight into how the God of the past is the God of today.

Along with those of the past, the people of the present become members of the temporary community. Wherever a temporary group finds themselves, it would be proper to connect with the local churches, shops, restaurants, and other community members. Along with supporting the local community, these interactions provide yet another voice that speaks into the life of the one moving toward the ultimate goal, and vice versa. The temptation is to look past the local community. To not see them as part of the temporary community. The temptation is to view the shop owners, food servers and local churches as non-participants. But, in doing so we commit the sin of viewing another person as *the other*. We view those who have come and gathered with us as our neighbor, but those on the periphery tend to be viewed as something else. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that to be a neighbor was not dependent on commonality. It was rather an issue of intentional affection (Luke 10:30-37). The most unrelated individuals are called to be neighbors. The same can be said concerning the temporary group who enters a local community.

## Space and Place

Just as relationship with people, both historic and present, influence one's formation, so does relationship with space and place, and particularly nature. Woodley connects the idea that all humankind is of the same family with the notion that all living creatures are of the same family. Since we are all sustained by the same planet, and we are all dependent on one another, we are therefore all (i.e., human and other-than-human) one family.<sup>5</sup> One's humanity is a gift from others. That gift is partially received from other human beings, but also, it is received from the natural world.

One way this gift is observed is through nature's holistic influence. The creation has the power to affect a person's mind, body, and spirit. Wallace Nichols describes this impact in his book, *Blue Mind*. He describes how being outside can result in a cognitive mindset of *connection* and *awareness*.<sup>6</sup> He also suggests that being in natural spaces creates a sense of active mental participation.<sup>7</sup> This would suggest that nature is beneficial to mental and cognitive health. When a person gets outside, they are often exposed to fresh air and sunlight. They also tend to be removed from sources of stress (e.g., media, news, etc.). Nature can serve as a mental buffer allowing one to disconnect from sources of anxiety while also acting as a space for emotional recharging.

Natural space is also advantageous for physical health. It often serves as a catalyst for exercise and beneficial habits. It does not take much stretching of the imagination to understand how this is possible. Simply visit a

---

<sup>5</sup> Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 80–81.

<sup>6</sup> Wallace J. Nichols, *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*, Reprint edition (New York: Back Bay Books, 2015), 166.

<sup>7</sup> Nichols, 213–17.

place where outdoor activity is part of the culture. Communities in these areas tend to be more active and in better physical condition. In their study of *Physical Well-Being and Spiritual Formation*, Valerie Hess and Lane Arnold suggest an association between being outside, physical health, and personal development. They suggest that the act of being outdoors leads to a positive attitude in terms of exercise and physical activity. This naturally leads to physical movement and physical well-being.<sup>8</sup> Nature and outdoor spaces, as a result, become unspoken influencers in a person's development and growth.

Finally, natural spaces facilitate spiritual health and spiritual experiences. J. Philip Newell says, "The deeper we move in the body of creation and in the inner landscapes of the human soul, the closer we come to the Presence [of Christ]."<sup>9</sup> There is a connection between the *body of creation* and the *inner landscapes of the human soul*. As mentioned in Chapter One, there is something about being in a natural space that encourages a sense of transcendence and wholeness.

Natural Spaces create opportunities for mental, physical, and spiritual health leading to a greater sense of wholeness. The same could be said for other spaces as well. Urban spaces, sacred spaces, and even virtual spaces have the potential to encourage health when they are curated and utilized in a manner that encourages connection. The point is that space and place have the potential to influence and encourage one's formational experience.

## Practical Experiences

As we conclude this chapter, I want to suggest two practical means of engaging space in order to encourage connection. The first is travel. Embedded deep within the history of Christianity is the tradition of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is a means of intentionally entering a new space and in doing so opening oneself to allow wholistic interaction. It is a bodily experience in that it requires one to physically go to a new place. Mentally, travel and pilgrimage are novel experiences that stimulate the mind and brain. Nichols suggests that novel experiences create chemical reactions in the brain that result in states of contentment.<sup>10</sup> And spiritually, travel and pilgrimage are associated with sentiments of connection.<sup>11</sup> Travel and pilgrimage are a means of engaging a space with intention and expectation that the place will reciprocate. That the place will become a conveyer of humanity. To intentionally enter a new place is to expect connection with the world, God, others, and self.

Though it may sound unassuming, the second means of engaging space is through recreation, adventure, and fun. Like travel and pilgrimage, recreational experiences have the potential to engage a person wholistically.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lane M. Arnold and Valerie Hess, *The Life of the Body: Physical Well-Being and Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013), 128.

<sup>9</sup> J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 96–97.

<sup>10</sup> Nichols, *Blue Mind*, 58–59.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth J. Tisdell, "Re-Searching Spirituality and Culture: Transformative Pilgrimage Learning and Living Answers into Big Questions," *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 92.

Discussing *Outdoor Leadership*, Recreation and Physical Education professors Phyllis Ford and Jim Blanchard argue that foundational to outdoor recreation is the idea that it is an all-inclusive endeavor. When people and groups are served in manner that takes seriously the whole person, the experience becomes development and formational.<sup>12</sup> David Austin, a fellow professor of Recreation, echoes this idea when he defines recreation as a means by which *people restore themselves*. Viewing recreation as a therapeutic medium, he understands it as an avenue toward *actualization* and *as a means to personal growth*.<sup>13</sup> Recreation is often understood as down-time; how folks spend their day when they are not engaged in something important. This is a poor understanding of the experience. Recreation, when viewed as a *holistic* and *therapeutic* opportunity, is a potential process for restoration, or *re-creation*. Recreation allows one to interact with a place (as well as others) in a type of mutual collaboration. Just like travel, intentional recreation guides the mind, body, and spirit toward greater health and wholeness. Nichols suggests that some recreational experiences (particularly outdoor experiences) have the potential to minimize people's stress levels. Through engaging in intentional outdoor recreation stress becomes less dominant during day-to-day activities.<sup>14</sup> Recreational experiences, perhaps, have the potential to form a person into someone who is primed for later contemplative experiences.

As one moves toward the ultimate goal of participation with Christ and union with God, people and place become important elements in the journey. Both serve as *gift* givers, presenting the *gift* of humanity to each of us as we make our way toward God. The call of those on the journey is to be aware. To receive the *gifts* that others have to offer we must be observant to those we interact with. And we must understand that we do not only interact with our contemporaries. We interact with those who have come before and those who previously occupied the spaces and places we utilize. We also interact with the spaces themselves. Whether it is natural spaces or virtual, whether we are traveling, adventuring, or simply being present, we must learn to be observant so that we might receive the *gifts* offered to us.

---

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Ford and Jim Blanchard, *Leadership and Administration of Outdoor Pursuits*, Second Edition (Andover: Venture, 1993), 11.

<sup>13</sup> David Austin and Michael E. Crawford, *Therapeutic Recreation: An Introduction*, 3rd edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), 8–9.

<sup>14</sup> Nichols, *Blue Mind*, 150–51.

## Chapter Seven: Sabbath Experiences

A discussion of *Sabbath* requires that we return to the beginning. The first chapter of Genesis describes the creation of the world. In six days, God creates day and night, the sky and land, the stars, sun, plants, animals, and everything else. The world is systematically formed, and the process is culminated on the sixth day with the creation of humanity in God's image. Chapter 1 ends with the creation of humankind and their place in the world as representatives of God. It appears that this is the pinnacle of the creation myth. But then, Chapter 2 commences, and we discover that the story has not ended. Chapter 2 begins by concluding the first creation story:

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. (Genesis 2:1-3 NLT).

Rather than beginning with a new narrative, Chapter 2 (in modern Bibles) begins with Day 7. It begins with God choosing to rest from the work of creation. There is an implied context of calm. Like God, the world is at rest. Chapter 2 begins with God allowing the world to function as it is meant to. This is the pinnacle of creation. That the world, when existing as it is created to exist, is capable of harmony and peace. It is in this act that God demonstrates to the creation (human and other-than-human) what it is intended to be.

From this Divine act of rest stems a practice that would influence and differentiate religious and cultural tradition in Ancient Israel. It would also serve as a defining factor in contemporary Judaism and Christianity. Over the next several pages we are going to look at the concept of *Sabbath*. We are going to ask the questions: what is sabbath and how is sabbath connected to our experiences and practices (i.e., worship)? Ultimately, we are going to consider how sabbath influences and moves us toward the goal of participation with God? If rest (i.e., Sabbath) is the pinnacle of the story and a definitive act, then how does it impact who we are becoming?

### What is Sabbath?

As already mentioned, Sabbath finds its introduction in religious and cultural tradition through the description of God resting after creation (Genesis 2:1-3). This model of rest would eventually be codified into law through what is known as the *Ten Commandments*. Exodus 20:8-11 lists the fourth commandment as such:

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy (NLT).

This commandment would be echoed throughout scripture through re-statement and reference. But, as the practice was reiterated over the years, the purposes behind it would evolve. The author of Deuteronomy, for example, re-states the fourth commandment, but in doing so, changes the reasoning. Deuteronomy 5:14-15 states:

...the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work.... Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out with his strong hand and powerful arm. That is why the Lord your God has commanded you to rest on the Sabbath day (NLT).

Through the Deuteronomic tradition sabbath becomes not just a reminder of God's creative work, but also a symbol of God's care and justice. This custom of adaptation is also observed in the New Testament through the words of Christ. Discussing the proper commemoration of the Sabbath Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27 NLT). Christ recognizes a greater purpose for the practice. A purpose dedicated to serving those created in the image of God.

Though a constant scriptural presence, there seems to be an evolving emphasis of why sabbath is significant. That said, it can be clearly observed that sabbath is historically an important marker defining what it means to be a follower of the God of Israel. In his survey of the Hebrew Scripture, Michael Coogan describes cultural progression within Ancient Israel. He suggests that through the centuries the practice of sabbath became a fundamental characteristic of what it meant to be an Israelite. The ritual of dedicating a day to God and rest was unique to ancient Israelite and early Jewish society, distinguishing the people of Israel from neighboring cultures.<sup>1</sup> Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann says this distinction was "...an act of trust in the subversive, exodus-causing God...[and] an act of submission to the restful God...."<sup>2</sup> Through the weekly practice of sabbath, *trust* and *submission* to God was lived out in the lives and culture of those who claimed to be the children of God. Sabbath was an act of *trust*, *submission*, and faith in the God of Israel.

This weekly repetition was a reminder of who the people of God were called to be, both in relation to God and the larger world. The systems of neighboring cultures focused on attributes such as *production*, *commodity*, *restlessness*, and *violence*, all qualities leading to a skewed understanding of humanity. The practices of *trust* and *submission*, on the other hand, created the conditions for seeing the image of God in all people.<sup>3</sup> *Trust* in and *submission* to God reorients one's view of the world and others. God is the one who provides. Provisions are not acquired through self-attainment or the utilization of others. They are supplied by the One who created all things. People, therefore, are not objects to be exploited to meet needs. They are neighbors. *Sabbath*, says

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Coogan and Cynthia R. Chapman, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, Revised edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Brueggemann, 17–18.

Brueggemann, "...is a practical divestment so that neighborly engagement...defines our lives."<sup>4</sup> He goes on to suggest that this is the underlining reason why sabbath is the *defining discipline* for the descendants of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

Hidden within the practice of sabbath is a continual prompting urging the people of God toward becoming something greater. Sabbath is concerned with rest, but rest is not the finality of the experience. Sabbath asks the community, and the individual, to give up their desires of control. The temptation for control (and power) tends to be an attribute inherent in the human condition. We want to control our lives and the situations we find ourselves in. To fully control those situations, it requires not only controlling ourselves, but also others (and God). Sabbath requires that we give up that control. It requires that we *submit* to God and *trust* that God has control of our lives. Connected to this *trust* and *submission* is an acknowledgement of the presence of God. Sabbath is a practice in faith that the Spirit of God is present in the midst of all circumstances. Despite the situation, one can rest because they trust that God is with them.

## Sabbath and Worship

What does sabbath look like today? How do we connect modern Christian worship gatherings/services with the historical expressions of sabbath in ancient Israel? Coogan describes a historical transition in regard to Christian worship and sabbath experiences. Initially, early Jewish Christians observed a traditional Saturday sabbath alongside a commemorative Sunday gathering. Sabbath was dedicated to the customary practices of Jewish faith while the Sunday gathering focused on the resurrection (and future return) of Christ. Over time, as the Christian identity become more prevalent, the adherences to traditional Sabbath began to decline. Sabbath merged with Sunday liturgies and eventually, Sunday became the day of Christian gathering and worship.<sup>6</sup> The Sabbath of rest, in many ways, was lost.

Unfortunately, the intent of rest, submission, and trust seem to be absent from many Christian Sunday worship experiences. As mentioned earlier, words such as *production*, *commodity*, and *restlessness* were used to describe the neighboring cultures of Ancient Israel. These same descriptors might also be used for many Christian worship experiences. There is often felt a need to *produce* an experience of high value (*commodity*) and this enticement creates an experience of *restlessness*. These impressions are felt not only among pastors and church staff, but also parishioners and volunteers. In many churches, worship has become labor and the opposite of a sabbath experience.

What is the goal of worship? Pastor Mark Pierson defines worship as "...a person or persons responding to the Trinitarian community of God, with heart, soul, mind, and strength."<sup>7</sup> In many ways echoing Pierson, Constance

---

<sup>4</sup> Brueggemann, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Brueggemann, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Coogan and Chapman, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament*, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Pierson, *The Art of Curating Worship: Reshaping the Role of Worship Leader* (Minneapolis: Sparkhouse Press, 2010), 22.

Cherry, who serves as a Professor of Worship, utilizes a definition that suggests a relational experience that results in a *response*.<sup>8</sup> Foundational to both Pierson and Cherry is a belief that worship is ultimately concerned with one's *response* to the presence of God in their life. Worship is not meant to be about *production* or *commodity*; it is about learning to be observant of the ways in which God is active. Just as sabbath was intended to point to the God who created and rescued, Christian worship is intended to be a response to the One who has intervened in the lives of the community of faith.

Describing the *purpose of Sunday*, Joan Chittister says, "...it is meant to immerse [the Christian] in reflection on God's place in their lives and their place in the life of the world."<sup>9</sup> She goes on to say, "Sunday is not a rest from physical labor; it is the rest of holy leisure, of holy reflection, meant to remind us once again that we have been created to make the world a better place, as Jesus did."<sup>10</sup> Just as the Hebrew sabbath helped to remind and define who Israel was, Christian worship is a means of reminding the church of who it is called to be. When worship and sabbath is approached in a manner that embraces *trust*, *submission*, and rest in God the experience becomes not only a response, but also a means of receiving from God. Through sabbath we become positioned to interact and commune with the One who is present with us.

### Sabbath as a Formational Experience

Sabbath (and worship) is a formational experience. If our ultimate goal is to enter into union and participation with God through restoration of the image of God, then learning to rest as God did is a practical movement toward that goal. But what is it that makes this experience especially formational? Why did God demonstrate sabbath so early on and then command that it become a foundational practice of the Israelite and Christian communities? Perhaps sabbath is formational because the practice orients both individuals and communities toward a posture of acceptance and engagement. If the ultimate goal is the restoration of the image of God, and that happens through becoming like Christ, perhaps sabbath is a primary means by which *becoming* occurs.

In an earlier chapter it was suggested that the restoration of the image of God happens through the healing of the fractured connections between God, oneself, others, and the world. Perhaps sabbath is a means of fostering and healing those connections. We have already mentioned that sabbath was a means for viewing others as neighbor. Sabbath assists with seeing the humanity in all people because sabbath invites one to look beyond *production* and *commodity*.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the same truths can be applied to the other relational fractures.

---

<sup>8</sup> Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 37.

<sup>10</sup> Chittister, 37–38.

<sup>11</sup> Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 17–18.

Perhaps sabbath provides a lens for viewing not only other peoples, but also the world, God and oneself in a manner that encourages connection and relational healing.

In his book, *Subversive Sabbath*, A.J. Swoboda discusses the protentional influence of sabbath and rest on the lives of those who in embrace the practice. Interestingly, Swoboda organizes his book into four parts: (1) *Sabbath for Us*, (2) *Sabbath for Others*, (3) *Sabbath for Creation*, (4) *Sabbath for Worship*.<sup>12</sup> His structure lends itself to an acknowledgement that sabbath extends beyond human or personal experience. It serves, in some way, as a common experience. Perhaps as a common experience, sabbath has the potential to function as a type of meeting place between individuals, communities, and the larger world. When we engage in sabbath we slow ourselves down enough to interact with others and the world. We also slow ourselves down enough to acknowledge ourselves and God. Swoboda says, "...a Sabbath assumes community. And by God's design the Sabbath would draw us in toward each other to lean on and support each other. Sabbath, thus, is a day that draws us into the very nature of God."<sup>13</sup> Sabbath provides space to experience those beyond oneself. Through experiencing others (human, other-than-human, and Divine) the relational attributes of the communal God we mirror become better known. Sabbath serves as a place of reflecting, knowing, and becoming. It is a space where one sets aside their ambitions in order to embrace *trust* in another, and in doing so experience the holiness of God.

Thomas Merton says, "Contemplation, by which we know and love God as He is in Himself...is the reason for our creation by God."<sup>14</sup> Though not directly connected, it could be suggested that the experiences of contemplation and sabbath, both of which are concerned with rest, trust, and contentment in/with God, are related. Sabbath is a practice that teaches us who we are to be, provides us opportunities for becoming, and allows us space for participating in the ultimate goal. The experience of contemplation is ultimately the same. It is the goal of being with God for no other reason than love of God.

When God rests after creation perhaps we are observing God in God's purest sense. The Divine reality does not exist because of what it does or creates or imagines. At God's purest, God is, simply, because God is. When God rests, God is simply being God. When God invites humanity to enter into sabbath and/or contemplation, God is inviting humanity to do the same. God is inviting humankind to simply be what it was created to be. The image of God is not determined by what one does, creates, or imagines. It is inherent. The image of God is observed, understood, and experienced most fully when one learns to rest. When one learns to simply be with the Presence of God.

---

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Swoboda, *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Swoboda, 67.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 225.

## Chapter Eight: The Experience of Reading Creation

At the core of our present task is engagement with the Holy Spirit. Our desire is to interact with the Spirit of God and in doing so move toward the ultimate goal of participation with God. Our unique context is the natural world. As suggested in the first chapter, there is something about natural places that draw many toward experiences with the Divine. Considering the ultimate goal (and the means by which the goal is achieved) and our unique context, how might we engage the Spirit in and through natural places (i.e., creation)?

During our discussion of a *Practical Pneumatology*, it was suggested that a historical means of engaging the Spirit was through the practice of *Lectio Divina*. It was also suggested that the movements of *Lectio Divina* might be used to connect with the Spirit through other means. The idea being that if the Spirit is present in and through all things, then all things, including creation and natural places, become a conduit of the Spirit. When one is attentive to the world and listens with intention, the presence of God has the potential to become noticeable. Basically, through utilizing and adapting the movements of *Lectio Divina* in a natural space, one can learn to be open to detecting the movements of the Spirit, and in doing so *read creation*. The next several pages will be dedicated to this idea. Through utilizing *Lectio Creatio* (i.e., Reading Creation) interactions in and with creation become opportunities for engagement with the Spirit of God. Creation, and nature, become avenues for connection leading toward the ultimate goal of union and participation with the Divine.

### Three Metaphors

For *Lectio Creatio* to be successful, one must approach the creation with an open mind and receptive attitude. For some, this may require a shift in how the natural world is perceived. Before discussing the movements and practice of *Lectio Creatio*, it might be helpful to first consider some ways in which one might do that. Though there are many metaphors one might use to approach the natural world, I want to suggest three: creation as God's first book of revelation, creation as a partner or sibling to humanity, and creation as a teacher.

Christian tradition has historically understood the natural world as a means by which God reveals a general understanding of the Divine. St. Augustine is quoted as saying, "Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it."<sup>1</sup> Augustine resonates with the words of the apostles. Early church leaders described the seasons of the year as evidence of God's presence and provision (Acts 14:15-17). And Paul, writing to the church in Rome, would describe how the qualities of God have always been known through the created world (Romans 1:20). Scripture and theological reflection remind us that creation serves as an artifact expressing the character and attributes of the One who created it. Like a book, it shares the story of God with those who are willing to read it.

Along with acknowledging nature's ability to proclaim the attributes of God, Paul also recognizes that nature anticipates the fulfillment of God's work in the world. Like humanity, creation is waiting for the day that it will be made new (Romans 8:19-21). The whole world, human and other-than-human, is bound together and the

---

<sup>1</sup> "Creation Care Quotes," Blessed Earth, 2, accessed April 16, 2022, <https://www.blessedearth.org/resources/creation-care-quotes/>.

destinies of all are connected. This binding is acknowledged in one of the earliest Divine promises. After the flood, when Noah was safe on dry ground, God made a vow that the Earth would never be destroyed again, and life would be allowed to persist. This vow was a promise to all, not just to humanity. The *covenant* established by God was explicitly universal. All the creatures of the Earth were included in God's promises of life (Genesis 9:9-10). In that action, God demonstrated love for all things, human and other-than-human. St. Francis of Assisi recognized this commonality that intertwined the created order. He would describe the earth as his mother and the natural elements as his sisters and brothers.<sup>2</sup> All of creation—animal, plant, mineral and element—are fellows connected by a common Creator. This inclusivity fashions familial ties between human beings and the other-than-human world. In a sense, creation and nature can be comprehended as a partner or sibling to humanity.

Using a similar anthropomorphic image, creation can also be appreciated as a teacher to humanity. Job says, "Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you." (Job 12:7-8 NLT). The psalmist(s) makes many similar statements, a well-known being: "The heavens proclaim his righteousness; every nation sees his glory." (97:6 NLT). Though the authors are invoking metaphor, they are sharing an inspired insight—nature has a voice. Tertullian is quoted as saying "Nature is school-mistress, the soul the pupil; and whatever one has taught or the other has learned has come from God – the Teacher of the teacher."<sup>3</sup> There is an implicit acceptance that nature has the ability to teach when one is attentive. This instruction may not come through lecture or formal dialogue, but when one opens themselves to discovery all the aspects of the world become co-tutors with the Spirit of God.

These metaphors may be beneficial as one considers the practice of *Lectio Creatio*. The world can be a book to read, a partner to engage, or a teacher to learn from. Or it may be a combination of all three. The aim is for one to discover the image that works best for them. If these metaphors are not helpful, they should be disregarded. Ultimately, the point is not the metaphor. The point is to view the world in a way so that one is free to optimistically employ the structures and movements of *Lectio Creatio* and interact with the Spirit of God.

## Lectio Creatio

*Lectio Creatio* is a tool developed to foster interaction with the Spirit of God through experiences in and with creation. As stated, it is an adaptation of *Lectio Divina*. As a reminder, the four traditional movements of *Lectio Divina* are:

1. *Lectio* (Reading)

---

<sup>2</sup> "Creation Care Quotes," 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Creation Care Quotes," 1.

2. Meditatio (Meditation)
3. Oratio (Prayer)
4. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Along with the four traditional movements, two common additional movements include:

1. Silencio (Silence)
2. Actio (Action)

To *read creation*, Lectio Creatio adapts these six movements as well as adding a final movement focused on reflection of the experience. The seven movements of Lectio Creatio are:

1. Preparation
2. Observation
3. Imagination
4. Conversation
5. Contemplation
6. Application
7. Reflection

These seven movements create an organized structure that assists individuals and/or groups with the goal of hearing and interacting with the Spirit of God in natural spaces. The following pages will briefly look at each movement, providing explanation and theological support. The final section will prescribe practical instructions for implementing the Lectio Creatio movements.

## PREPARATION

In the context of Lectio Divina, Adele Ahlberg Calhoun says silence is a “...preparation of the heart.”<sup>4</sup> As a spiritual discipline in and of itself, she observes that silence is often a place where we begin to discern the things we would rather not experience. It is in silence that the emotions we fear often make themselves present, but it is also in silence that, eventually, peace begins to overtake commotion. It is, she suggests, the place where *inner noise and chaos* is given space to dissolve, creating room for growth.<sup>5</sup> Silence is a means noticing and releasing. It is a means of priming oneself to experience something beyond oneself.

Wendell Berry describes a practice he often observes on *good-weather Sundays*: walking through the woods. In the woods, he says, “...I experience a lovely freedom from expectations.... I go free from the tasks and intentions of my workdays, and so my mind becomes hospitable to unintended thoughts: to what I am very

---

<sup>4</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 168.

<sup>5</sup> Calhoun, 108–9.

willing to call inspiration.”<sup>6</sup> For Berry, a walk becomes a means of *hospitality* and invitation. It is a means of preparing the self to receive something else. I cannot help but compare Berry’s practice of *walking in the woods* with Christ’s practice of going into the wilderness. Luke describes how Jesus would sneak out and get away from the crowds. He would head off into the wilderness to be alone and pray. (Luke 5:15-16). As Christ’s fame and reputation increased, the requirements of His ministry also increased. These advancements would inherently result in more *tasks, intentions*, and stresses. Going into the wilderness was a means of removing Himself from the noise and commotion of the day. The wilderness was a place of silence, and in silence, preparation to receive in order to serve others and God.

## OBSERVATION

In Lectio Divina one reads, and as they read, they pay attention. They listen for the word, phrase, or idea that stands out to them. Lectio Creatio invites the participant to do the same, but instead of paying attention to words, the participant is invited to observe their surroundings, and through observation, take notice.

In his discussion of Lectio Divina, Pastor and Author Eugene Peterson makes a strong connection between the use of the practice and the comprehension of *metaphor*. He suggests that when we do not understand the usage of metaphors, we tend to not understand the Bible (or at least large portions of the Bible). There are many reasons why this is so, but perhaps the primary reason has to do with mystery. The Bible, he suggests, uses metaphor because human beings are simply unable to comprehend the Divine. If scripture had attempted to express concepts of God without symbol, it would have missed the mark due to the inadequate nature of language. Metaphor allows scripture to speak of things beyond the boundaries of literal meanings, and in doing so, invite an imperfect world into connection with the Divine, through mystery.<sup>7</sup> Peterson says, “Metaphor does not explain; it does not define; it draws us away from being outsiders into being insiders....”<sup>8</sup> Rather than explanation, it provides an avenue of interaction.

Through observation of creation, one is opening themselves to see metaphors. Like scripture, the world is full of images and pictures. Go outside and you might notice a hundred different things, many natural (e.g., a tree, a bird, a cloud, etc.), but also some created by human beings (e.g., a bridge, an airplane, a building, etc.). All of these images have the potential to be a metaphor that expresses something about God, or perhaps something about oneself, one’s community, or the larger world. The goal of observation is to allow the Spirit to direct your noticing. In Lectio Divina we are trusting the Spirit of God to stir our hearts when we hear a particular word, phrase, or idea. In Lectio Creatio we are trusting the Spirit to guide our senses so that we might notice something in our vicinity. Jesus often noticed things in nature (e.g., flowers, birds, etc.) and then connected

---

<sup>6</sup> Wendell Berry, *This Day: Collected & New Sabbath Poems* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014), xxi.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 92–98.

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, 97.

those things to the kingdom of God. Those things became personal metaphors for Christ and his disciples. Lectio Creatio is inviting you to do the same by paying attention to the world around you.

## IMAGINATION

Richard Foster says, “God created us with an imagination, and, as Lord of his creation, he can and does redeem it and use it for the work of the kingdom of God.”<sup>9</sup> Foster connects the human capacity to imagine with the Christian discipline of *meditative prayer*. He suggests that mediation happens most easily when one allows a story or image to enter their imagination. In doing so, the conditions, he suggests, are created where one is capable of interacting with the image, and thus knowing the image becomes possible.<sup>10</sup> Peterson echoes this sentiment saying, “Meditation is the prayerful employ of imagination....”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to tie the practice of imaginative meditation to participation. Imaginative mediation, therefore, is a channel for connecting a person with the realm of the Divine.<sup>12</sup> Imagination creates the conditions where logically unrelated things are given permission to merge and in doing so, one thing is given permission to speak into the life of another.

Through imagination, Fosters says, “...we begin to enter the story and make it our own. We move from detached observation to active participation.”<sup>13</sup> The goal of imagination is participation and engagement. Where Lectio Divina asks you to ponder the word you have noticed, Lectio Creatio invites you to examine, explore, and engage the metaphor you have observed. Imagination is a means of both knowing the metaphor (i.e., what is it, what are its strengths and struggles, how does it interact with the world around it, etc.) and interacting with it. Imagination allows you to draw the metaphor into your life so that it might become part of your story. And as a participant in your story, it now has voice.

Imagination leads to engagement, and engagement leads to dialogue. Through imagination you are encouraged to listen to the metaphor (and the Spirit through the metaphor). What might the metaphor have to say concerning who you are? What might it have to say concerning where you find yourself? Who might God be calling you to be based on what the metaphor has to say? Imagination provides the space for the created order (and the Spirit) to speak into the life of the one who is observant.

## CONVERSATION

In many ways, the movements of Preparation, Observation, and Imagination are directed toward an encounter with the created world. And this encounter often functions as a conduit for learning. Just as we learn new

<sup>9</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992), 148.

<sup>10</sup> Foster, 147–48.

<sup>11</sup> Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 101.

<sup>12</sup> Peterson, 101–2.

<sup>13</sup> Foster, *Prayer*, 147.

things about ourselves, others, and God when we interact with other people, interactions with the natural world offer the same outcomes. Encounters with creation have the potential to spark insight and this is possible because it is the Spirit of God who is present in creation. It is the Spirit who allows the creation to act as source of revelation, sibling to humanity, and teacher to all.

Where the first three movements are concerned with encountering the created world, the movement of Conversation is concerned with engaging the Spirit (i.e., God) directly. Recognizing that it has been the Spirit who has guided the participant as they have observed and imagined, this movement is an opportunity for the participant to respond. The movement of Conversation is simply prayer. It is what Peterson calls "...the most universal of all languages."<sup>14</sup> It is dialogue with God. The expression of one's inward thoughts.

Describing prayer in the context of Lectio Divina, Calhoun says, "There is no right or wrong way to do this. The important thing is to respond truthfully and authentically."<sup>15</sup> The same can be said for Lectio Creatio. The manner in which one converses with the Spirit is broad. What matters is that expression happens. The goal of Conversation in Lectio Creatio is simply communication with God. It is to communicate what you have experienced (i.e., observed and imagined) and acknowledge *truthfully and authentically* your apprehensions and delights concerning the experience. This expression is the first step. The second involves sitting, waiting, and listening. Prayer is a dialogue. It requires mutual engagement: expressing one's thoughts while also being receptive to a response. The movement of Conversation does not cease until you have allowed space for God to also respond *truthfully and authentically*.

## CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation is probably the hardest concept of Lectio Creatio to describe. Like Conversation, Contemplation is concerned with engagement with the Divine. But unlike Conversation, this engagement is not focused on activity (prayer, meditation, etc.). Rather, Contemplation is understood simply as presence with God. It is the state of wholly being with God. Thomas Merton says, "Contemplation is, above all, awareness of the reality of the Source. It *knows* the Source, obscurely, inexplicably, but with certitude that goes both beyond reason and beyond simple faith."<sup>16</sup> It is a movement toward learning to simply be present with the Divine. In doing so Contemplation is movement toward the ultimate goal of union and participation. Calhoun says:

...through contemplation, intimacy with God and others can grow. Gazing on God, our neighbor or the created order with faith, hope and love can increase our awareness and

---

<sup>14</sup> Peterson, *Eat This Book*, 103.

<sup>15</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 169.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 1.

experience of both. Contemplation can lead us out of ourselves and into realities of which we only skimmed the surface before.<sup>17</sup>

In this sense, the experience of Contemplation allows one to recognize more fully their place and connection within the larger world. To participate and experience union with God is to begin to understand God's desire for union with all.

In many ways, Contemplation is the core of the core of the core of our present task. At the end of the day, it is the practice that defines this entire work. If *Lectio Creatio* is a means for engaging the Spirit in and through natural places, and if the reason why we engage the Spirit through creation is to move toward the ultimate goal of participation and union with God, then the movement of Contemplation is the foundational experience. All other experiences before and after are informed by Contemplation. In the context of *Lectio Creatio*, it is not the final goal, yet it gives us a preview of what we are ultimately moving toward. Human beings are created to experience God, and in doing so, experience a life of love and connection that extends to all the world. The movement of Contemplation in *Lectio Creatio* provides a taste of that ultimate goal.

## APPLICATION

In 1987 Richard Rohr established the Center for Action and Contemplation, a faith-based nonprofit dedicated to the goal of sharing contemplative Christian spirituality with the world. The naming of the organization was very intentional. Rohr believed that in order for contemplative spirituality to be complete, it must lead to action.<sup>18</sup> This conviction is confirmed from the highest seat in the Roman Catholic tradition. Reflecting on *Lectio Divina*, Pope Benedict XVI said that *action* and love for others was always the concluding movement.<sup>19</sup> In *Lectio Creatio*, the language of Application is invoked. The goal of this movement is to consider how one might apply the things they have observed, imagined, or experienced to their life. It is a movement of response. If Rohr is correct, then the ultimate goal of union with God (i.e., contemplation) does not end in silence and stillness. Rather, from silence and stillness should be birthed compassion and benevolence. James writes:

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. (James 2:14-17 NLT).

---

<sup>17</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 50.

<sup>18</sup> "Who We Are," Center for Action and Contemplation, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://cac.org/about/who-we-are/>.

<sup>19</sup> "Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (30 September 2010) | BENEDICT XVI," The Holy See, accessed April 16, 2022, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html).

If the first five movements are concerned with one's engagement with the creation and God, then Application might best be understood as a means of connection with others. Hopefully, we enter Lectio Creatio with the anticipation that we will be changed. The desire is that as we experience the Spirit through creation, we will be led to become more like Christ. Out of this formational experience should grow a desire for good in the lives of others and the world.

## REFLECTION

A final movement included in Lectio Creatio is Reflection. Discussing *experiential learning*, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier emphasizes two primary aspects: *action* and *reflection*. Learning and development begin with doing (i.e., an experience or action), but they must be followed by thoughtful consideration and evaluation of what has happened. To dismiss *reflection* is to divorce growth from the experience.<sup>20</sup> In many ways, Lectio Creatio, and the different aspect of the practice, are a form of experiential learning, or formation. Through experiencing the world, paying attention, and reflecting on what is observed, one is encouraged to be stretched, and through stretching matured.

In the context of Lectio Creatio, reflection serves two primary purposes. The first, as we have already mentioned, is developmental. Reflection is part of what David Kolb calls the *Experiential Learning Cycle*. Reflection on *concrete experiences* creates new ideas that can be implemented in new experiences and reflected on again. As each cycle is commenced the person involved encounters growth.<sup>21</sup> In many ways, this aspect of reflection occurs several times throughout the movements of Lectio Creatio. Inherent to Observation, Imagination, Conversation, and Application are reflective elements. The second purpose of reflection has more to do with how one understands their experience in relation to the community of faith. Kolb describes an aspect of reflection being the consideration of common or known structures and concepts. This reflective act uses established systems to examine observations, potentially leading to new perspectives.<sup>22</sup> The established systems in our context are ecclesial and theological. As members of the Christian community, we do not exist within a vacuum. Our experiences may lead to new perspectives, but it is important that our observations and insights align with and/or inform the larger community of faith. The movement of Reflection is a means of both ensuring that one is grounded theologically while also confirming the intuitions of one's experience.

## Lectio Creatio in Practice

Lectio Creatio begins with silent *preparation*. Depending on the location and space you find yourself, the first act of Lectio Creatio is simply walking and breathing. The initial goal of the first few moments of the experience is to notice any issues or anxieties that might be on your mind. As they are noticed, the aim is to let them go.

---

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2004), 198–99.

<sup>21</sup> David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Second edition. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2015), 50–51.

<sup>22</sup> Kolb, 58–59.

Give them to God. As you walk, you are also paying attention for a place that looks inviting and comfortable. Once that place is found and you are ready, quit walking and settle in (sit, lean, prop, etc.). The first movement ends with a prayer: God, open my heart, my mind, and my senses to know you in this place. Amen.

Without hurrying, look around with intention. *Observe* your surroundings. Pay attention to what you notice. The objective is to observe with your senses, but also with your heart. What is the Spirit drawing your attention to? This might be an animal, a plant, a sound, a movement, or something completely different. Once you find yourself drawn to something, focus your attention on that thing and watch (or listen, smell, etc.). What stands out? Continue to examine it for several minutes. As you observe, allow the thing that caught your attention to become a personal metaphor for you.

Now close your eyes. Picture the metaphor in your mind. Remember your observations and for several minutes replay them over and over. Through your *imagination*, interact with the metaphor. Get to know it. Ask yourself: What was it that caught my attention? What were the characteristics that stood out? What attributes might the Spirit be drawing me toward? How might these attributes connect with where I find myself today? Who might God be calling me to be or become based on these attributes? Now, in your imagination, embrace those attributes and paint a mental picture of how they might influence you or your world.

Consider the things you have observed and imagined. What thoughts have come to mind? What feeling have emerged? Do you feel encouragement or fear? Or Something else? It is through prayer and *conversation* with God that we express those feelings. Authentically articulate to God what you believe you are being called to do or become as a result of this experience. Express to God your excitements and your concerns. Now stop and listen. Open your heart, mind, and senses to the presence of the Spirit and listen. How might God be responding to your prayer?

Now stop observing, imagining, and conversing. Take several minutes and simply sit with God in a *contemplative* respite. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in the place you are. The Spirit is described as the breath of God. Breathe in the Spirit. Breath out. Recognize that the Spirit of God is simultaneously in you and around you. Rest in that knowledge and be present with God.

As Lectio Creatio ends, you should take some time to ask yourself how the experience will *apply* to your life and influence how you interact with the world. Some questions to consider may be: Who is God calling me to be? What is God calling me to do? What action(s) am I being asked to take? Take a few moments to ponder these questions.

After the experience has concluded and some time has passed, it is wise to take a few moments to *reflect*, process, and think through what has been learned. This can be accomplished in a group setting or by yourself. If you are part of a group, gather and share about your experience. Ask each other questions such as:

- What grabbed your attention?
- What did you hear or feel?
- What do you believe God is calling you to do or be?

After sharing your answers, allow others to give feedback and/or speak into your experience. If you did not hear or feel anything during your experience, recognize that that is alright. As best as you can, share honestly and openly.

If you are not part of a group, there are several ways that you can reflect on the experience by yourself. One way is through viewing your experience through various lenses (e.g., Scripture, Christian Tradition, Logic/Reason, and Personal Experience). After some time has passed, ask yourself these questions:

- How does my experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture? Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide any contributions to my experience?
- How does Christian Tradition (history, theology, etc.) inform my experience?
- Do the outcomes of my experience make sense? Do they seem reasonable or farfetched?
- How do my life experiences enlighten what I have heard or felt? How do the experiences or stories of those I trust enlighten what I have heard or felt?

## Section III: Retreat Logistics

The previous chapters have been concerned with an overarching idea: how might creation serve as a venue and catalyst for Christian spiritual growth. Chapter One began with a brief sketch of the natural world's presence in scripture and Christian tradition and Chapter Two outlined a philosophical model of ministry. Starting with an ultimate goal (i.e., union with God) and a theological worldview, formational objectives were determined (i.e., connection with God, others, self, and the world). Those objectives, in conversation with educational theory, led to the discussion of six programmatic strategies. The strategies emerged from the philosophical model (chapter two) in conversation with the unique context of the topic at hand (chapter one). The specific strategies were chosen because they, when utilized in the proposed context, facilitate connection(s) leading to movement toward the ultimate goal. Chapters Three through Eight have focused on these strategies. As a reminder, the six experiential and programmatic strategies include:

- Personal Experiences
- Communal Experiences
- Experiences with the Spirit and Scripture
- Experience with Creation and Place
- Sabbath Experiences
- Experiences of Reading Creation.

Section Three will dive more into practicality. The focus of these final chapters will be logistics and tools, i.e., schedules, content, materials, and budgeting considerations, all things needed to implement and facilitate the proposed retreat. The subsequent chapters will contain the following information and resources.

- Chapter Nine provides multiple schedules detailing how the retreat program might be adapted contingent on one's specific circumstance and timeframe.
- Chapter Ten offers a predeveloped curriculum for the retreat. Courses have been developed for each session of the event. Each course includes a course plan and resources for implementation.
- Chapter Eleven supplies materials to be distributed to participants. This includes handouts to be used during courses as well as a Participant Handbook to be distributed at the beginning of the event.
- Chapter Twelve serves as a source of brainstorming for the facilitator. It provides administrative and operational questions for the facilitator to consider during the planning of the event. It also provides an example budget to consider during planning.

As with all aspects of this text, the resources provided in this section are adaptable. They are provided as a tool to assist the facilitator in the implantation of the event. All schedules, curriculums, slides, etc. should be modified as needed.

## Chapter Nine: Retreat Overview

We now find ourselves at a place where we might ask: how can we utilize the determined strategies to approach the *Ultimate Goal*? How might these six experiential approaches serve as a link between creation/nature and a person who desires to grow spiritually and move toward union with God? There are probably many ways one might apply these strategies. There is a multitude of programs, both old and new, that have utilized the ideas that have been mentioned in the previous chapters. From traditional classrooms to small group programs to parachurch curriculums, the church has showed great creativity in the production of educational and formational experiences.

Understanding the many opportunities that already exist, we, as already mentioned, are approaching, and applying these strategies in the form of a retreat. Though certainly not a new or novel type of program, retreats do serve as a historical means of Christian education/formation that are also modifiable depending on the context, location, and space one chooses to employ. The next several pages provide a program schedule for an adaptable spiritual retreat that utilizes the six strategies previously mentioned. Table 1 briefly describes how each strategy plays out in the retreat structure.

Along with a Primary Retreat Schedule, two additional schedules are included below, an Abbreviated Retreat Schedule and an Extended Retreat Schedule. The Primary Retreat Schedule represents the experience(s) to be discussed throughout the remainder of this work. It is based on a one-week (seven day) event. Though specific days are not mentioned, it is conceived and designed around a Sunday arrival and Saturday departure. The additional schedules are included as examples demonstrating how the retreat experience might be modified. The programmatic strategies can be utilized in whatever manner works best for the person (or group) who is facilitating the experience. The Abbreviated Schedule assumes a weekend (four day) version of the experience. In that circumstance the arrival day may be a Friday and the departure a Monday. The Extended Schedule is designed for a two-week experience (fourteen days). This longer schedule might serve well for a retreat that is combined with an international travel experience. That said, how the schedules are utilized is ultimately irrelevant. The observation to make is that there is flexibility in how one employs this tool. The retreat and strategies are not static. They can be altered and adapted in whatever means works best for those facilitating and those being served.

**TABLE 1: RETREAT STRATEGIES AND STRUCTURES**

<b>Programmatic Strategy</b>	<b>Retreat Aspect</b>
Personal Experiences	Though not explicit, woven throughout the retreat experience is a focus on personal growth. Through reflective solitude (i.e., solo) experiences the participant is encouraged to listen to God through observing creation. This cannot be done without first listening to and trusting oneself. A fundamental piece of the retreat is self-awareness and learning to embrace one's personal experiences.
Communal Experiences	The retreat is designed as a group experience. The <i>temporary community</i> is an essential element leading toward the stated objectives. Along with community building exercises and shared daily activities (i.e., meals), participants are invited to partake in one another's spiritual progression through group reflection.
Experiences with the Spirit and Scripture	In many ways, the entire retreat experience is a type of <i>practical pneumatology</i> . There is an expectation that the Holy Spirit is present and working throughout all elements of the program. Acknowledging the Spirit's presence within human beings, as well as speaking through scripture, there is also an assumption of the Spirit's presence throughout the larger created world. This leads to the belief that the Spirit of God can be observed through the cultures and histories of different groups of people as well as through natural spaces.
Experiences with Creation and Place	The suggested retreat is designed to be facilitated in places with access to natural space. Being outside is crucial to the experience. Along with traveling to natural spaces, the retreat also includes recreational, educational, and historical aspects. Part of the formational experience is recognizing how a place can influence one's formational journey. Fun and adventure, as well as contextual observation, serve as partners in movement toward God.
Sabbath Experiences	Sabbath is a key component to both the discipline of retreat and the Christian life. Therefore, rest, along with worship, is intentionally placed within the agenda of the retreat. Because many misunderstand sabbath, there will be a formal gathering dedicated to discussions concerning what it is and how it influences spiritual formation.
Experiences of Reading Creation	Reading Creation (i.e., Lectio Creatio) is the primary formational tool of the retreat. It is the device being provided to move participants toward the ultimate goal of union with God, and therefore is woven throughout the entirety of the experience. In the context of this specific retreat experience, all other strategies are utilized to support this tool.

## Primary Retreat Schedule

### DAY 1—ARRIVAL DAY

3:00pm-6:00pm Arrival and Check-In

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

7:30pm-8:30pm Session 1: Optional Campfire Gathering

After 8:30pm                      Personal Time

### DAY 2—GROUP ORIENTATION DAY

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:30am                      Session 2: Developing a Temporary Community of Truth Through Fun & Game

10:30am-11:45pm                      Session 3: A Practical Pneumatology: Knowing the Holy Spirit as the “Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love”

12:00pm-1:30pm                      Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm Session 4: Listening to the Spirit through Scripture  
(An Introduction to Lectio Divina)

2:45pm-4:00pm Session 5: Listening the Spirit through the Created World  
(An Introduction to Lectio Creatio)

4:00pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm                      Session 6: The Gift of People and Place: An Acknowledgement of the Local Community and Land, Past and Present

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner Provided by Local Church

After 7:30pm                      Personal Time

### DAY 3—INITIAL EXPERIENCES DAY

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

\*Sack Breakfast Provided\*

8:00am-2:00pm Session 7: Restoration Through Recreation (Choose Your Adventure)

**\*Sack Lunch Provided\***

2:00pm-3:15pm Session 8: Practicing Lectio Creatio—First Solo Experience

3:15pm-4:30pm Session 9: An Introduction to Sabbath

4:30pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm Session 10: End of the Day Reflection—Second Solo Experience

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner Provided by Local Church

After 7:30pm                      Personal Time

#### **DAY 4—SABBATH DAY**

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:00am-5:00pm Session 11: Sabbath (Optional Excursion)

**\*Sack Lunch Provided\***

6:00pm-7:00pm Dinner

7:00pm-8:00pm Session 12: Worship Service

After 8:00pm                      Personal Time

#### **DAY 5—SOLO DAY**

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:45am                      Session 13: Review and Discussion of Lectio Creatio

11:00am-5:00pm                      Session 14: A Day of Solitude and Practicing Lectio Creatio

**\*Sack Lunch Provided\***

5:00pm-6:15pm Session 15: End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm                      Personal Time

#### **DAY 6—REFLECTION DAY**

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:30am Session 16: Practicing Lectio Creatio—Solo Experience

10:30am-11:45pm Session 17: Group Debrief I  
Discussion of the Retreat, Experiences, and Things Learned

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm Session 18: Group Debrief II  
Discussion of Personal Insights Concerning God, Self, and Vocation

2:45pm-4:00pm Session 19: Final Solo Reflection

4:00pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm Session 20: Closing Worship Service

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

## **DAY 7 — DEPARTURE DAY**

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

Before 11:00am Check-out and Departure

## Abbreviated Retreat Schedule

### DAY 1—ARRIVAL DAY

3:00pm-6:00pm Arrival and Check-In

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner Provided by Local Church

7:30pm-8:30pm Campfire Gathering  
(Developing a Temporary Community of Truth)

After 8:30pm Personal Time

### DAY 2—GROUP ORIENTATION AND INITIAL EXPERIENCES DAY

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:30am A Practical Pneumatology: Knowing the Holy Spirit as the “Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love”

10:30am-11:45pm Listening to the Spirit through Scripture  
(An Introduction to Lectio Divina)

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm Listening the Spirit through the Created World  
(An Introduction to Lectio Creatio)

2:45pm-4:00pm Practicing Lectio Creatio—First Solo Experience

4:00pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner Provided by Local Church

\*Presentation During Dinner: The Gift of People and Place: An Acknowledgement of the Local Community and Land, Past and Present\*

After 7:30pm Personal Time

### DAY 3—SOLO DAY

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-11:45pm Practicing Lectio Creatio—Second Solo Experience

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm Personal Reflection—Third Solo Experience

2:45pm-4:30pm                Group Debrief: Discussion of the Retreat Experiences, Personal Insights, and Things Learned

4:30pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm Closing Worship Service

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm                Personal Time

#### **DAY 4—DEPARTURE DAY**

Before 8:00am                Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (On Your Own)

Before 11:00am Departure

## Extended Retreat Schedule

### DAY 1—TRAVEL AND ARRIVAL DAY

Prior to 6:00pm Travel to Destination

3:00pm-6:00pm Arrival and Check-In

\*All Meals on Your Own\*

After Check-In Personal Time

### DAY 2—REST AND RECOVERY DAY

Before 6:00pm Personal Day to Rest and Recover from Traveling

\*Breakfast and Lunch on Your Own\*

6:00pm-7:00pm Dinner

7:00pm-8:00pm Opening Worship Service

8:00pm-9:00pm Optional Campfire Gathering

After 9:00pm Personal Time

### DAY 3—GROUP ORIENTATION DAY

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-11:45pm Developing a Temporary Community of Truth Through Fun and Game

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm A Practical Pneumatology: Knowing the Holy Spirit as the “Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love”

2:45pm-4:00pm Listening to the Spirit through Scripture  
(An Introduction to Lectio Divina)

4:00pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm Practicing Lectio Divina

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

**DAY 4— INITIAL EXPERIENCES DAY**

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-8:45am    Breakfast (Optional)

9:00am-2:00pm    Restoration Through Recreation (Choose Your Adventure)

\*Sack Lunch Provided\*

2:00pm-3:15pm    Listening the Spirit through the Created World  
(An Introduction to Lectio Creatio)

3:15pm-4:30pm    Practicing Lectio Creatio—First Solo Experience

4:30pm-5:00pm    Break

5:00pm-6:15pm    End of the Day Reflection—Second Solo Experience

6:30pm-7:30pm    Dinner

After 7:30pm                      Personal Time

**DAY 5— SOLO DAY**

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am    Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:45am    Review and Discussion of Lectio Creatio

11:00am-5:00pm    A Day of Solitude and Practicing Lectio Creatio

\*Sack Lunch Provided\*

5:00pm-6:15pm    End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm    Dinner

After 7:30pm                      Personal Time

**DAY 6— PLACE AND PEOPLE DAY**

Before 8:00am                      Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am    Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-11:45pm            The Gift of People and Place: An Acknowledgement of the Local Community and Land,  
Past and Present

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-4:00pm    Practicing Lectio Creatio

4:00pm-5:00pm    Break

5:00pm-6:15pm    End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm    Dinner Provided by Local Church

After 7:30pm            Personal Time

### **DAY 7 — EXCURSION DAY**

Before 8:00am            Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am    Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-5:00pm    Excursion to Cultural Site

\*Lunch Provided at Site\*

5:00pm-6:15pm    An Introduction to Sabbath

6:30pm-7:30pm    Dinner

After 7:30pm            Personal Time

### **DAY 8 — SABBATH DAY**

8:00am-9:00am    Breakfast (Optional)

10:30am-11:30pm    Worship Service at Local Church

\*Sack Lunch Provided\*

6:00pm-7:00pm    Dinner

7:00pm-8:00pm    Worship Service with Retreat Group

After 8:00pm            Personal Time

### **DAY 9 — FREE DAY**

Before 8:00am            Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am    Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-6:30pm Free Day to Explore on Your Own

\*Lunch on Your Own\*

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

### **DAY 10—EXCURSION DAY**

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-5:00pm Excursion to Cultural Site

\*Lunch Provided at Site\*

5:00pm-6:15pm End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

### **DAY 11—SOLO DAY**

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-5:00pm A Day of Solitude and Practicing Lectio Creatio

\*Sack Lunch Provided\*

5:00pm-6:15pm End of Day Group Reflection

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

### **DAY 12—REFLECTION DAY**

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

9:15am-10:30am Practicing Lectio Creatio—Solo Experience

10:30am-11:45pm Group Debrief I :  
Discussion of the Retreat, Experiences, and Things Learned

12:00pm-1:30pm Lunch and Break

1:30pm-2:45pm	Group Debrief II:	Discussion	of
	Personal Insights Concerning God, Self, and Vocation		

2:45pm-4:00pm Final Solo Reflection

4:00pm-5:00pm Break

5:00pm-6:15pm Closing Worship Service

6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

After 7:30pm Personal Time

### **DAY 13 — DEPARTURE AND TRAVEL DAY**

Before 8:00am Personal Time

8:00am-9:00am Breakfast (Optional)

Before 11:00am Check-Out and Travel Home

### **DAY 14 — SABBATH AND REST DAY**

\*Rest and Recover from Traveling\*

## Chapter Ten: Program Content & Curriculum

This chapter maps out the formal teaching and curriculum aspects of the retreat. Based on the Primary Retreat Schedule from chapter nine, there are twenty proper instructive sessions. This does not include personal time, mealtimes, or breaks. The twenty sessions have been distilled to 9 courses. Some courses directly correspond to specific sessions while others serve as a comprehensive course providing educational and curricular information for several sessions. That is to say, a facilitator will want to use some courses, or parts of courses, for various sessions. The following table (Table 2) provides a quick reference detailing which courses align with specific sessions from the Primary Retreat Schedule.

**TABLE 2: COURSE AND SESSION ALIGNMENT**

Course 1	Session 2
Course 2	Session 3
Course 3	Session 4
Course 4	Sessions 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 19
Course 5	Session 6
Course 6	Sessions 9 and 11
Course 7	Sessions 12 and 20
Course 8	Sessions 17 and 18
Course 9	Sessions 1, 7, and 11

Each course is structured with two parts, (1) a basic course plan followed by (2) material for instruction. The exceptions are Course 1, Course 7, and Course 9. Rather than instructional materials Course 1 provides a list of potential activities, Course 7 provides a suggested Order of Service for a worship gathering, and Course 9 includes no materials due to the many unknown factors that are required when selecting recreational activities (e.g., location, season of the year, participant competencies, etc.).

The course/lesson plan model utilized for the various sessions is Scottie May's *5-Ates to Educate*. Employing the theories of David Kolb and other educators, May, a professor of Christian Formation, designed a *lesson preparation* plan developed around learning styles. Using two spectrums of learning (*feeling vs thinking* and *doing vs watching*) to understand how students understand, May suggests that most people fall into one of four educational categories:

- Imaginative
- Analytic

- Common Sense
- Dynamic

From these learning styles she designed a five-phase curriculum model as a means of engaging all students as best as possible. May describes the five steps of her model as such:

- *Locate*—The lesson objective derived from a *felt need*.
- *Elaborate*—An activity or question that assists the student in understanding the problem or objective.
- *Illuminate*—The act of introducing the student to a source of knowledge or truth, i.e., scripture, research, literature, etc.
- *Integrate*—An activity or question that helps the student internalize and embrace the knowledge or truth they have been introduced to.
- *Activate*—A question or challenge that encourages the student to live out what they have learned.<sup>1</sup>

Though not being used in a traditional classroom, May's *5-Ates* serve as an appropriate structure for the formal instructional aspects of the retreat. The following course plans (and subsequent course material) are outlined utilizing May's model.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scottie May, "Learning Styles and Lesson Preparation," Small Groups, accessed November 20, 2022, <https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2008/learning-styles-and-lesson-preparation.html>.

## Course 1: Developing a Temporary Community of Truth

### COURSE PLAN

#### Session: Session 2

- Locate:** The aim of this session is to provide space for the participants to get to know one another and begin the process of developing an initial sense of trust. Trust is an essential component to community cohesion. For participants to feel the freedom to speak to and hear from others they must first trust one another.
- Elaborate:** This session will be focused heavy on *Elaboration*. Utilizing “get-to-know-you” and “team building” games, the participants will be asked to play, explore, and work through problems. A list of multiple games is included below.
- Illumination:** I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. (John 17:20-23 NLT).
- May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6 NLT).
- Integrate:** As you consider the week ahead, what might the games we’ve played and/or the problems we’ve solved (or attempted to solve) teach us. How might they apply to our context?
- Activate:** How will you be a beneficial community/team member as we move forward?

## COURSE MATERIAL

### Community Building Games

The following list of team and community building games comes from *The Big Book of Team Building Games* by John Newstrom and Edward Scannell. Detailed instructions for each game as well as game goals, materials needed, and example discussion questions can be found in the text.<sup>2</sup>

- Getting to Know You – Participants complete a “get-to-know-you” form listing facts about themselves.
- Self-Disclosure Introductions – Participants introduce themselves by choosing and sharing about two or three items from their wallet.
- Team Discovery – Participants identify two to three group questions. Once the questions are established, everyone takes a turn answering.
- What’s Our Name? Logo? Slogan? – The team works together to choose a team (community) name/logo/slogan.
- I Like Me Because – Participants pair off and take turns sharing what they like about themselves. As one partner shares the other listens.
- Coat of Arms – Participants create a “coat of arms” based on their talents, skills, and strengths. Participants then share their creation with the group.
- Trust Me – Participants are divided into teams of three or four. One participant is blindfolded and then given instructions concerning to how to get from one location to another. This is a game focused on trust and communication.
- Most? Best? Greatest? – Participants are routinely asked to answer a provoking question. Questions are selected by the facilitator and chosen to encourage sharing amongst the group.
- What Do I (We) Want in Life? – Participants are provided a form whereby they indicate their personal *values*. Forms are shared and compared. Discussions are had concerning community values.
- The I’s Have It – Participants pair off to have a conversation about anything. The only rule is that they cannot use the word “I”. The goal is to foster conversations (and a group discussion) that focuses on the importance of the other.

---

<sup>2</sup> John Newstrom and Edward Scannell, *The Big Book of Team-Building Games: Trust-Building Activities, Team Spirit Exercises, and Other Fun Things to Do* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1998).

## Course 2: A PRACTICAL PNEUMATOLOGY

### COURSE PLAN

#### Session: Session 3

**Locate:** The aim of this session is to introduce the participant to the theology and person of the Holy Spirit. Through acknowledging the Spirit, and the works of the Spirit, the participant builds a foundation for observing and interacting with the Spirit.

**Elaborate:** In groups of two or three, discuss these questions: How have you interacted with the Holy Spirit in your life? How have you observed the Spirit working in your life? In the life of the church? Where have you observed the Spirit working in the world?

**Illuminate:** This session will focus largely on *Illumination* by providing a theological foundation for who the Spirit is. This will be presentation heavy (i.e., PowerPoint).

#### References:

- The Divine Dance by Richard Rohr
- Faith Seeking Understanding by Daniel Migliore
- Flame of Love by Clark Pinnock
- Forgotten God by Francis Chan
- The Orthodox Way by Kallistos Ware
- Practical Theology & Qualitative Research by John Swinton & Harriet Mowat

**Integrate:** Based on what we have discussed, what are some ways you might actively pay attention to the Spirit? Where might you look to see the Spirit working (and speaking) in the world? Discuss these questions in your groups.

**Activate:** The next session will be dedicated to learning Lectio Divina. The goal of learning Lectio Divina will be to actively practice paying attention to the Spirit.

## COURSE MATERIAL

# A Practical Pneumatology

Knowing the Holy Spirit as the Sustaining Presence of  
Relational, Divine Life and Love

## Some Questions to Consider...

In groups of two or three, discuss:

- How have you interacted with the Holy Spirit in your life?
- How have you observed the Spirit working in your life?
- In the life of the church?
- Where have you observed the Spirit working the world?

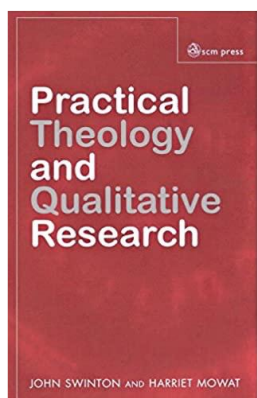
## What is a Practical Pneumatology

---

## Pneumatology

---

- Pneumatology = The Study of the Holy Spirit
- Pneumatology is concerned with the who, where, when, why, and how of the subject.
- Pneumatology is interested in who the Holy Spirit is and what the Holy Spirit does.
- Pneumatology is the “Search” of the Holy Spirit



## Practical Theology

“Practical Theology is critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”

—John Swinton and Harriet Mowat

## Practical Theology

Practical Theology is concerned with the **practices** of the Church, the world, and God.

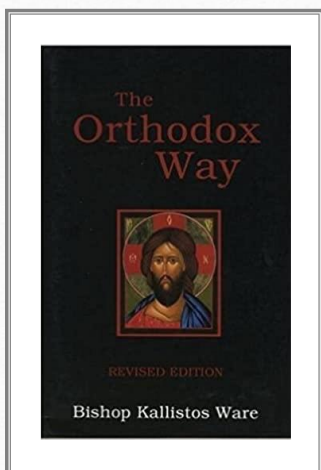
- Practices are not to be misunderstood as the singular experiences of an individual.
- Practices are to be understood in the contexts of:
  - Community
  - History

## A Practical Pneumatology

---

A Practical Pneumatology is reflection concerning:

- Who is the Spirit of God?
- How do we Engage the Spirit of God?



## A Place to Begin...God is Trinity

---

“There is in God genuine diversity as well as true unity. The Christian God is not just a unit but a union, not just a unity but community.”

—Kallistos Ware

## God is a Relational Existence

Early Christian thinkers would eventually use the term *perichoresis* to describe this Trinitarian relationship.

Perichoresis is a term that invokes multiple images:

- A Circle
- A Dance
- Sharing
- Leading
- Following
- Indwelling
- Give-and-Take

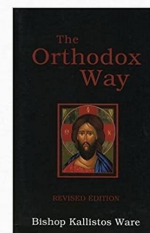
As Trinity, God is multiplicity, but also unity.  
Distinction, yet also similarity.

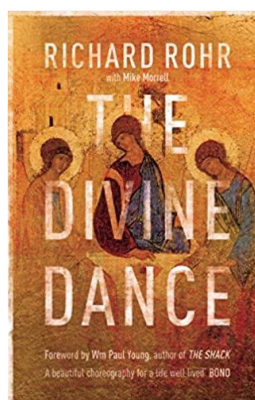
But what does that mean?

The most honest answer: We don't know.

Christian thought and reflection have concluded that the Divine reality is a communal, Trinitarian reality, but in the end, the word *mystery* tends to be the best descriptor of this dogma.

“...it is not the task of Christianity to provide easy answers to every question, but to make us progressively aware of a mystery. God is not so much the object of our knowledge as the cause of our wonder.”—Kallistos Ware

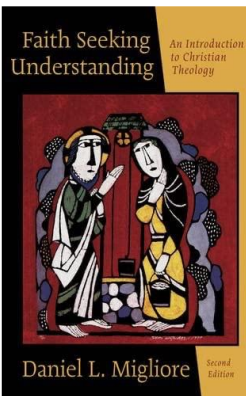




## God is Mystery

“Our speaking of God is a search for similes, analogies, and metaphors. All theological language is an approximation, offered tentatively in holy awe. That’s the best human language can achieve. We can say, ‘It’s like—it’s similar to...,’ but we can never say, ‘It is...’ because we are in the realm of beyond, of transcendence, of mystery.”

—Richard Rohr



## The Dogma of the Trinity

- To confess that God is triune is to affirm that the eternal life of God is personal life in relationship.
- To confess that God is triune is to affirm that God exists in communion far deeper than the relationships and partnerships we know in our human experience.
- To confess that God is triune is to affirm that the life of God is essentially self-giving love whose strength embraces vulnerability.

## God is Mysterious Love

---

When the church pronounces belief in a Trinitarian God it is saying that Christianity worships a deity that understands, expresses, and, at its very core, emanates love. Relational love is the essence of God. And if love is the essence of God, then God's interactions with the world are manifestations of love. Love is at the core of all things.

## The Persons of Mysterious Love

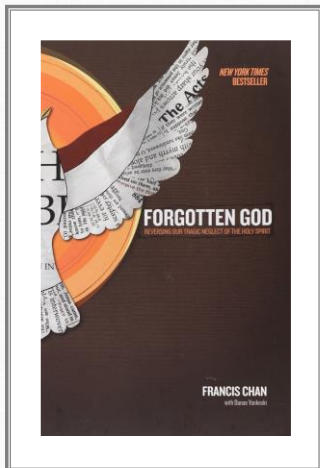
---

- **The Father**—When we picture God we tend to think of the Father. The Father is the Creator and the Sovereign, the God of Israel, and the Father of Christ.
- **The Son**—Jesus is the Son of God. He is God incarnate. The Savior who is simultaneously fully God and fully man. The Father and the Son are eternally co-equal and of the same substance.
- **The Holy Spirit**—Christians are good at acknowledging the first two, but what about the third?

## The Holy Spirit

---

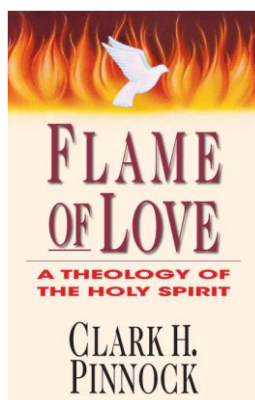
- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- How does the Spirit operate in the world?



## Who is the Holy Spirit

---

- The Holy Spirit is a Person.
- The Holy Spirit is God.
- The Holy Spirit is eternal and holy.
- The Holy Spirit has His own mind, and He prays for us.
- The Holy Spirit has emotions.
- The Holy Spirit has His own desires and will.
- The Holy Spirit is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.



## How does the Spirit operate in the world?

**Spirit in Creation:** The Spirit as Lord and giver of life, who touches creation and moves it toward completion.

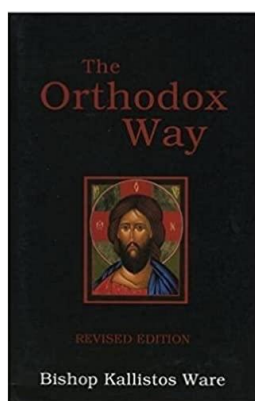
**Spirit and Christology:** The Spirit anointed Jesus of Nazareth to heal human brokenness from the inside and bring about atonement.

**Spirit and Church:** The Spirit indwells the church and is present sacramentally and charismatically to endow it for mission.

**Spirit and Union:** The goal of salvation is to live in loving union with God and to participate in the triune nature through the Spirit.

**Spirit and Universality:** God desires all to be saved and is found graciously present with every person in every place by the Spirit.

**Spirit and Truth:** The Spirit leads the church into truth along the path of mission, enabling it to be timely and fruitful in ministry.



## The Spirit as Sustaining Presence

“Like the air, the Spirit is source of life, ‘everywhere present and filling all things’, always around us, always within us.”

—Kallistos Ware

## The Spirit as Sustaining Presence

---

- It is the Spirit who is the source of existence, power, and purpose.
- It is the Spirit who initiates life.
- It is the Spirit who sustains the world.
- It is the Spirit who sparks new life in the believer, empowers the church, and leads humanity toward union with God.
- It is the Spirit who is the constant Divine presence throughout the world.
- It is the Spirit who draws, guides, speaks, and connects to humanity

## The Spirit as Sustaining Presence

---

The result of sin is fracture. The relationships between people, God, the self, and the world have been broken. It is Christ who shows us how to mend those fractures, but it is the Spirit who leads us to Christ, it is the Spirit who is presence of Divine love, it is Spirit who brings about healing, and it is the Spirit who forms us into the people we are created to be.

## Who is the Spirit of God?

The Spirit is the Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love found in and through all things.

As the presence of God, the Spirit is to be found wherever life abounds. Nature, beauty, art, theology, media, and scripture. All (and more) are the dwelling places of the Spirit. At the core of the Divine Reality is relational love, and humanity has been invited to participate in that experience. The Spirit is eager to guide and draw us in. And the presence of the Spirit is to be found in all areas of life, we must learn to be observant and open to the invitation.

## A Practical Pneumatology

- Based on what we have discussed, what are some ways you might actively pay attention to Spirit?
- Where might you look to see the Spirit working (and speaking) in the world?
- How might we engage the Spirit? What practices might help us *search* out the Spirit in our day-to-day lives?

Discuss these questions in your groups.

## Course 3: Listening to the Spirit Through Scripture

### COURSE PLAN

#### Session: Session 4

**Locate:** The aim of this session is to provide participants an overview of Lectio Divina. Along with a brief discussion of the history and movements of the discipline, Lectio Divina will be practiced as a group. The purpose of learning Lectio Divina will be to actively practice paying attention to the Spirit through scripture.

**Elaborate:** The previous session will have ended with groups discussing ways they might actively pay attention to the Spirit? The final activity of the previous session will serve as a means of *elaborating* the subject of this session.

**Illuminate:** A brief PowerPoint presentation will be utilized to explain the various movements that make up Lectio Divina.

**Reference:**

- Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

**Integrate:** This session will be focused mostly on *Integration*. As a group, the participants will practice Lectio Divina. Each participant will be provided a description of the movements and modified instructions for practicing the discipline as a group.

**Activate:** At the conclusion of the session, participants will be reminded that Lectio Divina is a historical means of reading and engaging scripture (as well as the Spirit). They will be encouraged to view the practice as a tool that can continue to be utilized long after the present experience has ended. More importantly, they will be encouraged to continue asking the question: How might I actively pay attention to the Spirit?

## COURSE MATERIAL

## Where we left off...

---

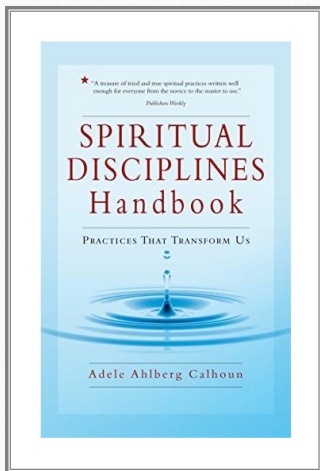
- What are some ways you might actively pay attention to Spirit?
- Where might you look to see the Spirit working (and speaking) in the world?
- How might we engage the Spirit?
- What practices might help us *search* out the Spirit in our day-to-day lives?

We want to introduce you to a practice that you may not be familiar with...

## Lectio Divina

---

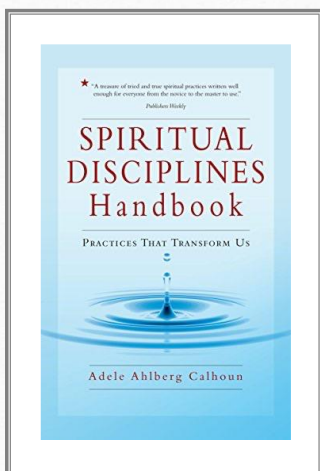
Listening to the Spirit through Scripture



## Background on Lectio Divina

“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. Some brief and memorable word or phrase become bread for the soul throughout the week.”

—Adele Ahlberg Calhoun



## Background on Lectio Divina

“Devotional reading is not an exercise in mentally critiquing or exegeting the text. It exists to further divine companionship. *Lectio divina* invites us into God’s presence to listen for his particular, loving word *to me* at this particular moment in time.”

—Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

## Traditional Movements of Lectio Divina

---

- Lectio (Reading)
- Mediatio (Meditation)
- Oratio (Prayer)
- Contemplatio (Contemplation)



## Lectio

---

### Lectio (Reading)

- Lectio Divina begins with simply reading and hearing the text of Scripture.
- A passage is read out loud multiple times.
- As the passage is read, the reader/listener pays attention to what stands out to them (i.e., what word, phrase, or idea are they drawn to).
- The point is not to scrutinize the *word*, but rather be observant and aware.

## Meditatio

---

### Meditatio (Meditation)

- The reader/listener is invited to ponder the word, phrase, or idea.
- The reader/listener reflects on how the specific *word* might interact with their life and what it might mean for them at that point in time.

## Oratio

---

### Oratio (Prayer)

- The reader/listener engages in dialogue with God.
- The point of this movement is to be honest with both oneself and the Spirit.
- The reader/listener communicates their feeling of excitement, hesitation, fear, joy, etc.

## Contemplatio

---

### Contemplatio (Contemplation)

- This is a time of sitting and resting in the presence of God.
- The goal of contemplation is to simply *be* with God.

## Additional Movements

---

Along with the traditional four, some include additional movements. Two common additions are:

- Silencio (Silence)
- Actio (Action)

## Silencio

---

### Silencio (Silence)

- This movement is sometimes used as a precursor to the traditional four.
- During silence, the reader/listener takes a few moments to silence themselves by momentarily calming down and intentionally letting go of any stress they may be dealing with.

## Actio

---

- Actio (Action)
- This final movement is sometimes added at the end.
- The reader/listener is invited to ask themselves: Who is God calling me to be as a result of this experience?

## Engaging the Spirit

- Lectio Divina is a method for reading, listening, and pondering scripture, but truly it is a means of communing, and being formed by, the Spirit of God.
- Built into the process is engagement with the Spirit.
- As the Sustaining Presence of Relational, Divine Life and Love, the Spirit is the one we release our anxieties to, the one we listen for, meditate with, pray to, and sit amongst. And it is the Spirit who forms us and sends us to be love in the world.

## Practicing Lectio Divina (as a Group)

- Preparation through Silence (Silencio)
- First Reading of the Passage (Lectio)
- Second Reading of the Passage (Lectio and Meditatio)
- Third Reading of the Passage (Lectio and Meditatio)
- Fourth Reading of the Passage (Lectio, Meditatio & Actio)
- Prayer (Oratio)
- Contemplation (Contemplatio)

See Handout for Detailed Instruction

## Final Thoughts

---

- Lectio Divina is a historical means of engaging scripture and the Spirit.
- It is a tool that can be utilized long after this retreat has concluded.
- As we concluded this session, I encourage you to continue asking the question: How might I actively pay attention to the Spirit?

## Course 4: Listening to the Spirit Through the Created World

### COURSE PLAN

Session:	Session 5, Session 8, Session 10, Session 13, Session 14, Session 15, Session 16, and Session 19
Locate:	The aim of this session is to provide participants an introduction and overview of Lectio Creatio. <i>Reading Creation</i> is the primary formational tool of the retreat and therefore woven throughout the experience. Through Lectio Creatio participants are given a structured practice for paying attention to and engaging the Spirit of God in natural spaces.
Elaborate:	When do you feel closest to God? Using crayon and paper, create something that communicates an answer to this question. Share with the group. As you share, try to explain why you feel closest to God at those time.
Illuminate:	A brief PowerPoint presentation will be utilized to explain the various movements that make up Lectio Creatio. Along with the movements, the presentation will also demonstrate how Lectio Divina has been adapted in other ways in the past. Finally, three metaphors for engaging the natural world will be offered.
Integrate:	Following the presentation and discussion, participants will be invited to go outside to practice the first two movements of Lectio Creatio (Preparation and Observation). This short rehearsal will provide an opportunity to get a taste of the experience.
Activate:	Along with receiving handouts describing the metaphors and movements, participants will receive a detailed guide for implementing Lectio Creatio. Participants will also have the opportunity to fully practice all the movements several times throughout the week.

## COURSE MATERIAL

## Lectio Creatio

Listening to the Spirit through the Created World

## When do you feel closest to God?

Activity:

Using crayon and paper, create something that communicates an answer to the above question.

In groups of two or three, share what you've created. As you share, try to explain why you feel closest to God during those times.



## The Spirit in all Things

“God’s breath is on the whole creation.... God is revealed in the beauty and order of the natural world.... Because [the Spirit] is at the heart of things, it is possible to encounter God in, with and beneath life’s experiences.”

—Clark Pinnock

## Avenues for Engaging God

If the Spirit is present in all things, then all things should be potential mediums by which one might engage the Spirit.

Examples:

- Literature
- Film
- Art
- Music

## Avenues for Engaging God

---

- If all things are avenues toward interacting with God, then perhaps Lectio Divina can be utilized to foster that connection.
- Lectio Divina is a tool that has been available to the church, and the world, for centuries. It has lasted because it is a proven method for listening to, hearing, and experiencing the Spirit.
- If adapted, this tool can become a method for listening to, hearing, and experiencing the Spirit in all the areas of life.

## Lectio Creatio (Reading Creation)

---

- Lectio Creatio is a tool developed to foster interaction with the Spirit of God through experiences in and with creation.
- It is an adaptation of Lectio Divina.
- Like Lectio Divina, it is made up of several movements.

## Movements of Lectio Creatio

Lectio Divina	Lectio Creatio
Silencio (Silence)	Preparation
Lectio (Reading)	Observation
Meditatio (Meditation)	Imagination
Oratio (Prayer)	Conversation
Contemplatio (Contemplation)	Contemplation
Actio (Action)	Application
	Reflection

## Preparation

- Lectio Creatio begins with silent preparation through walking and breathing.
- The initial goal is to notice any anxieties and release them to God.
- As one walks, they are also paying to attention for a place that looks inviting and comfortable. Once that place is found and the individual is ready, they will quit walking and take a seat. The first movement ends with a prayer: God, open my heart, my mind, and my senses to know you in this place. Amen.

## Observation

---

- Observation begins by paying attention to your surroundings.
- Pay attention what to what you notice. The goal is not only to observe with your senses, but with your heart. What is the Spirit drawing your attention to (e.g. an animal, a plant, a sound, etc.). Once you find yourself drawn to something, focus your attention on that thing. Continue to observe it.
- As you observe, allow the thing that caught your attention to become a personal metaphor for you.

## Imagination

---

- Imagination picks up where Observation concluded—with focused attention. Close your eyes. Picture the metaphor in your mind. Remember your observations and replay them over and over in your mind.
- Through your imagination, interact with the metaphor. Get to know it. Ask yourself: What was it that caught my attention? What were the characteristics that stood out? What attributes might the Spirit be drawing me toward? How might these attributes connect with where I find myself today? Who might God be calling me to be or become based on these attributes?

## Conversation

---

- In Conversation we authentically respond to God.
- Consider the things you have observed and imagined. What thoughts and/or feelings have emerged? Do you feel encouragement, fear, or something else?
- Express those feelings to God. Articulate what you believe you are being called to do or become. Express to God your excitements and your concerns.
- Now stop and listen. Open your heart, mind, and senses to the presence of the Spirit and listen. How might God be responding to your prayer?

## Contemplation

---

- The goal of contemplation is to simply be with God.
- Stop observing, imagining, and conversing. Take several minutes and simply sit with God. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in the place you are.
- The Spirit is described as the breath of God. Breathe in the Spirit. Breathe out. Recognize that the Spirit of God is simultaneously in you and around you. Rest in that knowledge and be present with God.

## Application

As Lectio Creatio ends, take some time to ask yourself how the experience will influence how you interact with the world. Some questions to consider may be:

- Who is God calling me to be?
- What is God calling me to do?
- What action(s) am I being asked to take?

Take a few moments to ponder these questions.

## Reflection

Reflection is intended to happen a short time after completing the first six movements of Lectio Creatio. After the experience has concluded it is wise to take some time to process and think through what has been learned concerning oneself and God (and others and the world). This can be accomplished as a group or as an individual.

- Group Reflection: Gather and share about the experience.
- Personal Reflection: View your experience through various lenses (e.g., Scripture, Christian Tradition, Logic/Reason, Personal Experience)

## Group Reflection

---

If you are part of a group, gather and share about our experience.

- What grabbed your attention?
- What did you hear or feel?
- What do you believe God is calling you to do or be?

After sharing your answers, allow others to give feedback and/or speak into your experience. If you did not hear or feel anything during your experience, recognize that that is alright. As best as you can, share honestly and openly.

## Personal Reflection

---

If you are not part of a group, one way to reflect on your experience is by looking at through various lenses. After some time has passed, ask yourself these questions:

- How does my experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture? Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide any contributions to my experience?
- How does Christian Tradition (history, theology, etc.) inform my experience?
- Do the outcomes of my experience make sense? Do they seem reasonable or farfetched?
- How do my life experiences enlighten what I have heard or felt? How do the experiences or stories of those I trust enlighten what I have heard or felt?

## Review of Lectio Creatio

---

Preparation—Walk and breath. Let go of anxieties. Find your place. Sit. Pray.

Observation—Pay attention. Notice. Where is the Spirit drawing your attention?

Imagination—Focus your attention. Interact. What attributes do you notice?

Conversation—Respond to God. What feelings have emerged? Be honest. Listen.

Contemplation—Be with God. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit. Rest.

Application—Who is God calling you to be? What is God calling you to do?

Reflection—Process you experience. What have you learned?

## Three Metaphors

---

- Before practicing Lectio Creatio, it may be helpful to first consider how creation might be understood and approached.
- Though there are perhaps many metaphors one might use to understand the natural world, for our purposes I want to suggest three:
  - Creation as God's First Book of Revelation
  - Creation as a Partner or Sibling to Humanity
  - Creation as a Teacher to Humanity.

## God's First **Book** of Revelation

- Acts 14:15-17— "...turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts."
- Romans 1:20—For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.
- Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? —St. Augustine

## A Partner or Sibling of Humanity

- Genesis 9:9-10— "I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth.
- Romans 8:19-21— For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
- All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing...O brother wind, air, clouds, and rain, by which all creatures ye sustain...O sister water, flowing clear, make music for thy Lord to hear...Dear mother earth, who day by day unfoldest blessings on our say...O praise ye! Allelulia! —Francis of Assisi

## A Teacher to Humanity

---

- Job 12:7-10— “Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you.... For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.
- Psalm 97:6—The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory.
- Nature is school-mistress, the soul the pupil; and whatever one has taught or the other has learned has come from God – the Teacher of the teacher. —Tertullian

## Review of Lectio Creatio

---

Preparation—Walk and breath. Let go of anxieties. Find your place. Sit. Pray.

Observation—Pay attention. Notice. Where is the Spirit drawing your attention?

Imagination—Focus your attention. Interact. What attributes do you notice?

Conversation—Respond to God. What feelings have emerged? Be honest. Listen.

Contemplation—Be with God. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit. Rest.

Application—Who is God calling you to be? What is God calling you to do?

Reflection—Process you experience. What have you learned?

## A Rehearsal...

---

- For the rest of the session (about 20 minutes), go outside and practice the first two movements of Lectio Creatio (Preparation and Observation).
- We will practice all the movements tomorrow.

## Course 5: The Gift of People and Place

### COURSE PLAN

#### Session: Session 6

- Locate:** The aim of this session will be to give participants an insight into the local context of where the retreat is being facilitated. Historical and contemporary cultural characteristics of the place will be introduced.
- Elaborate:** Group discussion: What do you know about the place we are at? What can you tell me about the history of this place? What can you tell me about the local culture?
- Illuminate:** A guest speaker will be invited to present and share about history and culture of the area.
- Integrate:** Group discussion following the speaker's presentation: What stood out to you concerning the history and culture of the people and land of this area? How might the people and land of this place speak into your life or influence your spiritual growth?
- Activate:** Dinner this night, as well as another night, will be provided by a local church. Along with cooking for the group, they will eat with the group. This will provide an opportunity for interaction and discussion.

## COURSE MATERIAL

# The Gift of People and Place

An Acknowledgement of the Local Community and Land, Past  
and Present

## Before we get started...

- What do you know about the place we are at?
- What can you tell me about the history of this place?
- What can you tell me about the local culture?

## The Gift of People and Place

---

People and Places, known and unknown, contribute to the gift of bestowing humanity on to others.

The people and land of this local community are participants in the objectives of this retreat. Their voices influence who we are becoming.

Thoughts?

## Guest Speaker

---

This slide (and following slides) would be dedicated to introducing a guest speaker and providing space for their content. Ideally, this person would be someone knowledgeable concerning the area and its history, culture, traditions, etc. (e.g., historian, college professor, park ranger, director of the retreat center, etc.).

## A Quick Debrief...

---

- What stood out to you concerning the history and culture of the people and land of this area?
- How might the people and land of this place speak into your life or influence your spiritual growth?

## Tonight's Plan...

---

Tonight's (and tomorrow's) meal will be provided by a local church.

Along with cooking for the group, they will eat with us.

Take some time and chat with these folks. Learn their stories (as best you can) and the story of this place.

I encourage you to allow the people and places of this area to speak into your lives.

## Course 6: An Introduction to Sabbath

### COURSE PLAN

Session: Session 9 and Session 11

**Locate:** The aim of this session is to introduce the theological concept of sabbath and emphasize the practical importance of rest in one's life.

**Elaborate:** In groups of two or three, describe what a typical *sabbath day* looks like in your life. When do you rest? How do you rest? Is sabbath something that has been discussed/taught/emphasized in your local congregation/church tradition?

**Illuminate:** This session will focus largely on *Illumination* by providing a historical, theological, and practical foundation and reason for sabbath. This will be presentation heavy (i.e., PowerPoint).

References:

- Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now by Walter Brueggemann
- Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World by A.J. Swoboda
- 24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life by Matthew Sleeth

**Integrate:** What does sabbath and rest look like to you? How might sabbath be implemented in your weekly schedule? Take a few minutes and create a *sabbath plan*. Share with your group your ideal plan.

**Activate:** The following day will be dedicated to sabbath. Other than an evening worship service, there will be no obligatory activities scheduled. There will be an optional excursion available for those whose sabbath experience might include active elements.

## COURSE MATERIAL

# Sabbath

A Theological and Practical Introduction

## Some Questions to Consider...

In groups of two or three,

- Describe what a typical sabbath day looks like in your life.
- When do you rest?
- How do you rest?
- Is sabbath something that has been discussed/taught/emphasized in your church tradition?

## In the Beginning...

- Day 1—Day & Night
- Day 2—Sky & Space
- Day 3—Sea, Land, & Vegetation
- Day 4—Sun, Moon, & Stars
- Day 5—Fish & Birds
- Day 6—Land Animals & Humanity
- Day 7—Rest

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

—Genesis 2:1-3

## God Rests...

- God chooses to rest from the work of creation.
- From this divine act stems a concept and practice that would ultimately differentiate and influence religious tradition and practice in not only Ancient Israel, but also historic and modern Judaism and Christianity.

## What is Sabbath?

---

**Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.** You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. **For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.** —Exodus 20:8-11

## What is Sabbath?

---

- We rest (Sabbath) because God rests.

## What is Sabbath?

---

Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your oxen and donkeys and other livestock, and any foreigners living among you. All your male and female servants must rest as you do. **Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out with his strong hand and powerful arm. That is why the Lord your God has commanded you to rest on the Sabbath day.**—Deuteronomy 5:12-15

## What is Sabbath?

---

- We rest (Sabbath) because God rests.
- We rest (Sabbath) because it reminds us that God provides and that we are not in control. It is a reminder of God's care and justice.

## What is Sabbath?

---

One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. But the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?”

Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He went into the house of God...and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions.”

Then Jesus said to them, “**The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.** So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!” —Mark 2:23-28

## What is Sabbath?

---

- We rest (Sabbath) because God rests.
- We rest (Sabbath) because it reminds us that God provides and that we are not in control. It is a reminder of God’s care and justice.
- We rest (Sabbath) because it meets our needs. It helps be who we are created to be.



## Sabbath as Trust and Submission

Sabbath is "...an act of trust in the subversive, exodus-causing God...[and] an act of submission to the restful God....Sabbath is a practical divestment so that neighborly engagement, rather than production and consumption, defines our lives. It is for good reason that Sabbath has long been, for theologically serious Jews, the defining discipline."

—Walter Brueggemann



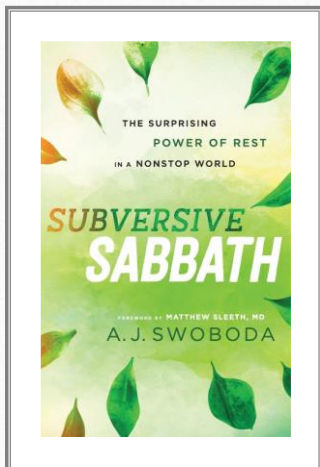
## Sabbath as Trust and Submission

- Through the practice of sabbath, trust and submission to God was lived out weekly in the lives of those who claimed faith in the God of Israel.
- This weekly repetition was a reminder of who the people of God were called to be.
- As opposed to the systems of neighboring cultures that focused on production, commodity, restlessness, and violence, all leading to a skewed understanding of humanity (i.e., the other is enemy or slave), the practice of trust and submission created the conditions for seeing the image of God in all people.

## Sabbath as Acknowledgement of Presence

- Hidden within the practice of sabbath is an invitation to become something greater. Sabbath is concerned with rest, but rest is not the finality of the experience.
- Sabbath requires giving up control.
- We want to control our lives and the situations we find ourselves in. To fully control those situations requires controlling ourselves, but also others, and God. Sabbath requires giving up control and submitting and trusting that God has control.
- Connected to trust and submission is an acknowledgement of the presence. Sabbath is a practice in faith that the Spirit of God is present amid all circumstances. One can rest because they believe God is with them, despite what the situation may look like.

## Sabbath as a Means of Connection

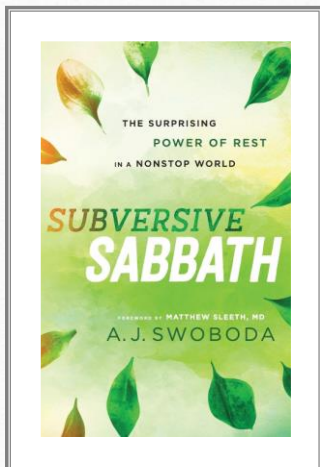


### Book Sections:

- Sabbath for Us
- Sabbath for Others
- Sabbath for Creation
- Sabbath for Worship

## Sabbath as a Means of Connection

- Sabbath extends beyond human/personal experience. It serves as a common experience.
- Sabbath has the potential to function as a type of meeting place between individuals, communities, and the larger world.
- When we engage in sabbath we slow ourselves down enough to interact with others and the world. We also slow ourselves down enough to acknowledge ourselves and God.



## Sabbath as a Formational Experience

“...a Sabbath assumes community. And by God’s design the Sabbath would draw us in toward each other to lean on and support each other. Sabbath, thus, is a day that draws us into the very nature of God.”

—A. J. Swoboda

## Sabbath as a Formational Experience

---

- Sabbath provides space to experience those beyond oneself.
- Through experiencing others (human, other-than-human, and Divine) the relational attributes of the communal God we serve become better known.
- Sabbath serves a place of reflecting, knowing, and becoming.
- It is a space where one sets aside their ambitions in order to embrace trust in another, and in doing so experience the holiness of God.

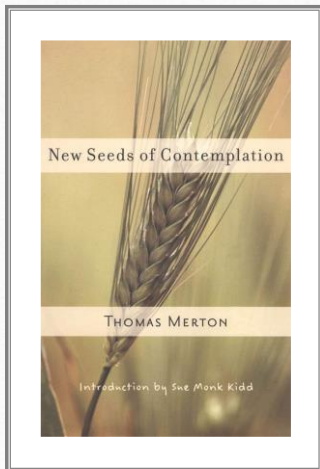
## Sabbath as a Formational Experience

---

Why did God demonstrate sabbath so early on and then command that it become a foundational practice of the Israelite and Christian communities?

- Perhaps sabbath is a means of being formed.
- Perhaps the practice of rest (and trust and submission) orientates us toward a posture of acceptance and engagement.
- Perhaps sabbath is a primary means by which we become more like Christ.

## Sabbath as a Formational Experience



“Contemplation, by which we know and love God as He is in Himself, apprehending Him in a deep and vital experience which is beyond the reach of any natural understanding, is the reason for our creation by God.”

—Thomas Merton

## Sabbath as a Formational Experience

- Sabbath is a practice that teaches us who we are to be, provides us opportunities for becoming, and allows us space for being with God.
- The experience of contemplation is ultimately the same. It is the goal of being with God for no other reason than love of God.
- When God rests after creation perhaps we are observing God in God’s purest sense. God does not exist because of what God does or creates or imagines. At God’s purest God is simply because God is.

## Sabbath as a Formational Experience

- When God rests, God is simply being God. When God invites humanity to enter sabbath God is inviting humanity to do the same. God is inviting humanity to be what humanity was created to be.
- The image of God is not determined by what one does, creates, or imagines. The image of God is observed most fully when one learns to simply be with the Presence of God.
- Sabbath is a means of living out the Imago Dei.

## How to Sabbath—10 Starter Ideas

- Encourage your family to take guiltless naps.
- Take a Sabbath walk.
- Take a media fast.
- Spend at least half an hour in silence.
- Write a letter of appreciation.
- Talk with your family and decide how you want to celebrate the Sabbath.
- Avoid eating out, buying things, and driving (except to church).
- Take off your watch and remove all reminders of work during the Sabbath day.
- Turn off the computer and your cell phone. Use your answering machine to screen calls.
- Spend at least ten minutes completely surrounded by nature.

This list and more can be found at [www.sabbathliving.org](http://www.sabbathliving.org)

## Your Ideal Sabbath Plan

---

- What does sabbath and rest look like to you?
- How might sabbath be implemented in your weekly schedule?
- Take a few minutes and create a sabbath plan.

Share with your group your ideal plan.

## A Day of Sabbath

---

Tomorrow will be dedicated to sabbath.

Other than an evening worship service, there will be no mandatory activities scheduled. Use the day to rest and recharge.

There will be an optional excursion available for those whose sabbath experience might include active elements. If you are interested in participating, please sign-up.

## Course 7: Worship Service

### COURSE PLAN

Session: Session 12 and Session 20

- Locate: The aim of the worship service is to provide space for connection with God through a simple liturgy.
- Elaborate: Two worship services will occur during the retreat. The first at the end of the *day of sabbath*. The second on the final full day of the retreat. The sabbath experience and the retreat are meant to affirm the realization that connection with God can happen in modest and everyday experiences. Worship experiences, and connection, do not need to be overly produced.
- Illuminate: Both services will be structured so that *the Table* (i.e., communion, eucharist) is at the center. Communion, or connection, with God will be recognized as the primary purpose of the service. All other activities will be acknowledged as an *invitation* and *response* to the table.
- Integrate: The service will end with a benediction that challenges participants to be conformed to Christ, which happens through connection.
- Activate: Participants will implicitly be invited to continue to connect with God through their interactions with others, self, the world, and the Spirit throughout the retreat and beyond.

## COURSE MATERIAL

### Order of Worship

- Opening Hymn:** The service begins with the singing of a traditional hymn. We intentionally sing a historic song of the church for two reasons: (1) to remind ourselves that worship is not predicated on *new* or *modern* and (2) to connect us with those who come and gone before us.
- Invocation:** A brief welcome to those who have gathered to worship followed by a prayer inviting the Spirit to be a part of all that occurs during the service.
- Homily:** A short, simple message derived from scripture.
- The Lord's Prayer:** Following the homily, the gathered community prays the Lord's Prayer together. We pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray as a reminder of who we follow and whose image we are being conformed into.
- The Table:** The Table (i.e., Communion, Lord's Supper, or Eucharist) is at the center of the service. Everything up to this point has served as an invitation to the table. Everything following will serve as our response. At the table of Christ, we are invited to share a meal with Christ, and in doing so participate with Christ in the communal life of the Trinity.
- Silence:** Following *the Table*, we enter into a few minutes of intentional silence and contemplation. This is an opportunity to acknowledge and rest in the presence of God.
- Worship in Song:** This is an opportunity to respond and connect to God through music (and/or the arts).
- Doxology:** Sung together, the Doxology reminds of the Trinitarian God we worship as well as our invitation (and the world's) to participate, together, with the Divine community. It is also, once again, a reminder that we are part of a historic church and connected to those who have come before.
- Benediction:** A final blessing as the community prepares to depart:
- May all that we are,  
Our thoughts, our actions, and our trust,  
Be conformed to all that God is, and all that the Spirit is, and all that Christ is,  
They who are our Creator, and our Sustainer, and our Salvation. Amen*

## Course 8: Group Debriefs

### COURSE PLAN

Session: Session 17 and Session 18

- Locate:** There will be two group debrief sessions. The aim of these session will be to talk through what the participants have experienced during the retreat.
- Elaborate:** The first session will be focused on the actual retreat experience, asking questions such as: What went well this week? What didn't go so well? What did I learn to do? The second session will be centered around personal experiences and take-aways: What did I learn about myself? What did I learn about God? Who am I learning to be or become?
- Illuminate:** In many ways, these sessions are about listening to one another, and through listening to others, hearing the Spirit. What might God be saying to you through the words of others (and yourself)?
- Integrate:** A final question to be asked at each session: How can I apply this to my life?
- Activate:** At the conclusion of the second session, participants will be challenged to continue reflecting, but also encouraged to give life to the insights they have had during the week.

## COURSE MATERIAL

# Final Group Reflection & Debrief

Session 1: The Retreat Experience

## The Retreat Experience

- What went well this week?
- What didn't go so well?
- What did I learn to do?
- How can I apply this to my life?

# Final Group Reflection & Debrief

Session 2: Personal and Internal Insights

## Personal and Internal Insights

- What did I learn about myself?
- What did I learn about God?
- Who am I learning to be?
- How can I apply this to my life?



## End of Retreat Survey

## Course 9: Recreational Excursions

### COURSE PLAN

Session: Session 1, Session 7, and Session 11

- Locate:** Recreational opportunities will be offered during the course of the retreat. The aim of these sessions will be two-fold. First, to connect with others and place in a means that is less structured, though purposeful. Second, to allow participants to engage in intentional stress (adventure) that might assist them in later contemplative experiences.
- Elaborate:** Participants will be invited to choose recreational experiences they feel comfortable with. The goal is to encourage each person to step outside their comfort zone while also feeling safe during the experience. Along with being fun, the experiences will hopefully assist participants with future aspects of the retreat.
- Illuminate:** Though no official teaching or texts will be used to discuss the purpose of the recreational activities, these experiences will be considered during the group debriefs at the end of the week.
- Integrate:** The integration of the recreation experiences with the retreat as a whole will be allowed to happen naturally, i.e., recreation and fun will hopefully influence future space where silence and contemplation comes easier.
- Activate:** Similar to integration, the hope is that the recreational experiences naturally assist with future retreat experiences.

## Chapter Eleven: Participant Material and Handouts

The previous chapter provided resources for the facilitator of the retreat. This chapter is dedicated to supplying resources for the participant. The subsequent documents are designed as handouts and educational materials to be distributed before, during, and after the retreat program. Documents included in this chapter include:

- **Handout 1: Lectio Divina**  
This handout provides descriptions for the movements of Lectio Divina. It is to be distributed during Course 3: Listening to the Spirit through Scripture (An Introduction to Lectio Divina). Along with providing descriptions of the movements, it will serve as a tool to assist participants in the practice of Lectio Divina.
- **Handout 2: Practicing Lectio Divina as a Group**  
This document outlines an adapted version of Lectio Divina to be practiced in a group setting. This document will also be distributed and utilized during Course 3.
- **Handout 3: Lectio Creatio**  
This document provides an outline and descriptions for the movements of Lectio Creatio. It is to be distributed during Course 4: Listening to the Spirit through the Created World (An Introduction to Lectio Creatio) and used multiple times throughout the retreat (i.e., Session 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 19).
- **Handout 4: Three Metaphors**  
This document is to also be distributed during Course 4 and in conjunction with Document 3. The Three Metaphors Handout provides biblical and theological perspective concerning how creation might be understood beyond tradition viewpoints.
- **Handout 5: Developing a Sabbath Plan**  
This document is to be distributed during Course 6. It is a planning sheet utilized to design a day of rest. Participants will receive this handout and use it to plan their Sabbath day experience.
- **Handout 6: End of Retreat Survey**  
This document will be distributed and complete at the conclusion of Course 8: Group Debriefs. It is a simple Retreat Survey designed around a Net Promoter framework.
- **Handout 7: Participant Handbook**  
This document is a general informational handbook for participants. It includes schedules, educational outlines, and basic information. It will be distributed at the beginning of the retreat.

## Lectio Divina (Sacred or Divine Reading) Handout

Lectio Divina is one of the oldest means of interacting and engaging scripture. For 1,500+ years Christian (lay, clergy/priests, and monastics) have used the movements of Lektion Divina to enter into the narratives of scripture, listen to the Spirit and connect with God through being aware of the Divine Presence.

### TRADITIONAL MOVEMENTS:

1. **Lectio (Reading)**—Lectio Divina begins with simply reading and hearing the text of Scripture. A passage is read out loud multiple times. As the passage is read, the reader/listener pays attention to what stands out to them (i.e., what word, phrase or idea are they drawn to). The point is not to scrutinize the *word*, but rather be observant and aware.
2. **Meditatio (Meditation)**—In meditation, the reader/listener is invited to ponder the word, phrase, or idea. The reader/listener reflects on how the specific *word* might interact with their life and what it might mean for them at that point in time.
3. **Oratio (Prayer)**—In this movement the reader/listener engages in dialogue with God. The point of this movement is to be honest with both self and Spirit; the reader/listener communicates their feelings of excitement, hesitation, fear, joy, etc.
4. **Contemplatio (Contemplation)**—This is a time of sitting and resting in the presence of God. The goal of contemplation is to simply *be* with God.

### ADDITIONAL MOVEMENTS:

5. **Silencio (Silence)**—The movement is sometimes used as a precursor to the traditional four. In silence, the reader/listener takes a few moments to silence themselves, i.e., momentarily calm down and intentionally let go of any stress they may be dealing.
6. **Actio (Action)**—The final movement is sometimes added at the end. The reader/listener is invited to ask themselves: Who is God calling me to be as a result of this experience?

## Practicing Lectio Divina as a Group Handout

- Preparation through Silence (Silencio)  
Quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God and experience His presence.
- First Reading of the Passage (Lectio)  
Listen to the Text.
- Second Reading of the Passage (Lectio and Meditatio)  
Hear the Text. What word, phrase or idea captures your attention?  
  
Meditate or focus your attention on that word, phrase, or idea.  
  
Repeat it to yourself silently.
- Third Reading of the Passage (Lectio and Meditatio)  
Meditate or focus your attention on how the word, phrase or idea speaks to your life today.  
  
What does it mean for you today?  
  
What is God speaking to you about your life today?
- Fourth Reading of the Passage (Lectio, Meditatio & Actio)  
Meditate or focus your attention on what God is calling you to do or become.  
  
Experiencing God's presence changes us. It calls us to do something. What is God calling you to do or be as a result of this experience?
- Prayer (Oratio)  
Speak to God. Silently, tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you have listened to His word and mediated. Tell God how you hope your heart will be changed to be more like His.
- Contemplation (Contemplatio)  
Focus your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. Simply be with God.

## Lectio Creatio Handout

### PREPARATION

“...quiet preparation of the heart.” —Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Take a few minutes to walk and breathe. Let this be a time of letting go of any stresses or worries that may be on your mind. As you walk pay attention for a place that looks inviting, a place where you can comfortably sit for a few minutes. When you are ready, quit walking and take a seat. Pray this prayer: “God, open my heart, my mind, and my senses to know you in this place. Amen.”

### OBSERVATION

“By means of metaphor we see far more than discrete *things*, we perceive everything in dynamic tension and relationship with everything else.” —Eugene Peterson

Pay attention to your surroundings. Look around. Don’t rush. What do you notice? What stands out? What might the Spirit be drawing your attention to? This might be an animal or a plant or a sound or a movement, or something else. Once you feel yourself drawn to something, focus your attention on that thing. Watch it. Observe it. Let this thing become a metaphor or symbol for you.

### IMAGINATION

“God created us with an imagination, and, as Lord of his Creation, he can and does redeem it and use it for the work of the kingdom of God.” —Richard Foster

Continue to focus your attention. Close your eyes. Picture your symbol in your mind. Replay your observations in your mind. Do it again. And again. What was it that caught your attention? What were the characteristics of the thing that stood out? What attributes of that thing might the Spirit be pointing you toward? How might these attributes connect with where you find yourself today? Who might God be calling you to be or become based on these attributes?

### CONVERSATION

“Prayer...is the most universal of all languages....” —Eugene Peterson

Now is the time to authentically respond to God. Consider (and listen to) the thoughts that have come to mind as you have *observed* and *imagined*. What feelings have emerged? Do you feel encouragement? Do you feel fear? Perhaps you feel something else. Articulate (either silently, vocally or written) what you believe God is calling you to do or be as a result of this experience. Express to God your thoughts, excitements and/or concerns. Now, stop and listen. Open your heart, mind, and senses to the presence of the Spirit. Listen. How might God be responding to your prayer?

## CONTEMPLATION

“God consecrates rest and calls it holy. Rest is for wholeness.” —MaryKate Morse

The goal of contemplation is to simply *be with God*. The early monastics used to describe contemplation using the image of a child who crawls into her mother’s lap and simply sits; the child is not trying to do or say or gain anything, the only goal is to sit with her mother. Stop *observing, imagining, and conversing*. Take several minutes and simply sit with God. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in this place. Breathe in and out. Recognize the Spirit of God is at the same time in you and around you. Rest in that knowledge. Be present with God.

## APPLICATION

“We do well also to remember that the process...is not concluded until it arrives at action....” —Pope Benedict XVI

As this experience comes to a finish, ask yourself some question: (1) Who is God calling me to be? (2) What is God calling me to do? (3) What action(s) am I being asked to take? Take a few moments to ponder these questions and then fill in the blank the best you can: God is calling me to \_\_\_\_\_.

## REFLECTION

“Experience without reflection is a happening, and no learning can be reaped from it.” —Elizabeth Conde-Frazier

**To be completed at a later time:** After the experience has concluded it is wise to take some time to process what you have learned about yourself and God (and others and the world). The act of reflection is important for many reasons, but two primaries are orthodoxy and confirmation. As a member of a larger Christian community, you do not exist in a vacuum, it is important to ensure that the insights you are experiencing align with the larger traditions of faith; the voices of the community of faith (1) help to keep you grounded theologically and (2) verify your intuitions by echoing what you are experiencing.

Two Methods of Reflection:

*Group Reflection* — As a group, gather and share about your experience. What grabbed your attention? What did you hear or feel? What do you believe God is calling you to do or be? Perhaps you didn’t hear anything. That’s OK. After sharing about your experience, allow others to speak into your experience.

*Personal Reflection* — If you practiced this as an individual and you are not part of a group, one way to reflect on your experience is by looking at through various lenses.

- Scripture—How does your experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture? Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide any contributions to your experience?
- Christian Tradition—How does Christian Tradition (History, Theology, etc.) inform your experience?
- Logic—Do the outcomes of your experience make sense? Do they seem reasonable or farfetched?
- Personal Experience—How do your life experiences (or your story) enlighten what you heard or felt? How do the experiences or stories of those you trust enlighten what you heard or felt?

## Three Metaphors Handout

Three Metaphors to consider as you enter this experience:

Creation as God's first **book** of revelation.

- Acts 14:15-17— "...turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts."
- Romans 1:20—For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.
- Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? —St. Augustine

Creation as **a partner or sibling** of humanity.

- Genesis 9:9-10— "I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth.
- Romans 8:19-21— For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
- All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing...O brother wind, air, clouds, and rain, by which all creatures ye sustain...O sister water, flowing clear, make music for thy Lord to hear...Dear mother earth, who day by day unfoldest blessings on our say...O praise ye! Alleluia! —Francis of Assisi

Creation as a **teacher** to humanity.

- Job 12:7-10— "Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you.... For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.
- Psalm 97:6—The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory.
- Nature is school-mistress, the soul the pupil; and whatever one has taught or the other has learned has come from God – the Teacher of the teacher. —Tertullian

## Developing a Sabbath Plan Handout

During a normal week, when would be the best time for you to practice Sabbath?

---

---

---

---

What do you need to do to prepare for Sabbath?

---

---

---

---

What energizes you? What endeavors help you to feel rested? What will you do?

---

---

---

---

What drains you? What endeavors lead to you feeling tired? What will you avoid?

---

---

---

---

What might interrupt or tempt you to break your Sabbath? How might you avoid those things?

---

---

---

---

What are your goals for Sabbath?

---

---

---

---

*\*Adapted from Matthew Sleeth, 24/6: A Prescription of a Healthier, Happier Life*

## End of Retreat Survey Handout

On a scale 0-10, how likely are you to recommend this retreat to another person?

(Unfavorable)    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    (Favorable)

On a scale 0-10, how would you rate the retreat educationally? Do you feel you have learned something new?

(Unfavorable)    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    (Favorable)

On a scale 0-10, rate the retreat in terms of enjoyment. Was the retreat a beneficial, fulfilling, and fun?

(Unfavorable)    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    (Favorable)

On a scale 0-10, how likely are you to utilize the tools (Lectio Creatio, Lectio Divina, etc.) learned during the retreat?

(Unfavorable)    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    (Favorable)

On a scale 0-10, do you feel this week was beneficial to your personal spiritual development and relationship to God?

(Unfavorable)    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    (Favorable)

What did we do well?

---



---



---

How might we improve?

---



---



---

What recommendations would you make?

---




---



---

*Feel free to use the back of this form for any additional comments.*

# Participant Handbook

Participant Handbook	
	
<b>READING CREATION RETREATS</b>	
Connecting with God through Experiencing Creation	
Table of Contents	
Retreat Schedule	1
About the Retreat	2
Objective	2
Location Information	2
Important Information	3
Meal	3
Personal Time, Breaks, & Sabbath	3
Safety	3
Course Outline and Notes	4
A Practical Pneumatology	4
Listening to the Spirit through Scripture	5
Listening the Spirit through the Created World	6
An Introduction to Sabbath	7
Experience/Guides	8
Lectio Divina	8
Lectio Creatio	9
Personal and Group Reflection	10

Retreat Schedule		About the Retreat
<b>Day 1 – Arrival Day</b> 3:00pm-6:00p Arrival/Check-in 7:30pm-8:30pm Optional Dinner/Networking		<b>Our Objectives This Week</b> The purpose of this reading group is to provide a safe space for participants to explore their own experiences with trauma and to learn from the experiences of others. The group will focus on understanding the impact of trauma on the individual, the community, and the world. The group will also explore ways to build resilience and to create a more just and equitable world.
<b>Day 2 – Group Orientation Day</b> 9:15am-10:00am Community Building 10:30am-11:45pm Affirmative Psychology 11:30pm-2:45pm Listening to the Voices of the Oppressed 2:45pm-4:00pm Learning to Say No Through the Creative Word 7:00pm-8:30pm The Power of the Written Word		
<b>Day 3 – Initial Experiences Day</b> 9:00am-1:00pm Choose Your Adventure 2:00pm-3:15pm Practicing Creative Writing 3:15pm-4:30pm Audio Production: Substack 5:00pm-6:15pm Day 3 Group Reflection		
<b>Day 4 – Sabbath Day</b> 7:00am-8:00pm Day 4 Sabbath/Reflection/Excursion/Workshop/Service		
<b>Day 5 – Sole Day</b> 9:15am-10:00am Review/Introduction to Creative Writing 11:00am-5:00pm A Day to Write/Practice Creative Writing 5:00pm-6:15pm Day 5 Group Reflection		
<b>Day 6 – Reflection Day</b> 9:15am-10:00pm Practicing Creative Writing 10:30am-11:45pm Group Reflection 11:30pm-2:45pm Group Reflection 2:45pm-4:00pm Final Group Reflection 5:00pm-6:15pm Closing Workshop/Service		
<b>Day 7 – Departure Day</b> Before 11:00am Check-out/Departure		

[illegible]

<p>Course Outlines and Notes</p> <p>Listening to the Spirit through Scripture: An Introduction to Lectio Divina</p> <p>How might I actively pay attention to the Spirit?</p> <p>What is Lectio Divina?</p> <p>Movements of Lectio Divina</p> <p>Engaging the Spirit</p>	<p>Course Outlines and Notes</p> <p>Listening the Spirit through the Created World: An Introduction to Lectio Creatio</p> <p>The Spirit in all Things</p> <p>Lectio Creatio</p> <p>Movements of Lectio Creatio</p> <p>Three Metaphors</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>

[illegible]

Experience Guides	Experience Guides
<p><b>Lectio Creatio</b></p> <p><b>Preparation:</b> Take time to immerse yourself in the text. Read it slowly and attentively. Pay attention to the words and phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions or reflections that arise as you read.</p> <p><b>Observation:</b> Pay attention to the words and phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions or reflections that arise as you read.</p> <p><b>Imagination:</b> Continue to immerse yourself in the text. Pay attention to the words and phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions or reflections that arise as you read.</p> <p><b>Conversation:</b> Now it's time to share your thoughts and reflections with others. Discuss the text with a friend or a small group of people. Share your questions and reflections and listen to the thoughts and reflections of others.</p> <p><b>Contemplation:</b> Take time to reflect on the text and your experience of it. Write down any thoughts or reflections that arise as you reflect.</p> <p><b>Application:</b> As the experience comes to a close, take a moment to reflect on what you have learned and how you can apply it to your life. Write down any thoughts or reflections that arise as you reflect.</p>	<p><b>Lectio Creatio et Personal Reflection</b></p> <p><b>To be completed at a later time:</b> After the experience is over, take time to reflect on what you have learned and how you can apply it to your life. Write down any thoughts or reflections that arise as you reflect.</p> <p><b>Group Reflection:</b> Take time to share your thoughts and reflections with others. Discuss the text with a friend or a small group of people. Share your questions and reflections and listen to the thoughts and reflections of others.</p> <p><b>Personal Reflection:</b> Take time to reflect on the text and your experience of it. Write down any thoughts or reflections that arise as you reflect.</p> <p><b>Scripture:</b> Now it's time to share your thoughts and reflections with others. Discuss the text with a friend or a small group of people. Share your questions and reflections and listen to the thoughts and reflections of others.</p> <p><b>Creative Reflection:</b> Take time to reflect on the text and your experience of it. Write down any thoughts or reflections that arise as you reflect.</p> <p><b>Personal Experience:</b> Now it's time to share your thoughts and reflections with others. Discuss the text with a friend or a small group of people. Share your questions and reflections and listen to the thoughts and reflections of others.</p>

# Experience Guides

## Lectio Creatio Group and Personal Reflection

**To be completed at a later time:** After this experience has concluded it is wise to take some time to process and think through what you have learned. The fact that reflection is important for many reasons, but two primary reasons are the orthodox and confirmation. As a member of the larger Christian community, you do not exist in a vacuum. It is important to ensure that the insights you are experiencing align with the larger traditions of faith. Reflection (1) helps to keep you grounded theologically and (2) verify your intuitions.

**Group Reflection**—As a group, gather and share about your experience. What grabbed your attention? What did you hear or feel? What do you believe God is calling you to do or be? Perhaps you didn't hear or feel anything. That's OK. After sharing about your experience, allow others to speak into your experience.

**Personal Reflection** — If you practiced this in an individual and you are not part of a group, one way to reflect on your experience is by looking at through various lenses.

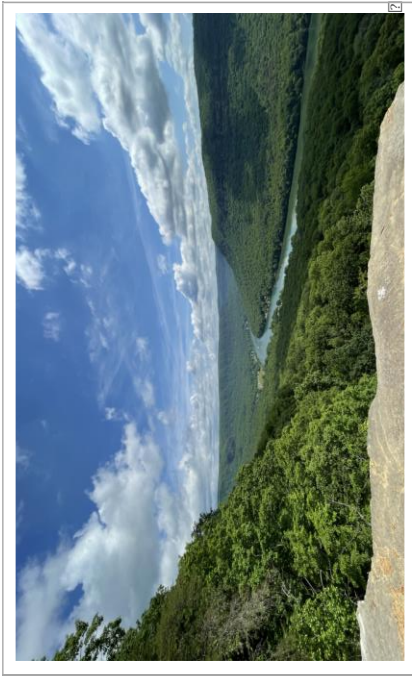
**Scripture**—How does your experience or insights line up with the stories of Scripture? Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide any contributions to your experience?

**Christian Tradition**—How does Christian tradition (History, Theology, etc.) inform your experience?

**Logic/Reason**—Does the outcome of your experience make sense? Do they seem reasonable or far-fetched?

**Personal Experience**—How do your life experiences (or your story) enlighten what you heard or felt? How do the experiences or stories that those you trust enlighten what you heard or felt?

# Participant Handbook



## READING CREATION RETREATS

Connecting with God through Experiencing Creation



# Experience Guides

## Lectio Divina

### Traditional Movements:

Lectio (Reading)—Lectio Divina begins with simply reading and hearing the text of scripture. A passage is read aloud multiple times. As the passage is read, the reader/listener pays attention to what stands out to them (i.e., what word, phrase or idea is they draw to). The point is not to scrutinize the word, but rather to be servant and aware.

Meditatio (Meditation)—In meditation, the reader/listener is invited to ponder the word, phrase, or idea. The reader/listener reflects on how the specific word might interact with their life and what it might mean for them at that point in time.

Oratio (Prayer)—In this movement the reader/listener engages in a dialogue with God. The point of this movement is to be honest with oneself and the spirit; the reader/listener communicates their feelings of excitement, hesitation, fear, joy, etc.

Contemplatio (Contemplation)—This is the time of sitting and resting in the presence of God. The goal of contemplation is to simply be with God.

### Additional Movements:

Silencio (Silence)—The movement is sometimes used as a precursor to the traditional four. In silence, the reader/listener takes a few moments to silence themselves, i.e., momentarily calm down and intentionally let go of any stress they may be dealing.

Actio (Action)—The final movement is sometimes added to the end. The reader/listener is invited to ask themselves: Who is God calling me to be as a result of this experience?

\* Adapted from Madeleine Berg-Alhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*

# Retreat Schedule

## Day 1—Arrival Day

3:00pm-6:00pm Arrival and Check-in  
7:30pm-8:30pm Optional Campfire Gathering

## Day 2—Group Orientation Day

9:15am-10:30am Community Building  
10:30am-11:45pm Practical Pneumatology  
1:30pm-2:45pm Listening to the Spirit through Scripture  
2:45pm-4:00pm Listening to the Spirit through the Created World  
5:00pm-6:15pm The Gift of People and Place

## Day 3—Initial Experiences Day

9:00am-1:00pm Choose Your Adventure  
2:00pm-3:15pm Practicing Lectio Lectio  
3:15pm-4:30pm An Introduction to Sabbath  
5:00pm-6:15pm End of the Day Reflection

## Day 4—Sabbath Day

9:00am-5:00pm Day of Sabbath (Optional Excursion)  
7:00pm-8:00pm Worship Service

## Day 5—Solo Day

9:15am-10:45am Review and Discussion of Lectio Lectio  
11:00am-5:00pm A Day of Solitude and Practicing Lectio Lectio  
5:00pm-6:15pm End of Day Group Reflection

## Day 6—Reflection Day

9:15am-10:30am Practicing Lectio Lectio  
10:30am-11:45pm Group Debrief  
1:30pm-2:45pm Group Debrief  
2:45pm-4:00pm Final Solo Reflection  
5:00pm-6:15pm Closing Worship Service

## Day 7—Departure Day

Before 1:00am Check-out and Departure

About the Retreat?

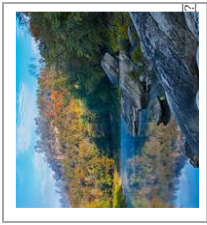
Course Outlines and Notes

Our Objectives this Week

The goal of the Reading & Reflection Retreat is to assist those who participate in the Retreats in moving toward the ultimate goal of knowing and becoming more like Christ. We do this by facilitating activities, providing tools for physical, mental, spiritual and social interaction, and creating space for rest, silence, and reflection. Our hope is that through these experiences you will feel a greater sense of connection with God, the world, and others (as well as yourself), and through those connections a better realization of who you are called and created to be.

Location Information

This space is allocated for information concerning the specific location of the retreat. Provide information such as the mission or history of the facility being utilized or practical information, e.g., what amenities are available for retreatants to use.



The Rockcastle River

An Introduction to Sabbath

What is Sabbath?

Sabbath as Trust and Submission

Sabbath as a Presence and Means of Connection

Sabbath as a Formational Experience

# Course Outlines and Notes

Listening the Spirit through the Created World:  
An Introduction to Lectio Creatio

The Spirit in all Things

Lectio Creatio

Movements of Lectio Creatio

Three Metaphors

# Important Information

## Meals

Unless otherwise indicated, meals will be served at the following times:

- 8:00am-9:00am Breakfast
- 12:00pm-1:00pm Lunch
- 6:30pm-7:30pm Dinner

The first meal served will be dinner on arrival day and the final meal will be breakfast on departure day.

Breakfast will be served at 8:00am-8:45am on day 3. Back lunches will be provided on days 3, 4, and 5. All meals, except back lunches, will be served at XXXX lodge.

## Personal Time, Breaks, and Sabbath

Built into the schedule are opportunities for rest all time before breakfast and after dinner is *personal time*. This portion of the day can be used in whatever means you desire. Most days will include extended break periods so see it. Day 5 is designated as Sabbath. This day may be used in whatever means you need to be recharged.

## Safety

Please follow all safety suggestions and protocols of XXXX Retreat Center. Along with XXXX Retreat Center safety suggestions, we recommend that you get plenty of rest, eat well, and drink plenty of water during the retreat. Due to the numerous solo experiences scheduled during the retreat, whistles will be issued for participants to use in case of an emergency.

## Course Outlines and Notes

## Course Outlines and Notes

A Practical Pneumatology:  
Knowing the Holy Spirit as the “Sustaining Presence of  
Relational, Divine Life and Love”

Listening to the Spirit through Scripture: An Introduction  
to Lectio Divina

What is a Practical Pneumatology?

How might I actively pay attention to the Spirit?

God is a Relational Existence

What is Lectio Divina?

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Movements of Lectio Divina

The Spirit as Sustaining Presence

Engaging the Spirit

## Chapter Twelve: Venue, Services, & Budget

This final, short chapter is dedicated to asking logistical questions. What are the operational and administrative tasks one must consider before implementing the proposed program? The next few pages are broken down into two simple sections. The first section is concerned with the venue (i.e., location and spaces) of the event and the services that are to be provided. The second section is concerned with fiscal matters.

### Venue and Service Considerations

The following list is a break down indicating factors that should be taken into consideration to facilitate the proposed retreat. The intention of this section is not to dictate how the retreat should be facilitated, but rather provide questions that a potential facilitator should be asking during event planning.

Location(s):

- Does the venue have lodging?
- Are there dining areas?
- Are areas reasonably accessible to all?
- Is there access to natural and/or outdoor space?
- Are there classroom or group meeting areas available?
- Is there space that can be utilized for group activities (inside and outside)?
- Is there space that can be utilized for a Worship Service?
- Is the venue in proximity to recreational programming (i.e., excursions)?
- What is the estimated cost for lodging and utilization of the venue?

Meals:

- Does the primary venue offer dining options?
- If not, is there a caterer available?
- If there is not a caterer, are there food preparation areas available?
- Do any participants have special dining requirements (e.g., food allergies, etc.)?
- What is the estimated cost for dining/catering/food preparation?

Transportation:

- How will participants get to and from the retreat center?
- How will participants get to and from excursions?
- Are buildings and facilities at the venue centralized or spread out?
- Are transportation/shuttles needed at the primary venue?
- What is the estimated cost for transportation?

External Partnerships and Services:

- Who will provide the presentation concerning local area/community?
- Are there churches in the area willing to participate/serve meals?
- What adventure programming organizations/companies are in the area?
- Do specialized professionals need to be contracted (e.g., musicians, facilitators, etc.)?
- What is the estimated cost for honorariums and/or service fees?

## Budget Considerations

There is a cost associated with facilitating an event such as the one proposed. The final question in each of the previous lists is concerned with expenses. What is the *estimated cost* to do what we desire to do. The subsequent table (Table 3) is an example of a proposed budget. Though fictional, this budget is based on authentic expenses and real-world costs. To create this proposed budget, the rates and fees of the following organizations were used to estimate lodging and excursion experiences:

- The Close Retreat Center<sup>1</sup>
- Sheltowee Trace Adventure Resort<sup>2</sup>
- Natural Arch Scenic Area, Daniel Boone National Forest<sup>3</sup>

To estimate meal and transportation costs, the following values were applied:

- \$10 per person per meal. This amount will cover all main meals, as well as extra snacks, coffee, etc.
- .60 cents per mile for fuel. The assumption is being made that the facilitator of the retreat has access to vehicles. If that is not the case, an additional cost would be incurred.

For guest presenters and contracted professionals, a \$250 honorarium/service fee is being employed. Finally, the proposed budget assumes 12 participants and 2 facilitators. The facilitators are not paid through the program; therefore, salary is not a line in the budget. Participant Program Fees will cover facilitator lodging, meals, and involvement. Following the proposed example budget is a blank version (Table 4) for potential facilitators to utilize in the planning of a retreat.

**TABLE 3: EXAMPLE BUDGET**

FACTOR	UNITS	COST PER UNIT	FACTOR COST
LOCATION			

<sup>1</sup> "Accommodations," The Close Retreat Center, accessed December 4, 2022, [www.theclose.org/accommodations.html](http://www.theclose.org/accommodations.html).

<sup>2</sup> "White Water Rafting Cumberland Falls, KY," Sheltowee Trace Adventure Resort, accessed December 4, 2022, <https://www.ky-rafting.com/summer-and-fall--cumberland-below-the-falls.html>.

<sup>3</sup> "Daniel Boone National Forest - Natural Arch Scenic Area," USDA Forest Service, accessed December 4, 2022, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/dbnf/recarea/?recid=39726>.

LODGING	14 INDIVIDUALS	\$25/PERSON	\$350
LODGING FEES		\$200/STAY	\$200
PROGRAMING SPACES		INCLUDED WITH LODGING	\$0
MEALS	238 MEALS (17 MEALS X 14)	\$10/MEAL	\$2,380
TRANSPORTATION			
SHUTTLE TO WHITEWATER RAFTING	100 MILES (2 VANS X 50 MILES)	.60/MILE	\$60
SHUTTLE TO SABBATH EXCURSIONS (NATURAL ARCH)	180 MILES (2 VANS X 90 MILES)	.60/MILE	\$108
EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS SERVICES			
SESSION 6 PRESENTER	1	\$250	\$250
WHITEWATER RAFTING	14 INDIVIDUALS	\$109	\$1526
WHITEWATER RAFTING GUIDE TIPS	14 INDIVIDUALS	\$5/PERSON	\$70
SABBATH EXCURSION (NATURAL ARCH)	2 VANS	\$5/VAN	\$10
MUSICIAN FOR WORSHIP SERVICE	2 SESSIONS	\$250/SESSION	\$500
TOTAL COST			\$5,454
PARTICIPANT PROGRAM FEE (TOTAL COST DIVIDED BY 12 PARTICIPANTS & ROUNDED TO NEAREST DOLLAR)			\$455

TABLE 4: BUDGET PLANNING TOOL

FACTOR	UNITS	COST PER UNIT	FACTOR COST
LOCATION			

<b>MEALS</b>			
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>			
<b>EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS SERVICES</b>			
<b>TOTAL COST</b>			
<b>PARTICIPANT PROGRAM FEE (TOTAL COST DIVIDED BY XX PARTICIPANTS &amp; ROUNDED TO NEAREST DOLLAR)</b>			

## Concluding Thoughts

In the introduction of this text, it was mentioned that one's personal experiences influence how they perceive the world. In the same manner, one's worldview is going to influence how they proceed in their interactions. Every person is going to receive, embrace, react, and progress in unique ways. Consequently, there is no definitive way to move forward in the creation of a program, event, or experience. There is subjectivity and freedom.

The ideas mentioned in the preceding chapters (i.e., the theoretical, the experiential, and the logistical) flow out of how I understand the world. Of course, they are informed by the ideas of others, but my worldview and my personal experiences have resulted in an emphasis on the concepts mentioned. The retreat I have outlined is the retreat I think would work best should I be the facilitator.

The structure in the pages above will work well, but, if it is to be a great experience and beneficial to all, it must not simply be copied. Obviously, use the resources. The Course Plans, Course Material and Handouts were created to be utilized. But they need to be adapted by the one leading. I encourage whoever may be using these resources: take them and make them your own. Allow the Spirit to use your interests, strengths, and talents to mold the program into something that you are excited about and capable of facilitating.

As stated throughout this work, the ultimate goal is that we are leading people toward Christ and Christlikeness, and in doing so, helping them move toward union and participation with God. In the end, though, it is the Spirit who accomplishes this feat. We are the instruments, but it is the Spirit of God who creates and brings about experiences, connection, and formation. Before attempting to facilitate experiences with Creation and Spirit for others, spend time connecting with the Spirit yourself. Use the tools provided in this text. Get outside. Walk among the trees, waters, and mountains. Pay attention to the silence and listen for the whispers of the Divine. And when you hear, engage. Learn. Be changed. And then find comfort in the Presence of the One whose love sustains you.

## Assessment

To determine the significance and substance of a project, evaluation and assessment are essential factors. It is only through an honest appraisal that the strengths of the venture, as well as its limitations, may be observed. And it is through observation that it may be improved. Below are the four benchmarks established at the onset of the creation of this project followed by a self-assessment of each.

### Benchmark 1

The Handbook and Facilitators Guide will be written in a manner that is comprehensible for the intended audience (Christian Adult) as indicated by the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Report and the Flesch Reading Ease Report.

The average Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score for the entirety of the text is 9.7. The Flesch Reading Ease Score is 53.6. When broken down, some chapters scored a bit higher in both categories (particularly those that employed more theological language) while others scored lower. The goal was to create a document that could be read and understood by *Christian Adults*. Though (in order to be more accessible) I would have preferred to have scored at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, I believe 9.7 is an acceptable Grade Level Score and appropriate for those who would utilize this resource.

### Benchmark 2

The Retreat content and material provided in the Handbook and Facilitators Guide will be usable as is, yet also adaptable so that leaders may utilize and implement in various contexts (i.e., classrooms, camps, personal use, etc.) as indicated through feedback sessions after the project has been finalized.

During the creation of the project, I was able to use and share portions of my project in two contexts outside the intended setting. First, I was invited to serve as an adjunct Christian Studies instructor during the Fall 2022 semester. The course I taught was a required general education religion class at the University where I serve. Several aspects of the project were adapted to be used during that class. Along with taking the students to a park and practicing aspects of *Lectio Creatio*, I was also able to utilize the sections concerning the Holy Spirit/Trinity, *Lectio Divina*, as well as experience-based learning. Along with my classroom adaptation, I was able to share the *Lectio Creatio* structure and the *Three Metaphors* for connecting with Creation with a friend who serves as a pastor. He provided those resources to his congregation to be used during a Sunday service which focused on nature and creation. I received positive feedback concerning the classroom experience(s) and the church experience. The content is adaptable and works well in various venues.

### Benchmark 3

As a resource for Christian spirituality, the desire for the project is that it be theologically sound, yet also stretching. When read and used by others, the material should encourage engagement (i.e., a desire to practice *Lectio Creatio*), but also spark thoughtful questions as indicated by reviews of the material first during feedback sessions and later through requested peer reviews.

As already mentioned, parts of the project have been utilized in both classroom and church venues. Though I received positive feedback concerning the church usage, I cannot speak to whether the Lectio Creatio/Three Metaphor material encouraged questions or theologically inquiry. In the context of the classroom, I observed several students engaging and processing the material. Though not used in exactly the same manner as I would have in the context of the described retreat, I did utilize the material concerning the Holy Spirit in a similar way. This led to thoughtful questions and inquiry in the classroom. Students were also given a “homework assignment” to spend *solo time outdoors* (an experience pulled from the project). The reflection papers I received after the assignment indicated an appreciation of the practice as well as desire to repeat the experience. Again, not an exact implementation of the experiences described in the project, but successful none the less. Where I failed concerning this benchmark is in the implementation of feedback sessions. My intention was to meet with potential facilitators and stakeholders and get their thoughts concerning the material. In the end, time was not on my side, and I failed to meet this goal. Looking forward, I will need to receive more feedback before officially releasing or implementing my project.

## Benchmark 4

As a resource for Christian spirituality intended for a popular audience, the desire is that Christians, both leaders and lay, would enjoy, utilize, and understand the material being presented. The hope is that it would be received in a positive manner by the public as indicated by (1) a score of 3.5 out of 5 on a public review board (e.g., Amazon) and (2) 80% of comments on the review board would be positive.

Obviously, this is a future benchmark, and therefore not yet achieved. With that acknowledged, there does seem to be an interest in the practices described throughout the presented material. Based on the feedback I received during the creation on the project, as well as the response from those who participated in the prototyping, there is a segment of folks within the church who desire to cultivate their spirituality and connect with God by engaging in new experiences, creation and outdoor experiences being a primary means of accomplishing that. I do not know if this specific medium (i.e., handbook) is the opportune method for presenting the material, but, in general, the material is desired. This benchmark will not be accurately accessed until a future date, but until then, the ideas described in the project will continue to be utilized through classes, churches, and shared experiences.

# Project Launch Plan

## Doctoral Project Description

Focusing on a prospective *opportunity*, my NPO states:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the natural world.

My Doctoral Project is a facilitators handbook outlining a retreat that utilizes an adaptation of Lectio Divina (i.e., Lectio Creatio) to foster observation, reflection, and engagement with God (i.e., contemplation) in the context of natural space. The facilitators handbook provides theoretical, experiential, and practical information that could be utilized to facilitate the proposed retreat or adapted and employed in other contexts (e.g., classroom, church, etc.) to encourage spiritual growth. The Doctoral Project, therefore, is not only the facilitators handbook, but also the unique experiences (e.g., retreats) developed through the use of the handbook.

## Audience

Over the course of the development of the project, two audiences have emerged.

The primary audience includes those individuals interested in leading and facilitating creation or nature-focused programming. Though the handbook outlines the experiences associated with a particular retreat program, the elements of the program can be adapted for other programmatic ventures in other contexts (e.g., classroom, church, etc.). Consequently, the primary audience may not be a retreat facilitator, they may serve as pastor, teacher, small group leader, etc.

The secondary audience includes those who would participate in the proposed program(s). The handbook was not created for use by the participant, but they are the intended recipients of the ideas described within. As a facilitator uses the handbook to create experiences, the participant becomes the audience.

In both cases, the intended audience is adult Christians who have an affinity toward experience-based learning, an interest in outdoor recreation, an appreciation for nature-based venues, and a desire for spiritual growth through contemplative experiences.

Bringing this work to the intended audience will largely be a word-of-mouth endeavor. Parts of the project have already been shared with pastors and leaders to use in their contexts and I have utilized portions of the project in a classroom environment. Through sharing in these ways, my hope is that an interest in the content is fostered. As interest is cultivated, experiences will be planned and facilitated.

## Development Plan

The following timeline provides a path for further editing and development, implementation of the described experiences, and finally, release and publication of the project for public use. Along with dissemination of the

information provided in the handbook, a successful launch includes the commencing of regular *Reading Creation* retreats.

- March—May 2023: As an adjunct instructor in Christian Studies at a Christian University, I have the opportunity and freedom to include aspects of my project in my syllabi and class curriculum. Along with adapting course materials for a college classroom, I also have liberty to move classes outside and introduce students to the movements of *Lectio Creatio*. Through classroom implementation and experiential learning opportunities I will continue to refine chapters and retreat materials. Though formal feedback will not be collected, I will observe student interactions with the material, as well as after experience reflections, and take note of any significant response criticism, or critique.
- May—August 2023: Invite feedback from select stakeholders. All or part of the project material will be shared with a selection of individuals (6-9) who participated in the various workshops and/or prototype experiences. Feedback, both written (i.e., edits) and in-person (i.e., Zoom Meeting) will be requested concerning what should be adjusted, removed and/or added to the handbook. Edits will be implemented following stakeholder feedback.
- September 2023: Share facilitator guide material with all previous stakeholders. Invite feedback (written and in-person) from stakeholders. Also, provide permission for stakeholders to utilize the material in their context. Request continued response should a program be facilitated using the supplied material. Edits will be implemented following stakeholder feedback.
- October—December 2023: Continue to refine chapters and retreat materials through classroom implementation (See March—May 2023 for more detail).
- January—March 2024: Seek funding to facilitate two weekend retreats. Funding sources include potential grants (e.g., The Elizabeth Ann Bogert Memorial Fund for the Study and Practice of Christian Mysticism), church sponsorship, and private donation. Approximately \$4,000 will need to be raised to finance two retreats. If 100% of funding is not secured by March, identify cost per person to attend initial weekend retreats. Begin preliminary planning for retreat, i.e., identify venue, food options, transportation, etc.
- March—May 2024: Continue to refine chapters and retreat materials through classroom implementation (See March—May 2023 for more detail).
- May—June 2024: Utilizing project materials, finalize plans for two weekend retreats. Invite former stakeholders to participate in a *Reading Creation* retreat. Secure ten participants (stakeholders or stakeholders and guest) for four days/three nights (Friday-Monday) event. Ideally, this event will be at no cost to the stakeholder/participant.
- July 2024: Facilitate *Reading Creation* retreat with former stakeholders (and guests). Following the event, utilizing debrief sessions, event surveys, and follow-up interviews, receive feedback in regard to content and experience. Based on feedback, adjust for the next retreat, as well as any edits to the facilitators guide.
- August—September 2024: Invite new participants to participate in a *Reading Creation* retreat. Employ former stakeholders to assist in recruiting ten participants for four days/three nights event. These participants will have no previous connection to the project. Ideally, this event will be at no cost to the participant.

- October 2024: Facilitate *Reading Creation* retreat with new participants. Following the event, utilizing debrief sessions, event surveys, and follow-up interviews, receive feedback in regard to content and experience. Based on feedback, make any edits to the facilitators guide.
- October—December 2024: Continue to refine chapters and retreat materials through classroom implementation (See March—May 2023 for more detail).
- January 2025: Revise, edit, and finalize handbook material based on feedback. Research Open Access/Open-Source publishing options. Begin the process of releasing the handbook to the public.
- Spring—Summer 2025: Plan and facilitate ongoing week/weekend retreats.

## Development Process

My intention is to continue to receive constant feedback concerning the project. I will do this by implementing portions of the project into the curriculum of classes I am teaching, requesting criticism from stakeholders who have participated during the research of the project, and implementing the retreats described within the project while inviting reactions from those who participate.

Along with constant feedback, one of the original benchmark goals for the project consisted of evaluation through public review forums. Once the handbook has been released for public use, I will track reviews (scores and comments) through a review board.

I have also established unique benchmarks to assess the program/retreat described within the handbook. Each event should be evaluated based on participant engagement, enjoyment, and embracement:

- Engagement—The retreat is designed in a manner so that the average Christian adult can comprehend and actively participate in all aspects as indicated through (1) intentional observation and informal conversations with participants and (2) receiving feedback ratings of 90% or higher on assessments and surveys.
- Enjoyment—Retreat participants recognize the experience as a beneficial and fulfilling use of time as indicated by (1) observed energetic participation, (2) positive feedback ratings of 90% or higher on assessments and surveys, and (3) intentional recommendation and recruitment of others.
- Embracement—The retreat will introduce participants to tools and theories for connecting with God that are usable and transferable to their day-to-day lives as measured through post-experience surveys and indicated through approval ratings of 90% or higher.

These benchmarks will serve as indicators of the overall effectiveness of the information and material supplied in the Doctoral Project (i.e., handbook). Data received will influence future edits of the facilitator's handbook.

## Appendix A— Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

## NPO Charter

### Personal Research Manifesto

Research is not an unaccompanied endeavor; as I embark on this journey, I recognize my reliance on others and that the community's voice will be essential to whatever I discover.

### NPO Statement

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, has the potential to create opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

### NPO Scope And Constraints

The emphasis of this NPO is understanding how outdoor-focused experiences act as a pathway toward spiritual growth. The goal is to both comprehend how this growth occurs and to create a program/curriculum that cultivates this type of opportunity. Though there very likely will be some cost implementing this type of program, i.e., travel expenses, equipment, fees, etc., the amount should vary depending on the complexity of the experience; the cost of the implementation of the guiding ideas should be minimal when realized as a smaller experience, yet the impact should be comparable.

### NPO Context

Rooted in the Christian tradition, this NPO will be approached from an inter-denominational/ecumenical perspective, allowing for varying understandings of spiritual growth. This deliberate inclusivity will extend to all socio-cultural categories with the intention that all individuals who find themselves desiring to participate may do so. The primary geographic location of the project will initially be southern Kentucky with programming potentially occurring in the larger Southeast region of the United States. With southern Kentucky being the base of operations, and therefore the primary area in which participants would be drawn, it can be anticipated that a majority would identify as middle class, white, socially conservative individuals coming from Protestant (Evangelical) Christian faith traditions. Due to the nature of outdoor-focused programming, e.g., adventure trips, retreats, travel, etc., participant numbers for each experience would likely hover around 6-14 individuals who are physically and mentally capable of taking part in the experience.

### Root Causes

A primary *root cause* determined through the discovery process was the idea of *uncertainty*; outdoor-focused experiences serve as a significant venue for spiritual growth because life often results in feelings of ambiguity and fracture, and creation/nature has the potential to provide a place of stability and connection during those times. A couple key reasons for why this is true were suggested, one being a lack of understanding of how humanity, and the individual, is connected to something larger, whether that is God or the world itself; when one feels alone, i.e., disconnected, one ceases to understand how they fit and exist in the larger whole, creating that sense of uncertainty. A second reason had to do with how folks prioritize what needs to be accomplished over what is important leading to false values, weak mooring of oneself to faith and a feeling of imbalance, again, causing a sense of uncertainty.

## Discovery Workshop Stakeholders

The Discovery Workshop included the following stakeholders: Youth Pastor, Executive Pastor, YMCA Professional, Christian Camp Professional, Parent, Missionary, and Business Professor.

## One-On-One Interviews

The interviews included a Creation-Care Non-Profit Founder/Director, an Outdoor Center Director, and an Associate Pastor.

## 3–5 Key Biblical Texts

- Genesis 2:4b-22
- Genesis 12:1-4a
- Deuteronomy 30:11-20
- Luke 4:1-15
- Revelation 21:1-5a

## Academic Resources

Moving forward will require exploring how several unique fields interconnect. A sampling of the areas that should be surveyed include environmental science, eco-theology, spirituality, experiential education, human development, anthropology, and sociology. Some key thinkers to interact with include farmer and author Wendell Berry, mystic and theologian Thomas Merton, theologian, and academic Clark Pinnock, as well as a multitude of education theorists, social and natural scientists, theologians, and outdoor-focused practitioners. Along with authors and thinkers, a valuable network/resource will be academic institutions/centers that emphasize the connection between faith formation and creation, e.g., Wheaton College, Memphis Theological Seminary, Portland Seminary, etc.

## NPO Charter Appendix

### Discovery Workshop Description

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of physical distance between stakeholders, the Discovery Workshop occurred over a two-day period through Zoom. Along with an introduction/overview and summary/debrief the workshop consisted of four primary sessions:

- Session 1 focused on NPO Definition and Audience. Using Google Docs, stakeholders answered various questions in order to better define the NPO and audience.
- Session 2 was concerned with the influence of the NPO. Using an online empathy map, Stakeholders were asked to brainstorm responses to, “What will the audience say, think, feel and do differently when the NPO is addressed?”
- Session 3 asked stakeholders to work through a series of Why questions in order to determine a root cause. An online spreadsheet was utilized to accomplish this individually and then cooperatively.
- Session 4 again employed Google Docs; the group attempted to take what had been previously discussed and put it together in order to create a Discovery Statement.

The Discovery Workshop included the following Stakeholders:

1. A Business professor at a small Christian University; Former student life professional; Former experience serving in corporate and non-profit/church business settings.
2. A current volunteer English teacher with The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity; Former youth director.
3. A Freelance Team Building Facilitator; Christian Camp Professional.
4. A YMCA professional; Former Summer Camp Director.
5. An Executive Pastor; Christian School Administrator.
6. A Former Youth Director and current stay-at-home parent.
7. A Youth Pastor and Master of Divinity Student.

### Discovery Statement

Considering the [spiritually minded] individual in the midst of life transitions (audience),

we’ve discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, has the potential to create opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection (NPO).

This opportunity exists because a common result of life transition is a sense of uncertainty and a feeling of fracture, whereas out-door focused experiences have the potential to create a sense of rootedness as well as a recognition that one is part of a larger whole (root cause).

If addressed, it would mean those in the midst of life transitions would experience a deeper sense of integration (i.e., relief from stress, a sense of empowerment, personal growth) and a sense of connection with God, oneself and others (outcome).

## Critical Insights from Discovery Workshop

The topic that created most conversation was *audience*. First, the group was split concerning who the audience was, active/engaged Christians, the *spiritually minded*, or people in general. This was recognized as important because this identifier determines how the project will ultimately be designed, and therefore clarification is essential to moving forward. Secondly, the majority of stakeholders identified individuals experiencing life transitions as a primary group to focus on. This insight connected to the session 3 activity in that *uncertainty* was acknowledged as a reason why the NPO should be pursued; for many, *uncertainty* and *transition* are connected and there is something, according to the stakeholders, that outdoor-focused experiences have to offer this context. Finally, it was recognized that the *social constructs/culture* of the audience would be a key element to consider because factors such as race, economy, geography, etc. influence how one perceives outdoor-focused experience.

## One-On-One Interview Discoveries

Several important insights came from the interviews; some echoed ideas produced during the Discovery Workshop/ interviews while others were unique to individual interviewees. All, in some way, acknowledged the importance of *intentional reflection*; it is through observation and thought that growth/personal application is developed. The discussion of audience continued; *spiritually minded* vs *Christian* was acknowledged as an important distinction to clarify as well as the need for a *biblical undergirding*. It was suggested that a solid biblical/theological foundation is what would set this NPO apart from others. A topic identified as essential during research was socio/economic factors; it was proposed that some individuals might perceive the outdoors as a *hostile* environment due to various reasons. Because of *fear* there may need to be discussions concerning starting points/levels of participation. The concept of *temporary community* was also discussed in how it relates to transition, sabbath and experience.

## Synthesis

As mentioned, refining the audience seems to be a critical step moving forward; should the final project focus solely on those who identify as *Christian*, or should it be developed more broadly? If understood in a broader sense, what would discussions around spirituality look like? The importance of observation and reflection was universally acknowledged, but how that happens would be dependent on the audience's spiritual background.

The *root cause* of *uncertainty* also reverberated among all stakeholders, though the language seemed to be different during the interviews; rather than *uncertainty*, words such as *fear*, *hostility* and *conflict* were used. Though different words, there is an underlying concept—the feeling of insecurity. If insecurity is the ultimate problem, perhaps the goal of the NPO is stability or confidence, again, an idea that is reaffirmed during the workshop/interviews with words like *empowerment*, *peace*, and *grounding*.

The one crucial divergence centered on whether or not outdoor-focused experiences had much to do with folks experiencing life transitions. According to one interview, serving those in transition was more connected with understanding *temporary community*. There is a connection in that outdoor experience is a great venue for *temporary community*, but perhaps that is the only connection.

## Next Steps

Moving forward there are several topics that need to be further researched. Five that were discussed during the workshop/interviews include:

1. How context influences perception of outdoor activity; not all economic, racial, or geographical groups approach nature in the same manner (or have had the same opportunities).
2. The idea of *life transition* and what that means. *Life transition* could be a specific experience, e.g., marriage, yet it could also be a general concept, i.e., all people are in some kind of transition.
3. How nature-based programming influences health (mental, physical, and spiritual), e.g., do outdoor-focused experiences lessen anxiety/stress, does it create a sense of spiritual wholeness, what are the physical health benefits, etc.?
4. What is the connection between outdoor-focused experiences and novel experiences? Is the opportunity found in being outside or in doing something unique?
5. How best to link experience with reflection, i.e., experiential education.

## Discovery Workshop Documentation

### NPO DEFINITION AND AUDIENCE

NPO STATEMENT: In relation to Christian adults, creation/nature/outdoor focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation (i.e., debriefs, journaling, reflection, etc.), seem to create opportunities for a deeper sense of connection with God and self.

I want to clarify my priorities by focusing on key critical issues...

What is the key issue I am trying to address and why is it important?	Who is it for?	What social/cultural factors shape the NPO?	What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?	Can you think of this NPO in a different way? Can you reframe it?
---	----------------	---	--	---

#### *What is the key issue I am trying to address and why is it important?*

##### Connecting with God through Creation /Bigger Picture

- Allows one to see that the world is much bigger than their own bubble
- Return to an organic or general revelation wisdom/knowledge
- A need to understand that the world is so much bigger than we think
- Locating self in relation to the created world
- Feeling small and finite, getting connected to the larger narrative of God's story through creation
- Allows one to see God outside of church
- Fostering Awe/Wonder
- Providing students/adults ways to tangibly experience connection with God through creation
- Outdoor connection with God and how community impacts that

##### Time and Space/Sacred Space

- Creating space for the practice of gratitude
- Time and space to look back in time and heal
- Time and space to look forward to the future
- Time and space to process challenges that are being faced
- Providing students/adults with intentional space outside of their usual daily routines/environments helps remove barriers to growth/connection.
- The role of the outdoors with rest/sabbath/quieting the soul
- Opportunity to Retreat / Get away from your ingrained patterns
- Integration of mind and setting

- The role of silence/solitude
- Time spent in creation leads to self-awareness Creating space for introspection

#### Connection with Creation/Nature

- Fresh air is good for you
- Not taking care of one's self, teaching kids how to unplug and take time to enjoy nature.
- Urban areas/access to beautiful places
- Changes of physical location/environment and its effect on emotional/spiritual health/function
- How the outdoors and beauty affect some people, but not others (some people are more inclined to need this than others?)
- How to create spaces that are quiet and beautiful when you also have a high amount of guests/people/needs
- Exploration and discovery, how the metaphor of being outside parallels the curiosity needed to connect with the Lord

#### Self-Awareness/Growth

- Exploration of personal capabilities
- Challenges people to see and do things in new ways
- Outdoors plus challenge (hiking/recreation) and how that can aid reflection

*Who is impacted by this potential opportunity and who should I focus on?*

#### Reconnecting with God/refreshment/Growth through tension/struggle x x

- Doubters--struggling to believe/with faith/God
- Parents of students that want their students to grow in faith
- People exploring the Christian faith for the first time
- People in recovery
- Those re-connecting with God (new fresh connection with God who've felt far from Him)

#### People in transition--Life transitions XXx

- People making major decisions
- Those at a crossroads
- People about to make decisions or transitions or changes
- Those launching a new endeavor that need new vision
- People facing periods of growth/self-identification
- Pre-teens and teens creating an identity apart from parents/family
- Older Teens/Young Adults answering question about relationships and career
- Mid-life adults figuring out if their choices, direction, and coping strategies are working for them

- Older adults trying to answer questions about legacy and passing the torch
- College students/young adults
- High School Juniors (Seniors)
- College Students - trying to figure out what is next in life

#### Restoration/Renewal x

- People going through burnout-
- Anyone who is tired after Covid-19
- Anyone who is really busy that needs quiet space
- People in need of healing/restoration after a major loss (grief)
- People finding the pace of life unsustainable and in need of a break.

#### Connecting with others/Unity

- Humans
- Parents
- Multiple Generations
- Those who are lonely and want to feel connected to something bigger
- Larger community that wants a better world
- Couples
- Families
- Children
- Ecumenism
- Lack of access/limited accessibility
- City People
- Urban Dwellers who are increasingly cut off from natural spaces
- Elderly
- Disabled

#### Leadership

- Those in leadership
- Church Elders
- Business Leaders
- Cross denom leadership

*What social and/or cultural factors shape this opportunity (NPO)?*

#### Technology/Ability to Unplug/External Barriers

- Digital distractions vs. unplugging (technology)
- Social Media
- TV bingeing
- Lack of WiFi in the woods

- Technology
- Online identity vs. Actual identity
- FOMO (anxiety)

#### Resources/Access/Lack of

- Finances
- access to wilderness
- Ability to take time off
- Busy schedules keeping people from investing the amount of time necessary for a desired goal
- Being busy
- “Work all the time” culture common in business and church leadership
- Resources (Time/Money/Ability)
- Childcare needs
- Physical fitness
- COVID

#### Identity/Value/Vision/Norms x xxxX

- “If it’s not visible”
- Family of origin’s value for the outdoor
- Knowing the need for this, belief in the value
- Value for sabbath (or lack thereof)
- Location of origin (i.e., don’t enjoy the outdoors because of where you grew up/how you grew up)
- Fear of the outdoors (unknown factors for people not used to it)
- Socioeconomic status/upbringing (i.e., inner city vs suburban cultures)
- Does your family/culture/community value these types of experiences?
- What people find fun
- Value placed on task orientation
- Education

#### Culture/Internal Barriers/Perspectives/Social Constructs xx

- Male / female stereotypes about outdoor activities
- Age/mental development
- Race concerns
- Fear of silence
- Willingness
- Mental state
- Feelings of Self-Worth
- Confidence in your ability to complete the experience/opportunity
- Pressure to fit in
- Example/Perceptions of others
- Maturity
- Not being cool enough
- Introvert vs extrovert

- education

***What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?***

- Scripture, Tradition, Reason & Experience :P

Experiential Learning

Objective

- Brain science and the role stress plays on our life xxx
- Mental health xx
- The high amount of anxiety in our culture (widely accepted across disciplines)xx
- The physiological calming affect being outside has had during Covid
- Rest and reset comes from being outdoors Xx
- Positive risks that empower better decision making xX
- Community building xxXxx
- Critical thinking skills developed xxxx
- Bridging cultural gaps xx
- Using outdoor space to develop understanding
- Pushing personal boundaries xxx
- Story telling xxX
- Innate Psychological/Emotional/Spiritual Desire for Connection to God & Others x
- Desire to know one's place in the created order
- The lessons of Sabbath both spiritually and historically xxX
- Learning: Wisdom of Nature, Cruelty of Nature

Subjective

- Working with reflection retreats with adult women, and the role space plays in rest/re-envisioning
- Going through personal burnout and what helped me at the time x
- Impact of daily personal outdoor space on my ability to be creative
- Hikes in the mountains to just gain perspective and clear my head XX
- The value for being away to get perspective (mountaintop) to give vision for the valley of daily life  
xxx
- The role outdoors/community, and environment play in my job in camp ministry
- Parks & rec and the role of reflection/discussion in personal awareness
- Working with youth day in and day out, and then we get them to camp and they make decisions for Jesus, or connect all the things they've been learning all year x
- Being able to write/create/process so much more clearly away from home x
- I've witnessed incredible breakthroughs on Fall student retreats x
- I've seen students share with incredible vulnerability during a week at camp
- Outdoors/nature/connection with creation has been a lifeline for me personally in the past 7 months  
x
- Being in nature/creation has given me opportunity for deeper conversations with my own kids X

- Personally life altering for me - my biggest personal life change/transition happened through this form of environment xxxx
- Watching during backpacking trips, the role that unplugging plays, and how much deeper they share a few days in
- College student development training experience (growth in my RAs)
- Outdoor experiences open the door for high school students to respond to God's call and will for their lives xx
- Family ropes course revelation at Honeyrock
- Seeing life transition in teen moms from the inner city at YoungLives camp
- Opportunity to talk about creation and our role in stewardship with my own children happens outdoors xXxx
- Many significant experiences/times of growth/development for me growing up were often on camping/retreat experiences xXxxx
- Outdoors together is a perfect place to do relational ministry xxx
- Personal Experience x
- Common Sense x
- Testimony of Others/Received Wisdom xXx
- Hearing friends/family dream about rest vacations with longing
- The lessons of Covid (stress vs. rest)

In relation to Christian adults, creation/nature/outdoor focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation (i.e., debriefs, journaling, reflection, etc.), seem to create opportunities for a deeper sense of connection with God and self.

Themes	What is the key issue I am trying to address and why is it important?	Who is it for?	What social/cultural factors shape the NPO?	What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?	Can you think of this NPO in a different way? Can you reframe it?
Personal Experience					
Self-Introspection					
Setting aside space/time					

**How might we think of this NPO in a different way? How might we reframe it?**

- Audience is guiding people along--Leaders
- Broaden the audience---spiritual vs “Christian adult”;
- This is a vehicle for anyone wanting to go somewhere
- Should community be included? God, self, and others (communal experience)
- Bias? Perhaps there are some who hate nature. What do we do for those folks
- The idea that not connecting with nature is a real modern idea; appreciation of other traditions/pathways
- Beautiful/peaceful space
- Investing those who have not experienced creation
- rest/sabbath -->connection with God (this is where the “thoughtful observation” comes in to play)
- Need/Problem--people are starved for this type of experience because of technology/fear/lack of experience
- Rest vs. challenge
- Individual vs community --getting back to nature
- Creation nature--do we broaden to beautiful spaces?
- Self betterment with/in nature.

In relation to Christian adults,

creation/nature/outdoor focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation (i.e., debriefs, journaling, reflection, etc.), seem to create opportunities for transformation and deeper sense of connection with God, self, and others.

*“Considering spiritual minded individuals who are in the midst of life transitions, we’ve discovered*

.... That integrated outdoor experiences in solitude and/or community, seem to create opportunities for transformation and connection with God self and others.

\_\_\_\_\_ (audience / who for), we’ve discovered \_\_\_\_\_ (NPO).”

“For the spiritually-minded individual in the midst of life transitions, we’ve discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, seem to create opportunities for transformation and a deeper sense of connection with God, self, and others.”

## UNDERSTANDING THOSE IMPACTED BY THE NPO

# Empathy Map

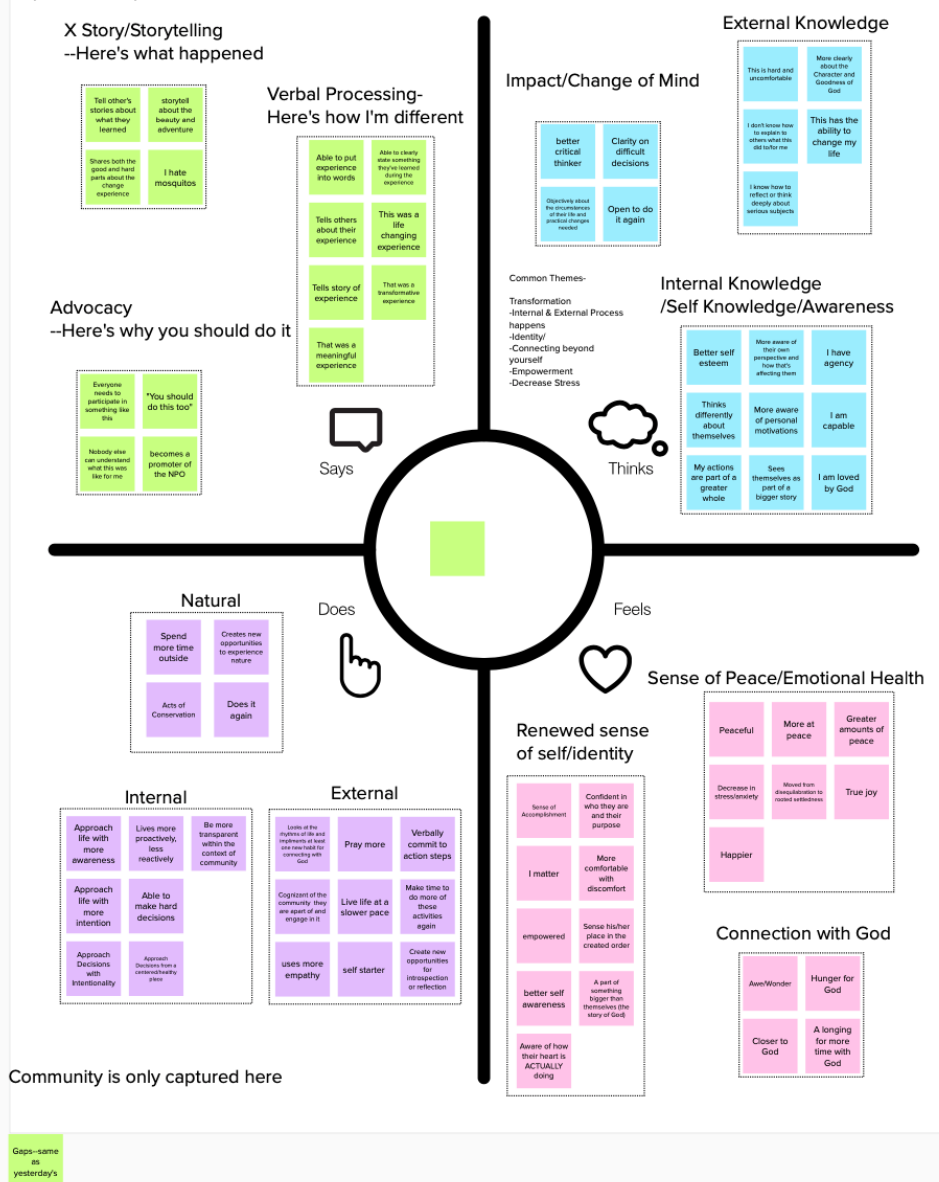
Use this template to create empathy for whoever you're solving a problem for.

1

Build empathy and keep your focus on the user by putting yourself in their shoes.

All of this requires the experience

other venues can create this





## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

### Key Takeaways--

#### Activity One: NPO Definition and Audience

- There is great value in collaboration/working in community
- The power is in the processing
- The prevalent role of transitions and disequilibrium in bringing us to hunger connecting with God.
- Community, structure, and feedback aid our processes in understanding
- Understanding the greater need and working toward something to help the greater good.
- We must overcome internal & external barriers in our spiritual work.

#### Activity Two: Understanding those Impacted by the NPO (Empathy Map)

- Even when we engage in community, we still need space to process internally
- The role of storytelling and articulating action steps after the experience
- Outward change comes through internal experiences/processing
- How a religious/faith-based understanding can help the individual achieve more.
- 
- Internal and external factors make up how we process events
- There is a universal desire to be part of something bigger than self, and nature-oriented experiences can facilitate/locate you in that desire.

#### Activity Three: Finding the Root Cause (5 WHYS)

- There is a deep need in our world for support as we process through brokenness and change
- How much the current moment (and human condition) is priming us for collectively getting better at rest, reflection, and new habits
- Reactive vs. intentional values-based living, and the need to evaluate that
- To be able to make changes we have to make time and space for it
- There is a need to come to the end of ourselves and connect/reconnect with something/someone bigger than us
- There is a disconnect between our values and lived experiences that creates anxiety/uncertainty that we need to address.

#### Points of Friction?

- Audience?
- Spiritually minded vs faith-based
- Bible/scripture

#### Points that need Clarification.

- Definitions, i.e., holistic, spiritually minded,
- Audience
- Goals based on audience

- Geography, demographic, etc.

Group Questions?

- Who is the audience?

Considering the spiritually minded individual in the midst of life transitions,

we've discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, seem to create opportunities for transformation and a deeper sense of connection with God, self, and others.

Common Themes from Empathy Map-

Transformation

-Internal & External Process happens

-Identity/

-Connecting beyond yourself

-Empowerment

-Decrease Stress

Root Cause: Because of uncertainty, people are more willing to go through the pain of change & try new experiences

Considering the individual in the midst of life transitions (audience),

we've discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing creates opportunities for transformation and a deeper sense of connection with God, self, and others (NPO).

This is true because in times of uncertainty people are willing to go through the pain of change and try new experiences (root cause).

If accomplished, it would mean an increased awareness that leads to deeper integration of the individual and a values-based life change (outcome).

Integration of Values and Lived Experience

Increased awareness (know), have a greater sense of integration (feel)  
and a framework for thoughtful observation through engagement with nature (do)

Individual would be equipped with tools to navigate uncertainty through engagement with nature.

*Uncertainty creates a willingness to go through the pain of change and try new experiences...*

current uncertainty, resulting in people's willingness to go through the pain of change & try new experiences (root cause).

### **Discovery Statement:**

Considering the [spiritually minded] individual in the midst of life transitions (audience),

we've discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, has the potential to create opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection (NPO).

This opportunity exists because a common result of life transition is a sense uncertainty and a feeling of fracture, whereas out-door focused experiences have the potential to create a sense of rootedness as well as a recognition that one is part of a larger whole (root cause).

If addressed, it would mean those in the midst of life transitions would experience a deeper sense of integration (i.e., relief from stress, a sense of empowerment, personal growth) and a sense of connection with God, oneself, and others (outcome)

### **Final Debrief -- A Driving Analogy**

1. **Keep my eyes on the road:** As I continue researching this Opportunity (NPO), what should I be sure to examine?
  - Definitions
  - What is universally true vs context
  - Audience and outcome
  - application
2. **Looking over my shoulder:** As I continue researching this Opportunity (NPO), what are potential blind spots that I best explore?
  - Cultural bias
  - Preferences ---church/faith traditions
  - Demographic lens
  - Wanting to get it done
  - Current events
  - Work from home

3. **Watching for downed trees in the road:** As I continue researching this Opportunity (NPO), what are potential pitfalls that I best avoid?
- Clarity
  - Bias
  - Length
  - Don't see the forest for the trees

## One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

Hello Everyone,

Thank you for your participation this weekend.

I just wanted to see if anyone has had any thoughts since we finished—Is there anything you would have added or have any new ideas come to mind in the last few days? If so, please let me know.

Below is the Discovery Statement that we created (with some editing/rewording from me based on our sessions together—I tried to be faithful to what was discussed); feel free to look it over and let me know if there is anything you would add or change.

### Discovery Statement:

Considering the [spiritually minded] individual in the midst of life transitions (audience),

we've discovered that intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with thoughtful observation and guided processing, has the potential to create opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection (NPO).

This opportunity exists because a common result of life transition is a sense uncertainty and a feeling of fracture, whereas out-door focused experiences have the potential to create a sense of rootedness as well as a recognition that one is part of a larger whole (root cause).

If addressed, it would mean those in the midst of life transitions would experience a deeper sense of integration (i.e., relief from stress, a sense of empowerment, personal growth) and a sense of connection with God, oneself, and others (outcome).

Again, thank you so much. I look forward to the next time I get to see each of you Face-to-Face.

Sincerely,

Ben

## One-On-One Interview Documentation & Data Collection

### 1x1 INTERVIEW #1

Based on the summary of the Discovery Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - Something that everyone has in common is Story telling (Journaling?)—appreciation where you've been
    - The language of Heaven vs the Language of Conflict—City with Gates propped open (Heaven and peace)—Language of heaven is connected to the language of nature in that nature will surpass the priorities of the world
    - Solomon and his richest (The priorities of the world) vs a Flower—the flower wins→Perhaps Flower (nature/creation) becomes a path to God, not the priorities of our world
    - Tree is the height (strongest, longest living) of plant kingdom, yet Jesus talks about flower (weakest, shortest living) and even with a flower, creation wins over the priorities of the world
  - Discussion/reflection afterwards
- 
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - There was nothing that they disagreed
- 
- What is missing?
  - Biblical undergirding of what we're doing
    - How does this connect with scripture?
    - It would be a shame to miss the biblical and just go with the nature, and vice versa
    - Keep it biblically grounded—that's what will distinguish this
- 
- Anything Else?
  - Aesthetic of Trees
  - The only gem Jesus' mentions is the Pearl—mixture of organic and inorganic—living and non-living—
  - Book--"Norton Anthology of Nature Writing"
  - Book—"24/6"
  - Sabbath—"Sabbath is not a day off, it is a day without work in which God rises to the focus"
    - Psalm 21—We'll be let to green pastures, streams—not a wifi connection
    - People who keep sabbath connect with God, and they tend to be folks who connect to nature
    - We are the first generation in 2000 years in which sabbath is optional, and it's not working out

- Conservation—Our original marching orders, as opposed to our current destructive understanding, i.e. being still vs riding a bike up a mountain—perhaps learning to connect with nature is learning to be still, and in stillness connecting with God
  - Care for land fall under sabbatical laws
- Suicide epidemic? Is there a connection between suicide prevention and sabbath, nature/creation experience, and conservation?
- There is research coming out of Australia about connection with Nature and mental health

## 1x1 INTERVIEW #2

Based on the summary of the Discovery Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - 95% agree with
  - The word “Integration” really stood out
    - Get out in nature and & connect with God
  - People experiencing life transitions—really agree with this—especially nothing in society for those transition points
  - Disconnecting from what we are typically connecting to, i.e., technology in order to be free to get out in the wild to connect and test oneself
  - Mental health aspect
  - The idea of experience awe
  - The idea of grounding
  - The idea of being guided—shepherd, guide, etc.
    - Fear: physical, spiritual, or even being disconnected (no phones)
  - Rest vs Challenge
  - Addressing Backgrounds and socio/economic status→helping to get people out the door practically and mentally
- 
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - The one noticed: “Christian Adults” vs “Spiritually Minded”
    - Is this clear that it is Jesus Focused?
    - Definition: Here is who we understood God to be
    - People should know upfront; we don’t want it to be Bait and Switch
    - When we are upfront there is a lot of opportunity
    - Who is the Audience???
- 
- What is missing?
  - Fear of the outdoors
  - Mental Health Aspect—what happens when something is triggered or if you have folks involved who struggle with mental health issues
    - Do “guides” get some kind of Mental Health First Aid training?
  - What is the starting point? Varying degrees of ability/skill/status. How much instruction do folks need?
  - Tools to take home afterwards→Application and continuing reality→ how do folks put what they have learned into practice?
- 
- Anything Else?
  - The TV series Alone—there’s nothing in our society about getting out and testing ourselves—there is nothing for those transition points

- Fear and Lack of control
- Jesus'/scriptural experiences in nature
- There is spiritual integration just being in nature
- Levels of participation: an hour, a day, a week etc. for different folks.
- What is nature/creation/outdoor experience?
  - Broad—wild—untamed—huge—peace—grounded--and healing. Large scale like the top of a mountain or the ocean. Something Big→ I am small, but not insignificant.
  - What is life about vs what it seems to be about
  - The big things, but also the grounded things, i.e., gardening, woodworking, sitting on a park bench.
- Sabbath—the act of removing self from the day-to-day is a reset→ to transition outside is a way to do this (walk in the woods or garden or work—physical removal from routine)
- Outdoor vs Novel Experiences—what is the catalyst?
  - There are certain places for connecting—Thin Place, but we don't want to create camp experiences. There are places that we can expect to be a "Thin Place"
  - There is something about newness and novelty

### 1x1 INTERVIEW #3

Based on the summary of the Discovery Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - Question 1 is accurate
  - Social Factors—increase in technology
  - “Brain Science”
  - Creation is a place of testing→Israel’s story, leaders were shepherd, Jesus in the wilderness/on the lake
  - Inherent natural power→peace
  - Coupled with thoughtful observation→observation/reflection increases the impact/benefit and may accelerates the need for more
- 
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - Creation may not be a key aspect to the transitional process→Rights of Passage may have more to do with this than creation
- 
- What is missing?
  - Discussion of Diversity→For white, middle-class Christians, the focus group is what is expected, but minority voices may approach the topic differently
    - Different ethnic groups have different perspectives when it comes to nature experiences.
    - For some groups, creation experience can be a non-interest or perceived as hostile experience→some cultural stories associate outdoors with violence (trees may be associated with lynching, darkness may equal fear).
    - This may be more associated with *urban* influence/experiences
    - Not just economic→socio/cultural
  - For those with a broken relationship with creation, how do we help them reconnect/reengage?
    - Reconciliation Process/Experience?
    - First Steps for those with an aversion to the outdoors.
    - What are basic level experiences?
  - Theological Case→We are created in Garden, then name animals and take care of creation; separation from Garden is what changes the relationship. God created us to have relationship with creation→if we don’t have that it changes who we are/who we are supposed to be.
- Anything Else?
  - Book→Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv
    - Nature Deficit Disorder—

- Society is disconnected from Nature and other issues parallel this (lack of creativity, ADHD, development, depression, suicide, etc.).
- Criminalization of Outdoor Experience—guilt associated with outdoor experience which leads to disconnection
- A Hermeneutic for General Revelation /A Hermeneutic relevant to Creation
- When we do this well (speaking about Christian camping), especially with young folks, we give a gift that continues to grow and continues to provide opportunities with God throughout their lives
- The Focus on Life Transitions is more connected to Temporary Community than with creation
  - When God wants to reform/change/refocus/grow He takes us out of permanent systems, because permanent systems are set up to keep us Living/thinking/doing the same thing, whereas temporary communities are disruptors, they create a break that provides opportunity to refocus/reframe
  - Rites of passage literature almost always includes breaks from permanent community to temporary community→something that resets their thinking/doing/living and they go back a different person.
  - Rites of passage help people in transition→our culture has lost these
- Outdoor Experiences vs Novel Experiences→ Novelty is connected to the temporary community
  - Novelty creates new growth experience, but there is something about old experiences with emotional connection (Thin Place)
- Sabbath is also connected to temporary community; TC are essential for formation/health/wholeness. When God wants to change/grow somebody he pulls them out of their normal experiences and put them into a TC experience (often creation) and something happens. Sabbath is TC once a week—on the 7<sup>th</sup> day we step outside our normal day-to-day.
  - Sabbath is a Temporary Interrupter
  - Sabbath is Pre-Fall→how much more do we need it now

# Appendix B— Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

# TOPIC EXPERTISE ESSAY: CREATION FOCUSED EXPERIENCE AS A CATALYST FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

## Introduction

In his autobiography, Thomas Merton describes his first year at the Abbey of Gethsemane; along with prayer and community, he depicts long, hard days working in the wheat fields of the monastery. Despite the strenuous labor, Merton remembers those experiences with a sense of poetic reverence; describing the end of the workdays he says, "...[when] you drop your arms and take off your hat to wipe the sweat out of your eyes, in the stillness you realize how the whole valley is alive with the singing of crickets, a constant universal treble going up to God out of the fields, rising like the incense of an evening prayer...."<sup>1</sup> In the calmness of the summer evenings, in the midst of rest, life and beauty, Merton noticed the connection between creation and the Creator.

In his description, Merton acknowledges an unspoken awareness; the created order confesses and worships the One who created it. Creation, like humanity, is called to revere the Creator, and when humanity is observant to this veneration, and willing to participate with creation, nature has the capacity to lead humanity into a deeper spirituality. The following pages are dedicated to appreciating this idea; through experiencing and embracing creation, human beings can better know God and, thereby, more fully become what God has created them to be.

## Section 1: Biblical and Theological Foundations

From the first chapter to the final, creation is fundamental to the story of God. It is often gardens and deserts that serve as backdrops and, more often than realized, creation itself is cast in a leading role.<sup>2</sup> Following is a short sampling of how creation has filled that role as well as a discussion of what scripture and theological reflection reveal about creation, and what creation might have to teach humanity concerning God, the world, and life.<sup>3</sup>

### CREATION IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

In Genesis 2:4b-24, God fashions the world, and then from the soil and God's own breath, humanity is formed. Following this act, the work continues; trees are made to grow, a garden is designed, and animals are shaped.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain: An Autobiography of Faith*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition (New York: Mariner Books, 1999), 432.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Chase, 62.

Creation, human and non-human, is described in terms of relationship, i.e., stewardship, partnership, and marriage. In its inception, creation describes and foreshadows a story that is understood through kinship.

Genesis 12:1-4a depicts God informing Abram that through him all would be blessed; Abram must simply go to a *new land*. Generations later, Abram's descents find themselves on the border of that *land*, listening as Moses issues a challenge; embracing the covenant or denying God (Deut. 30:11-20). The blessing, and the *land* connected to that blessing, was available, but never guaranteed; the people were invited to choose who they would become.<sup>4</sup>

In the story of Jesus' wilderness experience (Luke 4:1-15) creation serves as a place of both learning and listening; a venue for growth. N.T. Wright suggests that the wilderness is where Jesus learns to walk the difficult path, but also hear the voice of God.<sup>5</sup> The wilderness serves as Christ's training ground before he embarks on his ultimate journey because it is a place of solitude, challenge and self-discovery, a place Christ would return to throughout his ministry.

Finally, Revelation 21:1-5a describes what Michael Gorman calls "...the *climax of the...story of God...*"<sup>6</sup> A *new heaven and a new earth* are revealed; creation is brought to completion. Gorman makes a point that this completion does not mean the termination of the original, rather it is renewal; the original is made whole.<sup>7</sup> Creation is never forgotten nor dismissed, it is part of God's story, from beginning to end.

## THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

### *From the Soil*

The second creation account says "...God formed man from the dust of the ground..." (Gen. 2:7a NRSV). Ellen Davis proposes that hidden within these words is a secret lost to the English reader; the Hebrew word for man, or humanity, is *adam* and the word for ground is *adama*.<sup>8</sup> There is an intentional association made through the text; humanity and the land are connected. Furthermore, Genesis says the trees grow from the *adama* and the animals are formed from the *adama* (Gen. 2:9-19). Just as humanity is connected to the land, all life is connected through the land.

---

<sup>4</sup> Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 169.

<sup>5</sup> N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 2nd edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 163.

<sup>7</sup> Gorman, 163–64.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 29.

This connection is not solely material. After giving shape, God breathes *life* into humanity (Gen. 2:7b). This breath of God is the Spirit of God, and it is the Spirit that bestows life.<sup>9</sup> This is inclusive of all life. Clark Pinnock says, “There would be no life at all if matter had not been breathed upon....”<sup>10</sup> Describing the whole creation, the Psalmist says, “When you send forth your spirit, they are created...” but “...when you take away their breath, they die and return to dust.” (Ps.104:29-30 NRSV). The Spirit is the source; wherever there is life, there is Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Creation is varied, yet profoundly connected; all life is made of the same substance and is given breath by the same Spirit. All of creation is the community of God.<sup>12</sup>

### ***An Experiential Faith***

When Moses assembled the people of Israel, he said to them, “...I have set before you today life and prosperity, death, and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord...then you shall live...but if your heart turns away...you shall perish...” (Deut. 30:15-18 NRSV). This challenge in many ways echoes the directive of God to the first human beings, ultimately, the future was theirs to create.<sup>13</sup> One of the distinctives of life is God’s sanction of choice.

Daniel Migliore connects choice to the concepts of *vocation* and *Imago Dei*: through choice humanity decides who they will become.<sup>14</sup> Pinnock echoes this idea but does so through discussing human experience; choice is influenced by experiences. He also suggests that experience is related to the activity of God in that the Spirit is present in every experience.<sup>15</sup> Human vocation is tied to experiences and how one chooses to respond to God through those experiences; does one choose the way of life or death?

---

<sup>9</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 50.

<sup>11</sup> Pinnock, 52.

<sup>12</sup> A. J. Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2013), 204–16.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 171–72.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 148–49.

<sup>15</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 73–75.

Merton said, “Every moment and every event of every [person’s] life on earth plants something in [their] soul.”<sup>16</sup> If the Spirit is present in every experience, then every happening, relationship, and decision has the power and potential to connect the individual/community to God. It is through choosing to move toward the divine in the experiences of life that this connection is achieved, and the *Imago Dei* revealed.

### ***Creation as Presence***

Luke describes one of Jesus’ first undertakings: an endeavor into the wilderness (4:1-15). Luke portrays this venture as a time of training. Jesus fasts and as he does so he is confronted; Satan challenges him to use his divinity to ease his suffering and gain power, but Christ chooses the path of humility and prevails. It is after this experience that Jesus returns to Galilee to begin his ministry.

This would not be the only time Jesus sought sanctuary in the wilderness, Luke describes other experiences, e.g., praying in the desert (5:16), climbing a mountain (9:28), retreating to the Mount of Olives (22:39), etc. For Christ, the wilderness serves as a place of grounding, preparation and, perhaps, empowerment. But why the wilderness? If preparation was the goal, why not seek a place of religious training?

Perhaps Jesus recognized the uniqueness of nature; when one finds themselves surrounded by life and beauty, they find themselves enveloped by the presence of God. Kallistos Ware says, “...[God’s] energies, grace, life and power fill the whole universe....”<sup>17</sup> This is the immanence of God. Migliore associates this *presence* with the Holy Spirit; he declares that it is this life-giving presence that emboldens one to embrace God’s mission and to stand against the efforts of the enemy.<sup>18</sup> When Jesus retreats to the wilderness, He enters a place where creation itself becomes a means of connection; in a sense, creation becomes an *icon*, a window to the very presence of God.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Restoration for All***

---

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised Edition (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 234–35.

<sup>19</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 80–81.

John sees “...a new heaven and a new earth...” (Rev. 21:1 NRSV); the culmination of God’s story encompasses all things. There will be salvation for all the kingdoms of creation: human, animal, plant, and element.<sup>20</sup> But what does salvation mean for creation?

Western Christianity has tended to define salvation in terms of *conversion* and *forgiveness*; though valid concepts, perhaps a more comprehensive understanding comes from Eastern Christianity which understands salvation more in terms of *becoming and union*.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the salvation of creation is it *becoming* what God intended it to become.

Gorman says, “To become Christlike is to become Godlike....”<sup>22</sup> When a person is formed into Christ-likeness it is a restoration of the image of God; restoration is salvation. According to Nancy Bedford, this same salvific experience is provided to non-human creation; because of the love of God, it is possible for all things to be made whole.<sup>23</sup> Through the mystery of incarnation all creation is eligible to experience restoration.

John heard a voice saying: “...the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them...and God himself will be with them... (Rev. 21:3 NRSV). Discussing the concepts of salvation found in the ideas of the early church (and contemporary Orthodoxy) Pinnock says, “The purpose of life is a transforming friendship and union with God.”<sup>24</sup> *Becoming* finds its fulfillment in *union*. And this objective is, conceivably, not limited to humankind. The ultimate goal of all creation is participation in the movement of the Trinity.<sup>25</sup> It is in this eternal kinship of all life and substance that all creation encounters wholeness.

## GUIDING THEMES

Through this survey, three primary themes have emerged. First, *all created things are interconnected*. Kathleen McVey describes this idea as a *mysterious relation*; all things have significance to God, humanity, and life.<sup>26</sup> Scripture testifies to this bond; Genesis describes all life linked by the *adama*, and given breath by the Spirit,

---

<sup>20</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 135–37.

<sup>21</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 79.

<sup>22</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, “Unfinished Choreographies: Divinization as a Theme and a Challenge,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41, no. 2 (2014): 173.

<sup>24</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> Pinnock, 153–55.

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen E. McVey, “Ephrem the Syrian: A Theologian of the Presence of God,” in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough (Crestwood: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2002), 242.

and Revelation suggests a day when all creation will be *restored*. Through common origin and destiny, the created order is bound together.

Secondly, *the Holy Spirit is emphasized*. Scripture and theological reflection both accentuate the presence of the Spirit. Ware suggests a *panentheistic* perception; “God is *in* all things yet also *beyond and above* all things.”<sup>27</sup> Pinnock speaks of “...a spirituality of the present and the ordinary....”<sup>28</sup> As a result, creation is sacred; it is sanctuary and sacrament.<sup>29</sup> As Spirit conveyor, creation becomes a neighbor, teacher, and sibling to humanity. Just as human relationships foster spirituality, engagement with creation achieves the same due to the Spirit. This prominence of the Spirit also invites varying voices to the conversation; from theologians to mystics, all bring insight because it is the Spirit who gives life and awareness (Job 32:8).

Finally, *the ultimate goal of creation is union*. David Field describes an objective that progresses throughout scripture; a vocation to become. He says the Torah calls the people to *be holy as God is holy*, the prophet’s plea for *holiness through justice*, Jesus teaches *love of neighbor and enemy*, and Paul focuses on *being conformed to Christ*.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps this progression should be bookended with *image* and *union*. Ware says, “To believe that [humanity] is made in God’s image is to believe that [humanity] is created for communion and union with God....”<sup>31</sup> And this includes all creation; Migliore describes the end-goal of creation being “...participation...in the end-time glory of God.”<sup>32</sup> The goal of all creation is to rediscover its original vocation of union in the divine.

## Section 2: Topic History and Key Voices

### TOPIC HISTORY

Tied to the Biblical narrative is the created order. Throughout scripture, nature and outdoor experiences have served, via the Holy Spirit, as both a sacred place of divine interaction as well as a medium for development. Beyond the sacred text, this idea has also historically been infused within Christian tradition, sometimes implicitly hidden within liturgies and practices, while at other times explicitly stated through theological declarations and curriculums. In order to provide a brief historical survey of spiritual development through outdoor experiences, three primary disciplines will be discussed: *ecothology* provides an overview of how scholars have understood the interaction between humanity and creation, *Christian camping* illustrates how

---

<sup>27</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 66.

<sup>29</sup> Pinnock, 62–63.

<sup>30</sup> David N. Field, “I Believe in the Holy Earthy Church: Toward an Ecological Reinterpretation of the Holiness of the Church,” *Scriptura* 111, no. 3 (2012): 334–40.

<sup>31</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 52.

<sup>32</sup> Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 106.

the church has incorporated outdoor-focused experiences in the past, and *religious and experiential pedagogy* provides a framework for how outdoor experience is related to spiritual development.

### ***Ecotheology***

The discipline of ecotheology, or ecological theology, came about as a response to a criticism; in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, historian Lynn White Jr. proposed that the world's environmental problems were due to Christianity's perceptions of the natural world. Christianity, suggested White, viewed the Earth as something to be conquered, owned, and consumed; an idea leading to the exploitation of the environment and ecological devastation.<sup>33</sup> This denunciation gave rise to theological scholars concerned with humanity's relationship to the creation.

Though modern ecotheology originates relatively recently, Christian history is interspersed with admiration for the natural world; early Christian literature employed the creation to teach and illustrate theological ideas, and early church fathers and mothers connected love of creation with acts of devotion.<sup>34</sup> Building upon this history, the diverse voices of modern ecotheology have introduced various lenses for viewing the world as not only a creation of God, but also a means of connection with God, as well as understanding it as a recipient and partaker of God's work in bringing about a more just world for all.<sup>35</sup> This renovation of thought has provided a fuller way of understanding the human and other-than-human relationship.

A.J. Swoboda says the goal of ecotheology is "...to embrace a fresh ecological imagination by highlighting and harmonizing the distinctive voices of the Christian Scriptures and traditions in order to construct an ecological ethic...."<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, an ethic is about relationship; how one interacts with another. Through listening to the voices of the past alongside those of the present, ecotheology is concerned with relationship; how humanity is to relate with the world and what humanity and the world can become through that interaction. Swoboda, along with Daniel Brunner and Jennifer Butler, connects ecotheology's concentration on relationship with vocation; ecotheology invites humanity to embrace its call to care for the creation as God cares for the creation, a command that consequently requires an awareness and a desire to know and mimic the characteristics of God.<sup>37</sup> How one cares for and interacts with the earth is connected to how one perceives God and understands

---

<sup>33</sup> Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees*, 5–6.

<sup>34</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 68–74.

<sup>35</sup> Swoboda, *Tongues and Trees*, 29–61.

<sup>36</sup> Swoboda, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 96–97.

their spiritual development; being formed into the image of Christ is tied to one's relationship with the natural world.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Christian Camping***

Every year, people gather at Christian camps to connect with friends and mentors, enjoy the outdoors, and grow as followers of Christ; these camp programs are perhaps the most recognized outdoor-focused experience utilized by the church. Though modern camping is less than 200 years old, its foundations are much older and incorporate various functions and concepts.<sup>39</sup> Many ancient cultures (e.g., Egyptian, Greek, etc.) utilized camping for personal, social, and spiritual purposes and historically, *camping* has been a significant setting for instruction, training, and self-discovery.<sup>40</sup>

Contemporary Christian camping finds its heritage in three interconnected endeavors, the first being the *camp meeting movement*. Jen Burch and Nancy Ferguson describe camp meetings as "...outdoor gatherings [that] provided both social and religious opportunities.... participants lived in tents or covered wagons, ate meals together cooked over a fire, and shared stories of their lives...."<sup>41</sup> These events were opportunities for camaraderie, but more importantly, participation in the life of the church through fellowship, hearing the preached word and responding to God.<sup>42</sup>

Following the camp meeting movement was the rise of *bible and/or religious conferences*.<sup>43</sup> Building upon the ambitions of the camp meeting, the focus of the conferences was training; religious educators and workers would retreat to established centers where they would attend seminars led by well-known teachers and preachers for the purpose of vocational preparation. The goal was to prepare men and women to teach scripture and share the Christian faith, and when not in class, enjoy the outdoors; the centers served as a place for education, recreation, and connection with God.<sup>44</sup>

The final endeavor was the rise of *traditional summer camping*. The first structured summer camp was held in 1861 when educator Frederick William Gunn led several students on a two-week wilderness excursion. Other

---

<sup>38</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Nancy Ferguson and Jennifer Burch, "Religious Camps: Common Roots and New Sprouts," *The Camping Magazine* 84, no. 6 (2011): 49–52.

<sup>40</sup> Clifford V. Anderson, "Camping History," in *Introduction to Christian Camping*, ed. Werner C. Graendorf and Lloyd D. Mattson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 34.

<sup>41</sup> Ferguson and Burch, "Religious Camps," 50.

<sup>42</sup> Ferguson and Burch, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Ferguson and Burch, 50.

<sup>44</sup> Anderson, "Camping History," 36–37.

opportunities would soon be developed by organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, and Boy Scouts with the goals of getting kids outside, nurturing morality and fostering growth.<sup>45</sup> The bible and religious conference centers soon developed similar programming, which resulted in a flourishing of Christian camping opportunities.<sup>46</sup> As the church embraced camping, it became the primary outdoor experience connecting the individual, creation, and God.

### ***Religious and Experiential Pedagogy***

Perhaps the common goal of ecotheology and Christian camping is their desire to elicit change; both are devoted to the development of people who are whole, healthy, and connected. Ecotheology provides the theological lens to understand creation as neighbor and teacher; just as human beings influence one another, so can the other-than-human creation.<sup>47</sup> And camping, in many ways, serves as a workspace or studio, a place where one can rehearse their faith.<sup>48</sup> In both disciplines the result, whether stated or not, is an educative endeavor.

### ***Religious and Christian Education***

Outdoor-focused theology and ministry has always been closely tied to the educational ministries of the church. The International Council of Religious Education not only sponsored and studied the effectiveness of Christian camping, by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the council was publishing documents instructing local churches in how to successfully organize camps.<sup>49</sup> This attention was an acknowledgment that outdoor ministry was an effective and meaningful educational experience.

Perhaps this support of camping by early Christian educators was due in part to understanding the benefits of the experience. Contemporary research has revealed that camp and outdoor programming offer opportunities for development that affects various aspects of the individual.<sup>50</sup> These benefits are possible because outdoor experiences provide space for holistic development; it promotes an educational program that takes seriously the individual's cognitive, physical, and spiritual growth, as well as one's relationships with others and their environment.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ferguson and Burch, "Religious Camps," 49–50.

<sup>46</sup> Rob Ribbe, "Redefining Camp Ministry as Experiential Laboratory for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 146.

<sup>47</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 41.

<sup>48</sup> Ribbe, "Redefining Camp Ministry," 145.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, "Camping History," 45.

<sup>50</sup> Jacob Sorenson, "The Logic of Camp in Christian Education," *Theology Today* 76, no. 1 (2019): 54.

### *Education through Experience*

One of the primary influencers of the early camp movement was John Dewey, an educator whose theories suggest that experience is the driving force behind education and personal development.<sup>51</sup> The theories of Dewey, in concert with the cognitive development models of Jean Piaget, which suggest individuals gradually modify their thinking through experiences, and the research concerning *group dynamics* conducted by Kurt Lewin, influenced David Kolb to develop his *Experiential Learning Theory*.<sup>52</sup> Kolb suggests that learning occurs when an individual has an *experience*, is able to *reflect* on that experience, *think* about and internalize information from the experience and finally *act* upon the information; the result is *knowledge*.<sup>53</sup> Knowledge, in essence, is development; people are developed through the accumulation of knowledge through experience.

If development is achieved through experience, then experience-based education becomes key to understanding spiritual formation. This is true because experience is the common denominator of all human beings, and all life; experience provides the chance for one to tangibly interact with new ideas and perspectives beyond the self, and in doing so it provides opportunities for growth.<sup>54</sup> Experience creates the space and opportunity for one to reflect, think and act concerning the divine, and in doing so, promote change, advancement, and formation.

### **FOUNDATIONAL VOICES AND KEY IDEAS**

Central to the present topic is *experience*; the idea that an *outdoor-focused experience* can be both a venue and/or an agent for spiritual development. With experience as the fundamental concept, understanding how it influences development becomes a primary goal. The underlying assumptions of David Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* provides a structure for examining this concept. The following pages will be structured around those assumptions; first, in conversation with other educators, philosophers, theologians and practitioners, there will be a discussion of the *foundational voices* that inform Kolb's model, specifically, John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Kurt Lewin. Secondly, based on Kolb's definition and characteristics of learning, three *key ideas* will be discussed: *Formation as a Lifelong Practice*, *Formation as an Inclusive Endeavor*, and *Formation as a Holistic Progression*. Finally, moving beyond Kolb's theory, the topic of how *experience, creation and spirituality* intertwine will be considered.

### ***Foundational Voices***

---

<sup>51</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, First Touchstone Edition (New York: Free Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>52</sup> Norma Hedin, "Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 110–11.

<sup>53</sup> Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Second edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Hedin, "Experiential Learning," 114.

### John Dewey

As mentioned, primary to Dewey is the idea that experience is key to development. Joan James and Theresa Williams accentuate this when they describe experience-based education as “hands-on, active, in-context” learning.<sup>55</sup> Learning occurs through practical, active experiences. Education, though, requires more than an activity. The key to a worthwhile experience is the task of slowing down in order to reflect, i.e., paying attention, making connections, analysis, and thoughtful experimentation; it is through this reflective sequencing that experiences transform into growth.<sup>56</sup>

Through his ideas concerning experience-based education, Dewey influenced the theoretical schools of *Pragmatism* and *Progressivism*.<sup>57</sup> As recipients of Dewey’s work, these systems give insight into experiential education. Along with the primary call for experience and observation, these theories recognize that life and education do not exist independently. This influences how education is comprehended; teaching is not the impartation of abstract information, but rather the ability to influence. Education is more concerned with *how* one learns as opposed to *what* they learn. Curriculums, consequently, evolve from the interests and questions of the student; rather than structuring the classroom around specific academic topics, the learning experience is formed from the student’s needs.<sup>58</sup> Through Dewey, reflective student-focused experiences become central to education.

### Jean Piaget

The second foundational voice is Jean Piaget. Piaget was a developmentalist who described the cognitive stages a person progresses through as they mature. He believed cognitive development fundamentally changed the act of thinking; from cognition being connected to one’s senses in infancy to the utilization of symbols and logic in childhood to the ability to hypothesize in adolescence. This development transpired through one’s interactions with their surroundings; one either *assimilated* new or *accommodated* existing information, which resulted in *adaptation* and progressive development.<sup>59</sup> At its most basic, says Kolb, “Piaget’s theory describes

---

<sup>55</sup> Joan K. James and Theresa Williams, “School-Based Experiential Outdoor Education: A Neglected Necessity,” *Journal of Experiential Education* 40, no. 1 (2017): 58.

<sup>56</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 33.

<sup>57</sup> George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, Fourth Edition (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2006), 67.

<sup>58</sup> Knight, 71–74.

<sup>59</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 34–36.

how intelligence is shaped by experience. Intelligence...arises as a product of the interaction between the person and his or her environment.”<sup>60</sup>

James Loder suggests an often-ignored aspect to understanding Piaget is faith and the idea of development through *transformation*. For Loder, Piaget’s theories are not just about cognitive development, it is an all-inclusive transformation toward what it means to be human.<sup>61</sup> Piaget’s theories provide insights into how an individual’s experiences shape who they are holistically.

### *Kurt Lewin*

The final voice is that of Kurt Lewin. Lewin proposed a learning cycle that serves as the basis of Kolb’s model; after an initial *concrete experience*, learning is the process of *observing and reflecting* which allows for the development of *abstract concepts* that are then verified through *new experiences*.<sup>62</sup>

Along with his learning cycle, Lewin’s primary influence is his work understanding *group dynamics*.<sup>63</sup> According to Thomas Smith and Christopher Leeming, Lewin recognized that personhood was inclusive of “...all the interacting aspects of a person’s perceptions, behaviors and dynamics in any situation.”<sup>64</sup> To understand *groups* means first recognizing the totality of the individual; personhood incorporates all relationships and interactions. A group, consequently, includes all things that interrelate; this suggests that a person’s development is influenced by all the things they associate with, human and non-human.<sup>65</sup> Learning becomes an endeavor in understanding and engaging the whole environment that one is associated with.<sup>66</sup> Through Lewin, development is linked to not only the individual, but the community and the world.

### **Key Ideas**

Based on these *foundational voices*, Kolb proposes six *Characteristics of Experiential Learning*:

- Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes,

---

<sup>60</sup> Kolb, 12.

<sup>61</sup> James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 25–26.

<sup>62</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 32.

<sup>63</sup> Hedin, “Experiential Learning,” 110.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas E. Smith and Christopher S. Leeming, “Kurt Lewin: Another Kurt for Experiential Educators to Know,” in *Sourcebook of Experiential Education: Key Thinkers and Their Contributions*, ed. Thomas E. Smith and Clifford E. Knapp (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 174.

<sup>65</sup> Smith and Leeming, 174.

<sup>66</sup> Smith and Leeming, 175.

- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience,
- The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world,
- Learning is an holistic process of adaptation to the world,
- Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment,
- Learning is the process of creating knowledge.<sup>67</sup>

Using these characteristics, Kolb then defines experiential learning as “...the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”<sup>68</sup> From his characteristics/definition, three key ideas can be extrapolated, learning, or formation, is a lifelong practice, an inclusive endeavor, and a holistic progression.

### *Formation as a Lifelong Practice*

Perhaps the most important notion of experiential education is stated by Jacob Sorenson, “...the content is not as important as the experience.”<sup>69</sup> It is through relevant experiences that learning occurs. As referenced earlier, central to experience-based learning is an emphasis on the student, the needs of the learner surpass structured curriculums. The talent of an effective educator is the ability to transform all occurrences into potential learning opportunities; this requires a sense of *wonder* concerning the interdependence of all things as well as a sense of *freedom* to make honest, yet unique connections.<sup>70</sup> Ashley Denton calls this *thinking theologically*; the ability to discern wisdom through interaction with the ordinary.<sup>71</sup>

Experience is the vehicle of learning, but an experience itself is not sufficient, *reflection* and *reexamination* are also needed.<sup>72</sup> It is through tangible experiences that one encounters the world, but it is through intentional reflection that one internalizes the realities of those experiences. Without reflection the individual is not provided the opportunity to construct the conceptual ideas that are required for development. For a person

---

<sup>67</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 37–49.

<sup>68</sup> Kolb, 49.

<sup>69</sup> Sorenson, “The Logic of Camp in Christian Education,” 61.

<sup>70</sup> Sean Blenkinsop, John Telford, and Marcus Morse, “A Surprising Discovery: Five Pedagogical Skills Outdoor and Experiential Educators Might Offer More Mainstream Educators in This Time of Change,” *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* 16, no. 4 (2016): 350–51.

<sup>71</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership: Theology, Theory, and Practice* (Fort Collins: Smooth Stone Publishing, 2011), 226–27.

<sup>72</sup> Hedin, “Experiential Learning,” 111.

to internalize the experience, they must be able to acknowledge their responses to the event, evaluate their responses, and connect those responses to previous experiences; when this happens, learning occurs.<sup>73</sup>

Along with *reflection*, there must also be a *reexamining* of the experience. Often the language of *experimentation* is used; after reflection and the development of abstract/conceptual ideas, one is invited into new experiences where they can assess and rework those ideas, thereby reinitiating the experiential cycle.<sup>74</sup> James and Williams use the language of *scaffolding*, the idea being that *experiences* build upon one another.<sup>75</sup> Through constant *revisiting* and *reflecting*, experiential development is understood as a lifelong continuous process, always transpiring while building upon the experiences of the past.

#### *Formation as an Inclusive Endeavor*

In their research, Sean Blenkinsop, John Telford, and Marcus Morse identify five interpersonal themes of reflection connected to outdoor experiential education: reflection on *students, self, community, the unheard, and culture*.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps these specific themes stand out due to the relationality of experience; experience always seeks the participation of the *other*.

The student is the central participant; experiential education invites the learner to take a prominent role in their own development in order to foster self-leadership and advocacy.<sup>77</sup> This, ideally, plays out as an interaction connecting knowledge with the real world, an interaction that builds confidence and makes the educative journey more meaningful to the student.<sup>78</sup>

Others are also invited to participate. The most prominent being the educator. Invited as a *fellow traveler*; the educator is a participant with a bit more knowledge and a desire to show students *how to learn*.<sup>79</sup> Denton, along with others, uses the image of a *guide*; the guide being someone who can recognize learning opportunities in the midst of an experience.<sup>80</sup> Along with the guide, the journey also includes other co-learners. Smith and Lemming suggest that closely associated to experiential learning is *cooperative learning*, or the idea

<sup>73</sup> Hedin, 112.

<sup>74</sup> Hedin, 111.

<sup>75</sup> James and Williams, "School-Based Experiential Outdoor Education," 59.

<sup>76</sup> Blenkinsop, Telford, and Morse, "A Surprising Discovery," 354–55.

<sup>77</sup> James and Williams, "School-Based Experiential Outdoor Education," 60.

<sup>78</sup> James and Williams, 67–68.

<sup>79</sup> Knight, *Philosophy & Education*, 107–8.

<sup>80</sup> Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 141.

that through learning together more can be accomplished.<sup>81</sup> Tightening this idea, Rob Ribbe advocates for learning together in *temporary community*; he says development is maximized when one is removed from their “...permanent context into a community that promotes intimacy, familiarity, and collaboration....”<sup>82</sup> Through teamwork, community and friendship, fellow travelers and co-learners are invited to become teachers one-to-another.

The educative experience is also shaped by the other-than-human world; natural systems influence experiential education. When students enter a non-traditional classroom, artificial boundaries are dismantled and certain safeties eliminated; this requires hearing, acknowledging, and appreciating the pedagogical requirements of the environment.<sup>83</sup> This can be an alarming and difficult adjustment because it requires releasing control of the learning environment. Faith, in a sense, becomes a required skill; faith that the world has something to share and that students will receive it.<sup>84</sup> Through experience the world itself becomes a fellow educator.

#### *Formation as a Holistic Progression*

The ultimate goal of experiential education is advancement, and this happens through the gradual sequencing of interrelated experiences. Kolb uses the image of a *spiral* to describe this concept; every reflective experience moves a person toward a greater sense of understanding.<sup>85</sup> This was significant to Dewey’s thought; he suggested that every experience builds upon past experiences and impacts future experiences, while influencing the learner(s).<sup>86</sup> A similar idea is found in the developmental theories of Piaget; cognitive development is ultimately the ability to arrange information from multiple experiences in order to understand, learn, and grow intellectually.<sup>87</sup> Experiences built upon experiences allow for the expansion of intelligence and a greater knowledge of the world.

The work of two other developmental theorists provides additional insight into progressive formation; building upon the theories of Piaget and Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg conceived a moral development theory. He

---

<sup>81</sup> Smith and Leeming, “Kurt Lewin,” 175.

<sup>82</sup> Ribbe, “Redefining Camp Ministry,” 153.

<sup>83</sup> Blenkinsop, Telford, and Morse, “A Surprising Discovery,” 349–50.

<sup>84</sup> Blenkinsop, Telford, and Morse, 352–53.

<sup>85</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 61–62.

<sup>86</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 35.

<sup>87</sup> Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 83–84.

proposed a sequence of stages through which morality progresses, beginning with *reward and punishment* and culminating in a *universal ethical principle*.<sup>88</sup> The second is James Fowler, an associate of Kohlberg who proposed a theory of faith development. Fowler, according to Perry Downs, was interested in "...how people make meaning in their lives..." and embraced Kohlberg's stages as a way to approach the topic.<sup>89</sup> Fowler's theory illustrates how people potentially approach *meaning* as they mature.<sup>90</sup> Along with their insights, the significance of Kohlberg and Fowler is the realization of the breadth of human development.

Infused into experiential education is the idea of *integration*. Kolb says his theory is intended to be "...a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior."<sup>91</sup> Experiences have the ability to connect with people in multiple ways, expanding their capability to think and understand, but also influencing and developing their value systems and their actions. Discussing this idea, Sorenson suggests that faith-based outdoor experiences may have the ability to teach information, but their greatest competence is their ability to influence life and practice; experience leads not just to *orthodoxy*, but, perhaps more importantly, *orthopraxy*.<sup>92</sup> Through progressive experiences the whole person is invited into the formational journey.

### ***Experience, Creation, and Spirituality***

Merton suggests that every experience creates opportunities for spiritual growth, and it is often in the experiences of the ordinary and natural that God is most present.<sup>93</sup> The activities of the created world provide the *concrete experiences* for interacting with the divine. Brunner, Butler and Swoboda say, "Doing ecotheology may be the truest way to a conversion of both mind and lifestyle."<sup>94</sup> That is to say, it is through engagement with the natural world, whether that is a recreational activity, physical labor, or intentional conservationism, that one's thoughts and actions can be developed. This development occurs through *observation* and *reflection*. Steven Chase describes the early church mothers and fathers as individuals who concentrated on God and the *wonders* of God and in doing so, they were formed through their experiences.<sup>95</sup> He goes on to

---

<sup>88</sup> Downs, 99–103.

<sup>89</sup> Downs, 114.

<sup>90</sup> Downs, 115–18.

<sup>91</sup> Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 31.

<sup>92</sup> Sorenson, "The Logic of Camp in Christian Education," 56–57.

<sup>93</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 14–17.

<sup>94</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 12.

<sup>95</sup> Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice*, 23.

say, “What we pay attention to defines who we are.”<sup>96</sup> Experience, observation, reflection and action, these processes provide a means for turning one’s engagement with the natural order into formational practices.

As mentioned earlier, humanity’s engagement with creation is a means of vocation; through care of the natural world humanity lives out its calling.<sup>97</sup> And tied to this vocation is the capacity to know and commune with God. Through creation, humanity is invited to better experience both the power and the intimacy of the Creator.<sup>98</sup> Chase says, “Nature is the still point between the transcendent and the immanent....”<sup>99</sup> An outdoor experience becomes spiritually formational because it is a means of better understanding the holiness of God as well as the incarnation of God; it is a way of knowing the unknowable.

A common metaphor used to understand spirituality is relationship; to experience the spiritual is to have a connection with something beyond oneself.<sup>100</sup> To relate with the creation, is to potentially open oneself to relationship with that which is beyond the creation; to experience creation is to experience the Creator, an action which leads to growth and formation.

### Section 3: Synthesis and Conclusion

#### AGREEMENT AND CONSENSUS

The goal of the preceding work has been to understand how scholars and practitioners have considered and applied the idea of spiritual development through outdoor-focused experience. This review has drawn from two primary areas, the first being religion, i.e., Christian theology and ministry, which provides a philosophical and practical means of understanding the natural world and development/formation. The second being experiential education, a pedagogy which acknowledges both *experience* as a primary mode of learning, as well as the *context* of the learner (i.e., action, community, and environment, etc.) as being influential to the experience. Both of these areas give insight into how an experience in God’s creation provides an avenue toward spiritual growth.

Along with common themes that have appeared throughout, such as the associations between experience, reflection, and growth as well as the emphasis on relationships/relatedness and how this influences development, an observed area of correlation is found between the theological *Guiding Themes* acknowledged

---

<sup>96</sup> Chase, 23.

<sup>97</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 96–97.

<sup>98</sup> Brunner, Butler, and Swoboda, 101–2.

<sup>99</sup> Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice*, 66.

<sup>100</sup> Marie Briguglio, Teresa Garcia-Muñoz, and Shoshana Neuman, “Environmental Engagement, Religion and Spirituality in the Context of Secularization,” *Environmental Research Letters* 15, no. 10 (October 2020): 2.

in Section 1 and the *Key Ideas* pulled from Kolb's theory in Section 2. The following table identifies these *themes* and *ideas*:

Guiding Themes	Key Ideas
All Created Things are Interconnected	Formation as an Inclusive Endeavor
The Holy Spirit is Emphasized	Formation as a Holistic Progression
The Ultimate Goal of Creation is Union	Formation as a Lifelong Practice

When viewed together and interwoven, these concepts seem to build upon and support one another. If all of creation is interrelated, then the pursuit of spiritual formation is all-encompassing, it involves the individual, the community, the world and beyond. If this venture is comprehensive, then perhaps it is the Spirit of God who is advocating growth; formation is not solely an intellectual pursuit because it is a holistic vocation. The Spirit develops the whole person in order to bring them into communion with the divine. This movement toward communion happens constantly, every experience a potential step toward the final goal. All experiences, including outdoor-focused experiences, are therefore capable of being instructive because all of God's creation is, again, interrelated. Theological reflection and experiential pedagogy provide both sound reasoning and a supporting structure for encouraging engagement with creation in order to nurture spiritual growth.

## POINTS OF TENSION

Though spiritual formation through outdoor-focused experience is a solid concept, there are areas that need continued discussion. One area is how creation is to be characterized; should nature be viewed as a venue for development, e.g., an outdoor classroom, or as a promoter of development, i.e., creation itself can serve as a guide leading toward growth. At the core of this tension is a question of autonomy; should creation be perceived as an object to be utilized (as well as stewarded) or as a subject that is independent and self-sufficient, such as a person. Is creation a place or participant?

From the outset, the current topic has been approached with the assumption that creation can be viewed as both. Early Christian camping, for example, understood camp as being a place of fellowship, worship and teaching; it was a means to encourage spiritual growth. Ecotheology makes the case for viewing the natural world in terms of relationship; humanity is meant to co-exist relationally with the world. The same concepts can be seen in experiential education, the environment is both setting and influencer. Both, in a sense, are true. The tension, therefore, is not in theory, but in practice. How does humanity faithfully realize and interact with the natural environment as both place and participant?

To perceive creation as place is not so difficult, it is to utilize resources in a manner that is practical, safe, and sustaining. The harder question is how to engage the world as a participant; how does one approach ecology in a manner that honestly views it as a fellow subject? For example, as one experiences God through creation, how does one provide a similar experience for the creation itself; how does one serve as bearer of God to the

ecological and what might spiritual development look like for the other-than-human world? To attribute autonomy to creation is to recognize that God's purposes are grander than simply the human experience, but this requires considering questions that are difficult, stretching and, at times, out-of-the-box.

### GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

With this tension acknowledged, the question of what might relieve the tension comes to the forefront. In order to live into a reality of partnership with the other-than-human creation, what must be better understood? As already mentioned, one of the *guiding themes* of the current topic is an emphasis on the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is acknowledged as being present in and with all of creation. It is this belief that stresses the reality of the creation's sovereignty; where the Spirit is present there is uniqueness, holiness, and purpose. If the Spirit is present within all of creation, then all of creation is capable of serving as mediator for the Spirit. What does it mean, practically and authentically, for humanity to encounter the Spirit through creation? And what does it mean for creation to experience the Spirit through humanity? There is a question of mutuality and co-participation. How is human spiritual development tied to ecological spiritual development, and vice versa? To understand how one influences the other is to have a better understanding of the whole. Perhaps a *practical pneumatology* concerning the Spirit, creation and spiritual formation would provide a richer insight into how creation exists as a created partner to humankind.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

From the beginning of the story to the final culmination, there appears to be an ultimate goal—a deep knowing of the Creator of all things. If union with God is the ultimate ambition, then the experiences of life, in concert with the works of Christ and the presence of the Spirit, are the means by which that desire is achieved. When understood at its simplest, yet fullest, this vocation is a call to embrace one's neighbor, human and other-than-human. Through embracing the other through the experiences of the world, life is invited to excel and become what God has created it to be.

## Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

# Design Workshop Report

## NPO Statement

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

## NPO Scope And Constraints

The emphasis of this NPO is understanding how outdoor-focused experiences act as a pathway toward spiritual growth. The goal is to both comprehend how this growth occurs and to create a program/curriculum that cultivates this type of opportunity. Though there very likely will be some cost implementing this type of program, i.e., travel expenses, equipment, fees, etc., the amount should vary depending on the complexity of the experience; the cost of the implementation of the guiding ideas should be minimal when realized as a smaller experience, yet the impact should be comparable.

## NPO Context

Rooted in the Christian tradition, this NPO will be approached from an inter-denominational/ecumenical perspective, allowing for varying understandings of spiritual growth. This deliberate inclusivity will extend to all socio-cultural categories with the intention that all individuals who find themselves desiring to participate may do so. The primary geographic location of the project will initially be southern Kentucky with programing potentially occurring in the larger Southeast region of the United States. With southern Kentucky being the base of operations, and therefore the primary area in which participants would be drawn, it can be anticipated that a majority would identify as middle class, white, socially conservative individuals coming from Protestant (Evangelical) Christian faith traditions. Due to the nature of outdoor-focused programming, e.g., adventure trips, retreats, travel, etc., participant numbers for each experience would likely hover around 6-14 individuals who are physically and mentally capable of taking part in the experience.

## Root Causes

The *root cause*, or primary reason why the topic at hand is an *opportunity* (NPO), is *connection*; outdoor, or creation-focused, experience(s) create a venue which fosters a sense of connection with something larger than oneself. In the Discovery Workshop, this idea revealed itself in language that described insecurity, words such as uncertainty, ambiguity and fracture were used. In the Design Workshop concepts such as dependence, space for growth and awe were applied. At its core, the NPO is about creating a space where each person involved feels more united with those entities outside the self, e.g., one's community, peers, the world, and the Divine. There is a sense of paradox though, the more one feels connected and accepted, the more one feels a sense self-acceptance (self-understanding) and empowerment; outdoor experience encourages both dependence on the other as well as personal growth, both essential elements for spiritual development.

## Definition Of 'Done'

A program that invites participants to experience the created/natural world, and in doing so develop a sense of belonging and connection with it, others, and the Divine.

## Three Big Ideas

- A Garden/Farm that is worked and stewarded by the local faith community
- A progressive Mediation Program that encourages contemplative practices through observation of the creation in local parks and recreation areas.
- A Travel/Pilgrimage Program that invites participants to experience thin places through local, regional, and remote expeditions.

## 3 Concept Pitches

1. A Garden/Farm that is worked and stewarded by the local faith community.
2. A progressive Mediation Program that encourages contemplative practices through observation of the creation in local parks and recreation areas.
3. A Travel/Pilgrimage Program that invites participants to experience thin places through local, regional, and remote expeditions

## CONCEPT PITCH #1

**Big Idea:** **A Garden/Farm that is worked and stewarded by the local faith community.**

<b>Audience:</b>	Though primarily <i>worked</i> by the local faith community, this garden/farm would be open to all for food/produce, educational experiences, and community interaction.
<b>NPO:</b>	At its essence, the current <i>opportunity</i> is about <i>connection</i> ; creating a space where individuals understand that they are part of something larger than themselves.
<b>Benefit:</b>	The user benefits through access to nutritional food, learning specific skills, community engagement, a connection to the land, and means of understanding spirituality through agriculture.
<b>Approach:</b>	Members of the community come together to work, harvest crop, and share food. Through this experience several things can be formed: community/friendship, understanding of creation, and acknowledgement of the Divine.
<b>Risks:</b>	Ultimately, gardens and farms are hard work; they require commitment, patience, sweat and time. A community-based farm/garden is also going to require leadership. Without these things this program could fail.
<b>Assumptions/Hypothesis to Test:</b>	If this program works, there will be an increased sense of reliance on and appreciation for the <i>other</i> .
<b>Benchmarks of Success:</b>	A successful program will observe (1) community members learning to work together, (2) neighbors taking a greater interest in the community, (3) individuals acknowledging their lack of control and reliance on God and (4) a greater appreciation of the earth and what it provides.
<b>Other Approaches:</b>	Community Gardens are not necessarily a novel program; they exist in public, non-profit, and church worlds. The difference with this garden/farm would be the focus on not only education and produce, but the goal of connection and interdependence; the goal would be to know the land, others, and God through it.

## CONCEPT PITCH #2

**Big Idea:** A progressive Mediation Program that encourages contemplative practices through observation of the creation in local parks and recreation areas.

<b>Audience:</b>	People who want to learn and grow their ability to engage with the Spirit of God through meditation and mindfulness while spending time outdoors.
<b>NPO:</b>	At its essence, the current opportunity is about connection; creating a space where individuals understand that they are part of something larger than themselves.
<b>Benefit:</b>	The user benefits by connecting with God and self through growing their meditative/contemplative toolbox while simultaneously increasing their awareness, interaction, and support of local/public green spaces.
<b>Approach:</b>	Individuals or groups would gather weekly in public parks and recreation areas to practice personal meditative/contemplative prayer. Each participant would be encouraged to gradually develop their meditative/contemplative skillset.
<b>Risks:</b>	For some, meditative and contemplative experiences can seem ineffective due to the lack of immediate and tangible rewards. False expectations could result in failure.
<b>Assumptions/Hypothesis to Test:</b>	If this program works, there will be an increased comfort and appreciation for silence/solitude in natural spaces; participants will feel greater sense of peace with self and God during these times.
<b>Benchmarks of Success:</b>	A successful program will observe participants (1) becoming more comfortable with extended periods of meditation/contemplation and (2) acknowledging the creation as a source of wisdom/connection.
<b>Other Approaches:</b>	The unique aspects of this program are the coupling of natural spaces with contemplative experiences, the frequency of the experiences (weekly), and the intention of accessibility; it utilizes the consistency found in the local church, the beauty of creation found at many retreat centers, and the availability of public space.

### CONCEPT PITCH #3

**Big Idea:** A Travel/Pilgrimage Program that invites participants to experience thin places through local, regional, and remote expeditions

<b>Audience:</b>	People who want to engage with the Spirit of God through intentionally experiencing and interacting with the new places, communities, ventures, and stories.
<b>NPO:</b>	At its essence, the current opportunity is about connection; creating a space where individuals understand that they are part of something larger than themselves.
<b>Benefit:</b>	The user benefits through connecting with people and places beyond their normal community; these new experiences create opportunities for acknowledging God's personal and universal presence.
<b>Approach:</b>	Groups travel to unique places where both silence/solitude and listening/engagement are equally utilized to recognize God's presence and work in the stories of place, creation, self, and community.
<b>Risks:</b>	Travel can be expensive; it may be seen as a frivolous/wasteful use of resources. It may also be out of reach, especially for those in under-resourced communities.
<b>Assumptions/Hypothesis to Test:</b>	If this program works, participants will experience a greater sense connection with God, others, the larger world, and one's place among those entities.
<b>Benchmarks of Success:</b>	A successful program will observe participants (1) developing an appreciation for creation/natural beauty, (2) acknowledging their responsibility to other people and cultures, and (3) articulating how spirituality is observable in all things.
<b>Other Approaches:</b>	The feature that sets this program apart from other travel-based programs is the emphasis on not just going on an adventure but creating space to listen to the stories of the places and people and listening to oneself and God through solitude and silence; connecting with God, self, people, and place is the goal.

## Design Workshop Stakeholders

The Design Workshop included the following stakeholders: Youth Minister, Pastor, Higher Education Professional, Teacher, High School Horticulturalist, Outdoor Professional, and Stay-at-Home Parent.

## One-On-One Interviews

The interviews included a Youth/Outdoor Ministries Professor, a Spiritual Director who operates a small farm/retreat center, and the Director of a Non-Profit focused on Contemplative Spirituality.

## 3–5 Key Biblical Texts

- Genesis 2:4b-22
- Genesis 12:1-4a
- Deuteronomy 30:11-20
- Luke 4:1-15
- Revelation 21:1-5a

## Annotated Bibliography

Delio, Ilia, Keith Douglass Warner, and Pamela Wood. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. Illustrated edition. Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2008.

In this text, Delio, a professor of spirituality, Warner, a researcher in the field of environmental studies, and Wood, a spiritual director and retreat facilitator, examine creation care through the lens of Franciscan Spirituality. To do this, the authors approach four primary topics, incarnation, kinship, contemplation, and conversion, and systematically discuss each topic through a triadic framework focused on ecology, theology, and practical applications. Through this work, the reader is invited to consider how creation and humanity are interrelated; how might creation serve as the word of God and tell the story of God and what responsibility humanity has to a creation that displays the presence of its Creator.

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. First Paperback edition. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2015.

In the biographic section of this text, Kimmerer is described as a mother, scientist, professor, and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. With each of these vocations influencing her thinking, she approaches the natural world in a way that understands every plant, animal and element as a unique character, individuals worthy of personhood. By connecting the dots between science, native wisdom and the art of storytelling, Kimmerer provides a means of recognizing the natural world as teachers to humanity and co-physicians in the process of healing the natural world.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. 1st Fortress Press edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

As a prominent theologian, Moltmann provides primary theological grounding for understanding creation, as well as for recognizing God and humanity's connection to the creation. Moltmann begins his text by connecting the Christian perception of creation with the doctrine of the trinity; by connecting the social trinity (and particularly the Spirit) with creation, Moltmann contends the God is deeply united with the created world, leading it (and humanity) toward a final formation. This formation is accomplished through the presence of the Spirit in all of creation. This theological reminder encourages reflection and mediation on creation to encounter the presence of the Divine.

Nichols, Wallace J. *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*. Reprint edition. New York: Back Bay Books, 2015.

Why are people happy when they are around water? This is the question researcher Wallace Nichols asks in his text, *Blue Mind*. According to Nichols, being near water, (whether that is boating, swimming, or simply viewing it from a beach) results in a neurological effect he refers to as Blue Mind, a consequence which reduces stress, anxiety, and depression. Along with general mental health benefits, the Blue Mind effect may also provide pathways toward spiritual experiences; Nichols relates Blue Mind and outdoor experiences with a sense of connection, peace and belonging.

Schut, Michael, ed. *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. Denver: Living the Good News Inc, 2002.

In this compilation of essays by various writer, researchers, theologians and farmers, the question concerning the connection between faith, food and the creation is explored. The reader is asked to consider how the food they eat (and where it comes from) connects to their spirituality; how is a Christian to approach food, understanding that the food one eats connects to health, economy, stewardship, and community, many of the things that scripture identifies as important.

# Design Workshop Report Appendix

## Design Workshop Description

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of physical distance between stakeholders, the Design Workshop occurred over a two-day period, October 8<sup>th</sup> (5pm-9pm EDT) and October 9<sup>th</sup> (10am-2pm EDT), through Zoom. The workshop agenda consisted of the following sessions:

- Introduction and Goals
- Understanding/Revisiting the NPO:
- Activity 1 asked stakeholders to use Google Sheets work through a series of *Why* questions in order to determine a *root cause*.
- Activity 2 focused on understanding the larger context of the NPO; using Google Docs, stakeholders identified characteristics/aspects of themes connected to the NPO.
- Exploring the NPO
- Activity 3 invited stakeholders to use Google Docs to work through four questions concerning the NPO: What do we know we know? What do we know we don't know? What don't we know we know? & What do we not know that we don't know? Participants then discussed any insights they had.
- Session 4 used Google Sheets as a platform to generate program ideas. Each stakeholder envisaged three ideas and then the other stakeholders took turns building upon the ideas.
- Session 5 asked stakeholders to divide into pairs and, in a short amount of time, create a *concept pitch* for a new program. Each pair then gave a short presentation to the group.
- Putting it Together
- Session 6: After each of the previous three sessions, stakeholders identified "5 Good Ideas." Stakeholders were asked to consolidate these "15 Good Ideas" into 5-7; they were then asked to identify "3 Great Ideas."
- Session 7 asked the stakeholders to use the "3 Great Ideas" to develop three *concept pitches* that addressed the NPO. (Note-We ran out of time. These were not done well).
- Debrief (Note-This did not happen).

The Discovery Workshop included the following Stakeholders:

1. Youth Director at a Roman Catholic Church in Washington; Former Gap Year Student in the Program I directed.
2. Pastor at Free Methodist Church in Oregon; Wife and Mother; Outdoor Enthusiast.
3. College Advisor/Success Coach at Large Private University in Central Texas; Child of Immigrants; From Evangelical Background; Former YWAM Staff and Adventures in Missions Staff.
4. An Elementary Teacher in South Carolina; Wife and Mother.
5. A horticulturalist at a High School in Oregon; Seminary graduate with an interest in Eco-Theology.
6. An Outdoor Professional (camp, river guide, etc.) in Nevada; Along with outdoor leadership, he has worked with at-risk populations; post-Evangelical.
7. Stay-at-Home Husband and Father; Former United Methodist Youth Director; Former Missionary in Poland; Resides in Kentucky; Avid Birder.

On a scale of 1-5 (Likert Scale Assessment) I would give the Design Workshop a 3.

What went Well:

- Stakeholders were present and engaged.
- Diversity in theology, vocation, and location.

What Went Poorly:

- Time management—we ran out of time despite the 8-hour timeframe
- One stakeholder did not show up for second day.
- “Concept Pitches” and “Definition of Done” were not adequately accomplished.

Improvement:

- Fewer Activities/Games with better timing.
- Less focus on Revisiting the NPO.
- More Focus on end of workshop activities.

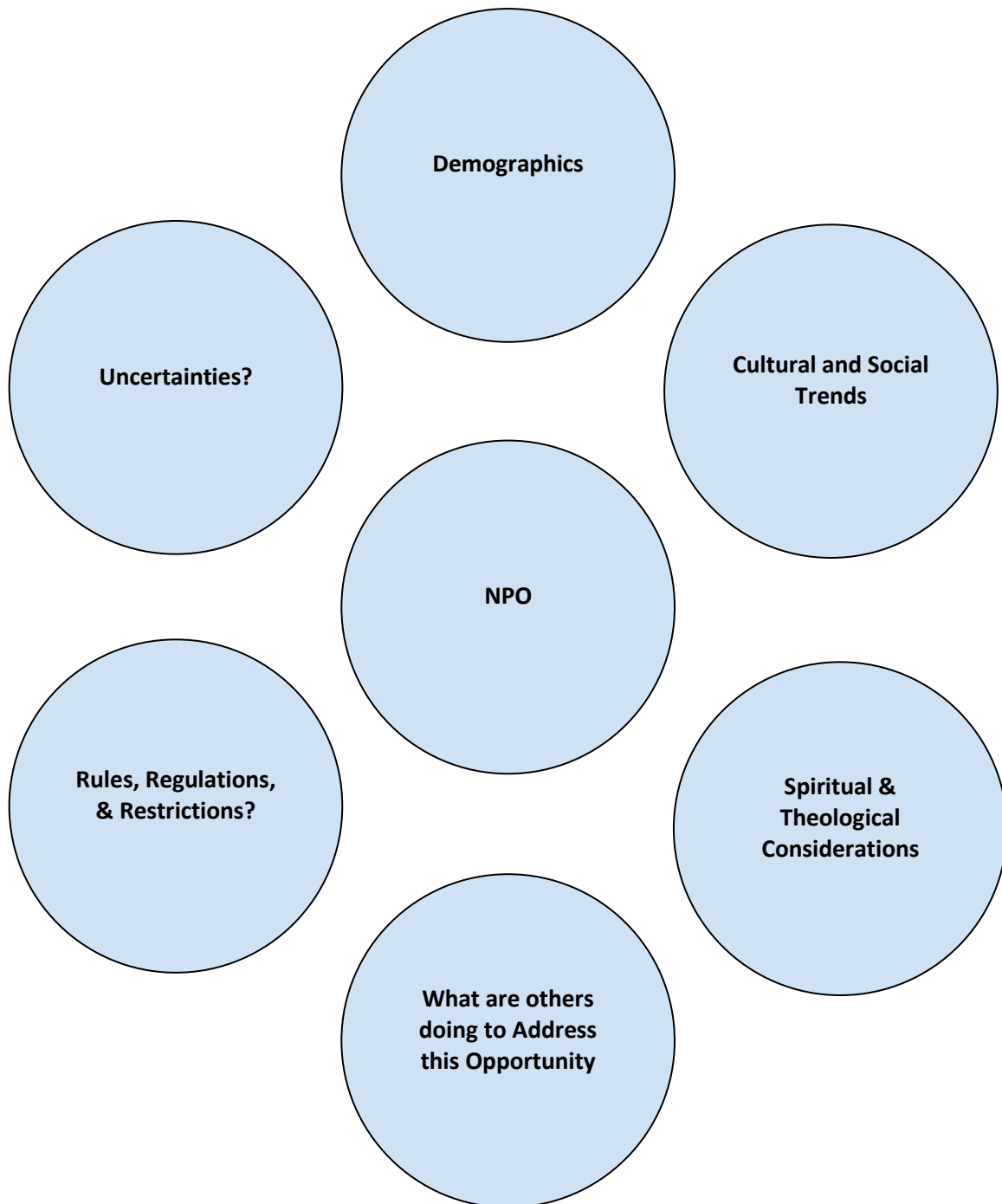
# Design Workshop Documentation

## UNDERSTANDING AND REVISITING THE NPO

### Activity 1: 5-Whys

	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2	Stakeholder 3	Stakeholder 4	Stakeholder 5	Stakeholder 6	Steve
Opportunity Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement	NPO Statement
WHY?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?	WHY is this an opportunity?
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Opportunity Statement	Because most of us live our lives with very little intentionality, simply pulled along by whatever is the next most pressing thing. This leaves us feeling depleted and disconnected.	Society today does not encourage intentional connection with God, others, and the world. By creating these spaces it allows for development as whole selves.	Opportunity b/c we have so little time disconnected from business and noise. Intentional, guided time outside is powerful, and for me always seems easily closer to God.	This is an opportunity because being outdoors often gives us an opportunity to slow down and in slowing down we often make room for the Spirit to move and speak.	I believe that being in nature is one of the purest ways to connect with the Spirit of God.	opportunity because the solutions we seek to solve the problems in our singular lives, our community life, and global life all require a greater sense of union and the dissolution of the dividing lines we place. As we come into communion, we move toward shalom, which is God's imagination for Life that God has created. Time spent	This is an opportunity to center and regroup oneself in creation and get away from distractions
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Opportunity Statement	Because we are all just trying to survive and cope with life as best we know how. And much of what we do is simply what has been modeled for us, and we fall back on the things we've been taught, often without realizing what we are doing and why we are doing it.	As a whole people do not understand the value of connections with self or others. It is hard to make space in a busy life.	powerful b/c it takes us out of our busy, noisy context and puts us into close proximity with creation and God	There is less busyness and distractions in nature. Well less man-made distractions	This is when I have felt the closest to God.	Ultimately, the reality and truth we are beholden to are earth, sun, wind, and rain and the creative spirit of Love that is the animating power of these. It is imperative for us to be connected to that truth and reality in order to tap into the solutions we seek, from the personal to the global scale.	Because it connects me to a more primitive state and simple way of living, where I don't have all the modern conveniences
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Opportunity Statement	Because life is hard, and demanding, and often overwhelming. And we cope by trying to control things that are most often beyond our control.	People that are connected to self and others have more empathy/compassion. Making time for things unseen doesn't always make sense in a fast paced world	close proximity b/c God's Spirit is clearly evident, and I think less hindered? Hard to articulate that part. Busyness and noise distract from internal work & awareness	I have had found a lot of connection with God in nature	It removes all the busyness of the world. It takes away all the distractions.	Through 'grounding' in the system we are truly a part of. wisdom is discovered that serves us toward real healing, growth and solutions	I am left with the bare essentials and simplicity of life, my sense of blaming things on other people end
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Opportunity Statement	Because it's much harder to slow down and ask for help when we need it, or even to simply admit that we need help in the first place.	In order to love better we need to have space and time to figure out what love looks, feels, acts like	Internal work takes intention. It also takes deeper awareness that is easy to distract ourselves from when we are busy or surrounded by external noise. God's voice, character and the movement of the Spirit seem less hampered outside (for me)	I think that because I am so close to what the Creator, Himself created, it makes me feel somehow that much closer to Him. It's as if He is directly speaking through his creation	All of your senses are involved. You have the sound, smell, feel, and beauty of nature surrounding you and pulling you in. In that beauty you can truly see and feel the Spirit of God.	We must first become aware of and oriented toward the interdependent system God has created in order to then understand that (paradoxically) working for the well being of that system is the only way to work toward personal well being	I get a chance to focus on myself and see how I fit into the whole, I start to enjoy the simpler things
WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Root Cause	Because though we were created for interdependence (with God, others, and creation), we value independence and so we continue to lean on ourselves until we finally can't do it anymore.	It takes time and space to create an environment for growth and connection	God's beauty, power and creativity seem close out in wild places. There is not much to distract from our response to whatever that shows us of God	Less distractions means more focus and I think that often times, God is speaking but because of the day to day distractions of life, we miss Him. Nature can help us focus in on God	Because it is real and not man made! You can commune with the spirit on a personal level	Because "all things were created in Him, and without Him, not one thing came into being. And what came into being through him was Life, and the Life was the light of all people." In order to see the second coming of Christ, to experience the Christ consciousness, to live in Shalom (God's imagination for the world) to maximize our potential for joy, abundance, balance, beauty, awe and the things of God, we must enter communion	I can start to accept myself with my flaws and faults and see the imperfection and beauty of nature, which then I can also translate to my own flaws and beauty. I get a sense of belonging and oneness
						Pardonably (again) it is only through the state of communion that we receive the freedom of true authentic expression as individuals in a way that is supported, encouraged, and celebrated	I also can leave some of the social conventions behind  Sometimes when I can get into these spaces, some say thin spaces I encounter the divine in a way

Oppurtunity Statement		Oppurtunity Statement
WHY?		WHY is this an opportunity?
		↓
Oppurtunity Statement		It's an opportunity to realign ourselves with what is really important
WHY?		WHY?
		↓
Oppurtunity Statement		Because most of us probably feel that something is "missing" in our day to day reality
WHY?		WHY?
		↓
Oppurtunity Statement		We long for connection, but are living in a state of perpetual disconnection
WHY?		WHY?
		↓
Oppurtunity Statement		We need reminding of our true place in the world.
WHY?		WHY?
		↓
Root Cause		Because we are a part of creation, and are dependant on our Creator

**Activity 2: Context Map**

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- 18+
- All Genders
  
- Calendar/holiday observances
- Food allergies
- People unfamiliar with outdoor activities
- Physical fitness? What level is necessary, or would there be various experiences?
  
- Geographic Location
- Inner city kids
- People who live in urban areas
  
- People with available time/money
- Access to transportation
  
- Gear costs money
- Camps cost money
- Cost
  
- People in the middle of a transition
- College students/graduates
- High school seniors/grads/gap year
- People in career transition
- People seeking transformation
  
- People with stressful daily lives
- Busy people
- Care givers
- People struggling with addictions / in recovery programs
- People wanting to connect with their historical background. For SC-Gullah Culture

## CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TRENDS

- Unplugging from electronics and media
- Constant connection to devices/social stimuli

- Inability to be here and now
  - Western society (highly individual, “success” driven, etc.)
  - Social media culture (wanting all experiences to be “Instagram-able”)
  - Busyness
- 
- Anxiety disorders on the rise
  - Depression, mental health a major concern
  - Mental Health
  - Anxiety-mental health as a whole
  - Global pandemic
  - Busyness
- 
- People wanting to connect with their historical background. For SC-Gullah Culture
  - Allowing people to connect to their cultural heritage-celebrating that heritage
  - History of the area you live in
- 
- Culture of outdoor recreation
  - Unfamiliarity with our natural environment
  - Culture of spending time at a place the family is not familiar with
  - Different people have different comfort levels with being in the outdoors
  - Desire for environmental awareness
  - Sustainability
  - Increasing awareness of how interconnected we all are with our environment
  - Familiarity with outdoor sports/or people who do outdoorsy **things**
- 
- Purpose and Meaning
  - Finding one’s strength and resilience
  - Seeking answers to questions about one’s life and receiving them from nature
  - Connection to community and planet
- 
- Deconstruction movement
  - Deconstructing exclusive theology/appreciating diversity
  - Global pandemic
- 
- Life skills - weaving, harvesting, wild crafting, herbal medicines, bee keeping, natural building, sowing, grafting, etc.
  - Earth art - making art from articles found in nature, by nature, for nature

### *SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS*

- What are the guardrails, in terms of hopes for spiritual experience? Broad? Christian-specific?
- Expectations vs intention
- A kid said the other day “I don’t use the phrase ‘mother nature’ because I’m a Christian’ - breaking down some Christian cultural stuff in favor of Christ consciousness
- How to handle differences of opinions
- Different faith traditions (both Christian and non-Christian) have different understandings of the story of creation
- Who is excluded? Is anyone excluded?
- What definition of spiritual is being used?
- What is the intent from a spiritual/theological perspective?
- How does this relate to the work of the Holy Spirit internally, and how is that communicated/guided?
- 
- Limited religious institutional support
- Availability of “trained” personnel
- How to connect to those on a spiritual deconstruction journey
- Fear of other religion or new age/hippy
- Concept of “general revelation” vs “special revelation”
- Redefining or recontextualizing what connection to nature means
- Examples of religious experiences in nature
- 
- Nature is ‘God’s first book’ - the bible is the next - how is God revealed through nature when reading it?
- 
- Inclusion Archetypes and metaphors are found throughout nature - how to recognize them and what story are they telling at the moment?
- What animals, plants, does one notice predominantly? What is the archetypal meaning they carry and how does that reveal God?
- The character and attributes of God
- Spiritual consideration: the mental disturbance that can come with being out in nature; it can be frightening in deep ways

### *WHAT ARE OTHERS DOING TO ADDRESS THIS OPPORTUNITY?*

- Growing scholarships and literature on the issue
- Spiritual retreats
- Drug induced spiritual journeys
- Books and movies like ‘Wild’, etc. - spiritual epic tales set in nature
- Sweat lodges
- Retreat centers for inner healing and inner work
- Wilderness therapy programs
- Retreat/camps centers

- Outdoor school
- Ropes courses/Team building exercises for corporations
- Monastic retreats; some places are more isolated than others or have elements of being outside in creation
- Workshops with life coaches and embodiment coaches
- Onsite retreats
- Christian summer camps
- Freshmen “passage” experiences
- Gap year programs
- Catholics have a lot of stunning retreat centers set in some of the most beautiful places
- Not aware of many overtly Christian, spiritual guided outdoor experiences for adults
- Outdoor industry is getting popular, fashionable- Patagonia
- Individual wilderness retreats or experiences with an intent to withdraw and focus on God
- Addiction/recovery treatment centers in secluded areas

#### *RULES, REGULATIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS*

- Financial roadblocks
- Insurance
- certifications/training
- Insurance
- Availability of locations
- Supervision/trained leaders
- Cost
- To work with students (specifically minors) you need parental involvement/permission
- It’s a ton of work to do things out in nature. Much easier in a hotel.
- Physical limitations; physical health
- liability
- Access to wilderness areas close by
- Group size limited in certain wilderness areas
- Ability to leave behind work/family obligations
- Expensive gear
- Cost in time, financial cost
- It’s intimidating to get out into nature for a lot of folks who aren’t familiar with it. It’s scary to think about - plus need equipment/provisions, etc. A lot of people don’t know how to navigate such a thing and it’s a big learning process without someone who knows what they’re doing to hold your hand
- Safety concerns
- Doing something outside of the “normal” for some
- Transportation guidelines/rules
- Sleeping patterns/necessities
- Unfamiliarity with outdoors; fear of it
- Limited access to wilderness areas
- Hard to get to locations

- Growing competition with other sports programs or busy lives, overprogrammed lives
- Childcare
- Health
- Increasing cell coverage in wild places (can be harder to disconnect)

#### *Uncertainties?*

- Weather
- Dynamic situations
- Being able to take time off from job
- Pandemic restrictions
- Injuries and illness are much more complex to deal with out in nature - where is help and how can we get there?
- Interest or response of particular audience
- Return on investment or interest
- Upstart cost
- How do we know it “works”? Much of the research would necessarily be based on subjective experience.
- What kind of training/skill set is most important for leaders/facilitators? Various skills needed: spiritual, mental health, outdoor expertise?
- Well thought out and designed programs v copy cats that just use the language
- How vague or specific is the hoped-for outcome? What is the connection that is most desired, and how might that look?
- 
- How to sustain what is learned; gained

#### *Things to Think About:*

- What stands out?
  - People seeking some kind of missing aspect of life, transformation
- What are common ideas?
  - Cost is a theme.
  - Accessibility is a theme - cultural/geographical/financial barriers are an issue.
  - Terms like ‘spiritual’ and contexts for ‘nature’ etc. - people have different connotations for these things. How do we communicate these terms through cultural biases?
  - Experience good for transition and transformation - whether one is currently in transition or seeking transformation
  - Seeking answers: direction, purpose, meaning, understanding, rest.... looking for something
  - Deconstruction movement - this could be helpful to people currently in deconstruction and reconstruction - a chance to get away from Christian ‘dogma’ and connect to God in a new way
- What are our Knowledge Gaps/stands alone?
- What areas do we need to explore more deeply?

- Accessibility-----logistically, financially, across traditions,
- Spiritual Context--Language/
- What Challenges are good?
- The tools we will provide

### Activity 3: The Blind Side

What Do We Know?

Know/Know	Know/Don't Know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's true</li> <li>• For some people the NPO is more powerful than for others (more relatable)</li> <li>• It's important for humans to be outside and to convene with nature.</li> <li>• Decreasing distractions/busyness is good for our mental well-being.</li> <li>• It can be effective</li> <li>• Thoughtful, reflection is key part</li> <li>• Intentional</li> <li>• Outdoor</li> <li>• Guided</li> <li>• Will need to reflect/use brain</li> <li>• The power is in the processing</li> <li>• Focus is spiritual development based on connection with God, others, creation</li> <li>• intentional</li> <li>• spiritual</li> <li>• It will help others to be realigned with what matters</li> <li>• Connecting to others, God, and the world</li> <li>• It's about spiritual development</li> <li>• Nature can reveal the nature of God to us</li> <li>• Intentionality is powerful in producing the desired results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do all people feel a spiritual connection in nature</li> <li>• Outcome of experiences</li> <li>• How this will be carried out</li> <li>• How to actually create the experience necessary for the transformation and aligning to happen (logistics/program/activities etc.)</li> <li>• How to measure that this was successful/met goal expectations</li> <li>• How it all works?</li> <li>• Who and how it will be guided</li> <li>• What is the relationship between potential/creating opportunities to being intentional, and guiding concrete connections?</li> <li>• How is the group made up? Randomly selected people put together who sign up? Or cultivated somehow based on similar needs/aptitudes?</li> <li>• I don't know what Holy Spirit will reveal through this process to any individual (no set outcome)</li> <li>• Exactly who the "target audience" is</li> <li>• How to measure/assess if it is "working"</li> </ul>

Don't Know/Know	Don't Know/Don't Know
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How nature will reveal during the experience and how that revelation will be guided in the moment</li> <li>• How is this idea already being applied/used?</li> <li>• How does this idea relate to the parks system in general?</li> <li>• What research has been done on this type of experience?</li> <li>• That outdoor experiences lead to a deeper level of self-awareness; how is this guided?</li> <li>• Connection to God as an assumed outcome of guided reflection in creation</li> <li>• The relationship of silence and prayer to being in creation</li> <li>• Documentation-permission slips, photos, methods of information distribution</li> <li>• Resources available-money, skills, items</li> <li>• What the location has to offer in regards to activities that can be provided</li> <li>• What abilities or training is necessary in order to lead an experience like this?</li> <li>• Hosting, first aid, meal planning, preparation/logistical planning</li> <li>• The story/context of the person who is drawn to this sort of experience</li> <li>• Do you need counselors, pastors, coaches, wilderness guides? What may be helpful qualifications or disciplines of those involved?</li> <li>• Knowledge from the fields of psychology/sociology</li> <li>• How do peak mental states in psychology through meditation or drugs can create similar experiences</li> <li>• What physical/mental state has to do with actual ability to connect in this environment/way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That nature will lead people to a deeper spiritual relationship with God.</li> <li>• Are the outdoors a necessary medium for these experiences</li> <li>• God is revealed through nature.</li> <li>• Not everyone feels the same way about being outdoors as I do.</li> <li>• How much time it will take to be able to attain the responses needed for the NPO</li> <li>• What if being outdoors doesn't provide the sort of connection/answers that a certain group desires?</li> <li>• Desired outcome may not be the same for all- some may possibly not connect or find it uncomfortable</li> <li>• What is the role of maintenance back in the normal world to keep growth going after an outdoor spiritual experience</li> <li>• How to prepare for and after the NPO?</li> <li>• How any experience is always filtered through our own internal biases</li> <li>• Our assumptions of reality could be completely wrong</li> <li>• What is guided, and what is left alone to mature or develop in time? As in, how much will reflections be "concluded" with the experience?</li> <li>• Specific challenges that will come up during each individual retreat</li> <li>• How will anxiety and withdrawal from fast-paced life be anticipated and guided?</li> <li>• What amount of time is necessary for reflection, and is there time allowed for adaptation to what may be a very unfamiliar environment/rhythms?</li> <li>• Can these experiences be over guided by a facilitator?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

What are the unique challenges? How might we address them?

- Know/Know
  - Intention, thought, reflection, focus
    - If someone does not have these may be a challenge

- Or if you do have these intentions they may not bear fruit
  - It is good to decrease distractions
    - Need help with these process
- Know/Don't Know
  - Things take time-but how long the process takes for each person
  - How to measure
    - Subjective
  - Logistics
- Don't Know/Know
  - Logistics
    - What is needed to practically pull this off
  - How much you need to research versus how much control do you really need
    - How to apply this to outdoor experience
- Don't Know/Don't Know
  - Does it have to be outdoors
  - Perception of reality
  - The balance of how much it is or is not guided
  - Maintenance of aftercare/tools provided
  - Individuals' mindset coming into the experience

What are our Insights or “ahas” we had?

- The careful balance of being prepared but also space for the Spirit to act and move
- Distractions are more pervasive than I realize. I have forgotten the vehicle we have to connect with God- through nature. The opportunity to recenter and connect is a lot simpler than I tend to make it
- People may not like nature as much as I do.
- Being out in nature may increase anxiety in some individuals.
- That this can't be “over-controlled”, but rather the goal would be to provide a structure/process in which to “let go and let God.”
- I feel super confident with my ability to lead and facilitate, particularly in nature, but it's like the more confident I feel, the less God opens the door for me to do it in a formal setting. My life is my prayer and I lead by ‘chopping wood and carrying water.’ I get frustrated with God about that sometimes, but that's the way it is.
- I take for granted that God will meet me in creation, but it's so important to put thought and intentional care into forming an experience for a group without over-thinking or under-researching/planning. After all that planning and care, it is dependent on the Holy Spirit and the leader and group's ability to be open to what God will do, expected or not

## 5 Good Ideas

As a group, what are 5 Good Ideas that we can pull from the session as we continue to think about how we might address our opportunity (NPO)?

- Balance of intention and openness
- Good debriefing of event
- Good protocol and distribution of protocol--accessible and transferable
- Clarity around intentions and guidance -- why you are doing what you are doing
- What are markers for success? Create space without controlling outcome. Did debriefing happen satisfactorily? Success is not measured by individuals 'tying everything up neatly in a bow.' Does group say this retreat was a success? Can individual list triumphs and areas of growth through experience?

**Activity 4: Brainwriting**

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
Person A	Person A writes an	...and another idea	and a third idea here.
Person B	Person B writes their	...or one that builds on	...or a combination of a
Person C	Person C	...which can build on	...or could be an

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
Stakeholder 1	Create an experiential guide, a curriculum of sorts, that would be both accessible and transferable across multiple age groups and demographics, and that could be put into use in any sort of nature/outdoor location.	Create a sort of guided pilgrimage experience at a specific location.	Work with counselors/therapists to create an experience that could be utilized by people working through addiction/recovery.
Stakeholder 2	This experiential curriculum can draw upon an understanding of nature to see the connection/interconnection points of the outdoors to real world issues, like holistic poverty, understanding how communities work and fit in together	I see this guided pilgrimage the end destination is not super important but having guideposts along the way challenges along the way for people to accomplish and learn things about themselves or about morality, something sort of like the Odyssey and how we navigate these challenges	With the 2nd two ideas I am seeing maybe making a metaphorical hero's journey sort of pathway (ala Joseph Campbell) that can use physical places and blend them with metaphorical places or experiences in our mind that can be guided through with the help of therapists to empower people for transformation. Possibly working through this with some of the 12 steps or group guided work

			through some of the 12 steps.
Stakeholder 3	I like the idea of the program being accessible anywhere, even in your own backyard. There could be group check-ins where everyone completing the program/pilgrimage would meet up virtually and discuss experiences. This is where a professional would be involved to help guide the discussion or debriefing.	Just like with a 12-step program, maybe people would get a small token of some sort or a badge for the challenges they complete. Maybe they would receive a medal. People like medals :)	How do we do this without making it seem too gimmicky? We want it to be authentic.
Stakeholder 4	I think accessibility is key and something that can be replicated. I think that developing a versatile curriculum is important.	I like having guideposts available along the way. Things that help provoke thought and get them to engage with whatever their need is- direction, realignment, connection. I think it would depend largely on the demographic of the people taking part.	I like getting counselors/therapists involved to work through the experience with this group.
Stakeholder 5	I think of the book by Dr. MaryKate Morse on prayer experiences. Possibly a curriculum of this kind, with group and individual experiences (all outdoors). People could go on guided experience together, or use personally	Virtual group that meets in person once a year to share?	Relating a nature experience with metaphorical story seems powerful. Walking through your own journey. Have people write their story in their minds as they go through a set of experiences outside. Then process as part of recovery.
Stakeholder 6			
Markers/guideposts along the way			

Use of curriculum-individual or group		
Outdoor spaces as container of experiences		Reciprocated listening

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
Stakeholder 6	The experience should engage all 5 senses (touch, taste, smell, feel, hear) to help create all types of opportunities to encounter self-awareness and connection with God, others, and the world	What does done look like-is there a way to do pre and post surveys/info gathering to have quantitative and qualitative info, or how else would this part be measured	Depending on what experience occurs will depend on how much preparedness will need to happen. If you were to break it down by percentages, what percentage would you want to be prepared and what percent left to the Spirit
Stakeholder 1	Ideally, any experience would be structured to engage the participant as holistically as possible, but at the same time would not be so controlled as to effectively limit the participants range of possible experience.	Allowing for the participant to be able to clearly communicate in some way what has led them to this experience, what they are hoping to "get out of" the experience, and a chance to process and reflect after the experience are essential.	Perhaps a guide could be created that would offer helpful questions to be used in processing any such type of experience.

Stakeholder 2	After using describing and reflecting on the holistic experiences through the sense, dive deeper into 1 or 2 of the sense (maybe the most dominant and least dominant, to understand our strengths and weaknesses.	Allow for the participants to describe the situation through a variety of different mediums writing, but also art, poetry, music, dance or collage,	Possibly engage the help of a therapist, or some other facilitator or group to be able to reflect back on what they hear the person describing
---------------	--	---	--

Stakeholder 3	I think these ideas are blending together and could be used as one program.	Participants are first asked to use their senses to connect with nature and then asked to reflect on those experiences through different artistic expressions. Maybe the participant would be asked to focus on the two dominant senses from the first part and use them in their artistic expression in some way. If it is sound-write a song, sight-drawing/painting/etc., and so on.	Yes, have different professionals available at the end to help navigate the debriefing time. Some people may need a therapist, some may need a spiritual advisor, and some may need to just have a mentor.
---------------	---	---	--

Stakeholder 4	I think that addressing the 5 senses is great and would be helpful when thinking about examples of what can specifically be done during the program. Ex- do we provide a meal that participants enjoy in nature? Do participants prepare/cook a meal together and then partake together?		I agree, use of professionals-counselors is important
Stakeholder 5			
Engaging the five senses/processing with your body			
Value in having professional/trained facilitators			
Addressing through various mediums			
Leaders who know how to adapt			
Working with people's strengths and weaknesses--creating dialogue to see things in different lights			

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
--	---------	---------	---------

Stakeholder 5	take people to one familiar place outside (inner city could be park; PNW could be lake/mountain) and one unfamiliar place outside to intentionally discover what aspects of God and themselves are uncovered in a familiar and unfamiliar outdoor setting	create an experience based on silence & solitude in a remote area; traditional in the sense that it is like monastic retreat. Think combining backpacking with monastic retreat. Set times for alone and together, but with silence and solitude part of each day	practicing skills for listening with others without distraction outside, and connect to listening to God and what's going on inside self
Stakeholder 6	Yes!! So smart to bring them to familiar and unfamiliar locations to help them make the connection with God, others, world	How can this be tied into Idea 1? I think you could take elements of familiar and unfamiliar and connect to monastic life, would be curious what this would look like in a city (especially the silence)	Is there a particular order of introducing listening so that they could get the most out of their experience? Is it easier to start with practicing listening to others, then self, then God? Is there a different order that would make this more successful?
Stakeholder 1	With the busy pace of life that many people are accustomed to, learning how to genuinely listen may take time and practice. Perhaps that could be the focus of going to the familiar/unfamiliar setting -- to teach the participants how to slow down and listen and notice.	Maybe the first step is to teach people how to simply pay attention / listen / observe within the actual physical world. Then guiding them to work this same process inwardly, i.e., the practice of mediation / holy listening.	It's possible that this could all be done at one location, within a set time frame. Maybe, as was mentioned in a previous idea, you create a structured experience that is meant to purposefully engage all the senses, guiding participants on how to pay attention to what they are noticing. Then, as the experience progresses, you lead them into more intentional times of silence/listening/mediation/etc.

Stakeholder 2	Play with inverting the familiar and unfamiliar spaces, what is novel or new at their common places of meeting and what is familiar at the more exotic or different places	Along with the things mentioned possibly using guided meditation by the facilitator first, and then progress to the use of mantras and finally silent meditation, also maybe employ mindfulness in activities such as walking	Possibly partner people up to have them reflect on their experiences and employ listening like which is used in non-violent communication Rosenberg, the 1st person explains the event, the second person describes what they heard using the first person's words, then the original tries to clarify things, and finally the listening says something of gratitude for hearing the story of the first person
Stakeholder 3	I talked about meditation in my first idea. I think meditation would be a good start for the overall process. Teaching people to be quiet in nature and listen will help them to do the same in the midst of their busy day-to-day lives.	Allowing people time to just be silent and listen would be great, especially in nature. So often people feel the need to fill silence with something. Silence can be uncomfortable, so what if we made it more comfortable. If people were just taught the skills of being okay with being still, listening, and reflecting in their daily lives.	I know we talked a lot yesterday about unplugging, but I think a podcast would be good for this idea. Podcasts are fairly easy to create and are very accessible. The podcast could be what guides the individual. I have also found that sometimes when I am meditating I have to set a timer for myself because it is so uncomfortable. So, even to have a set amount of time to sit and listen. You could start off with small increments of time-maybe 1-2 minutes and gradually increase that time over the course of the program.
Stakeholder 4			
Going to a familiar/accessible spot and then going somewhere unfamiliar			
Learning how to listen/how to slow down (sensory)--How to engage mindfulness			
Incremental Silence/experiences			
Imagination			
Bringing it home with you			
follow through from professionals			

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
Stakeholder 4	Hiking to a natural hot spring at night after a snow fall with the only light being from the stars	Having an objective being to have to find things in nature while camping or on perhaps a hike that represent who God is to you in this season and then having to share with the group	24 hr Silent retreat for part of the experience.
Stakeholder 5	Go on a silent retreat (idea 3). Include meditation on what Bible says about the character of God with idea 2 being part of the assignment during silent time. Share your discovery of objects and the aspects of God's character discovered in creation together when silent time is complete	Idea 1: could read a selection based on a theme while people relax at hot spring; then guided meditation. Silent walk to spring. Silence broken with prayerful reading by facilitator; guided relaxation of body and mind, with questions for awareness of what's going on internally and what the Spirit may be inviting each person to. Talking/laughing on way back.	24-hour silent retreat, ending with idea #1, then guided prayer and self-reflection with group/spiritual director
Stakeholder 6	I think nighttime and stars are a great way to connect with God. I think this could be easily adapted to various locations. Psalm 147 may be good if you wanted to include scripture in the experience (or really any scripture/passage).	Really like the concept of having to find something in nature that represents God, I think it is helpful to engage the senses	I like the concept of silence on a retreat. Depending on age and experience is 24 hours too much or would it fit better with Emily's idea in #2 to be on

			the way to something silence and on the way back have talking/laughing
Stakeholder 1	Silence can be hard for a lot of people. Perhaps you could create a "guide to silence" or something, using ideas such as the nighttime walk or finding an object that represents God to you.	Silence can be especially hard for younger people. Maybe you could specifically focus on creating tools to help students engage in silence/listening/meditation.	Create a retreat center that specializes in silent retreats.
Stakeholder 2	I think times of silence is great but maybe start small with periods of silence and slowly increase the amount of times of silence. Age and maturity/ability of the group will also dictate the amount of silence times that can be employed. There are many metaphors that can be played with about the hot springs and spiritual renewal or to the source of God. Also playing with the certain degrees of sensory deprivation like walking without flashlights, or being blindly guided to a location	For groups that have trouble with silence possibly employ the use of instrumental music, or listening to natural sounds, doing the meditation by a river or something	Certain Catholic/quaker groups do a good job with silence and meditation so collaborate with them. Employ the silent chunks of a retreat at the end or middle of a retreat and allow for debriefing before and after the event.
Stakeholder 3			

Combing silence with experience (hot springs)			
Working up to something			
Silence			
A little structure goes a long way			
Pull from the spiritual traditions/know your resources			
Metaphors			
Don't be afraid of technology (podcasts/zoom)			
Discussing spiritual high and normal life			

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
Stakeholder 3	Teaching groups or individuals how to successfully meditate. Meditation could be through a Christian lens or just focusing on self-awareness.	Self-guided hiking tours with the use of trail systems/parks already in local area. The hiking tour would include a debriefing session at the end.	A virtual program that individuals could sign up for and complete on their own time. It would include classes and instruction on how to connect with God through nature. The program would suggest different ways to put into practice. It would also include debriefing at the end and possibly have access to counseling.
Stakeholder 4	There could be space provided for group meditation. Then actually walk through what the experience was like for everyone. I think there is benefit in others hearing what is being experienced. Especially for those who have never meditated before. Then by the end of the time, individuals would	Participants could be given questions to provoke thought and personal processing along the hike. Depending on the demographic, it could be questions asked to provoke thought on next steps in life or general connectedness to self, others and God.	Maybe a daily devotional or daily resources that participants could use for the week after to offer practical ways to continue to connect in nature after the course is completed. Perhaps a Facebook group or online forum to share and check in on what they are gaining on their own time.

	hopefully be comfortable enough to go off by themselves and meditate.		
Stakeholder 5	Combine Axx's ideas 1 & 2 (teaching on meditation before sending people out on self-guided walks) with Teresa's ideas (1 & 2). End result: group meeting first at park entrance together, to learn meditation and to practice with group. Give questions to process on walk. Then send people out on individual meditation walks. Regroup at set time, designated spot and debrief. Maybe listen for God through each other at the end (think group spiritual direction)	Counselor assigned to people who sign up for virtual experience (idea 3). Could be groups assigned with tailored instruction and group/individual check ins	Individual questions given to people to process for others in their group after a guided teaching on meditation. Send out on meditation walks, but with questions to ponder for others in group (less self-awareness and more other-connection focus)

Stakeholder 6	I think this idea goes hand in hand with #2 and would pair nicely	This makes me think of Stations of the Cross in the Catholic faith, I know there are many outdoor ones in the PNW. Perhaps there are existing self-guided tours/locations that could easily lend themselves to the experience you want to provide. That would also be cheap/free to use	Really like this concept of virtual program. Would be nice if you can tie in elements of idea #1&2- learning how to meditate and self-guided tour
Stakeholder 1	Really love these ideas!	I don't know what else to suggest!	Perhaps your focus could be on creating a curriculum on learning how to meditate. This could then be used in any of the various formats mentioned before (online, groups at parks, etc.)
Stakeholder 2			
Practical and accessible			
Debriefing/after care			
using local parts, labyrinths, stations of the cross---tools			
Virtual reality retreat--connected to outdoor experience			
Base Curriculum (something that can be widely used--Think 12 steps)			
Some kind of structure			
Go really broad or go very specific			

	Idea #1	Idea #2	Idea #3
--	---------	---------	---------

Stakeholder 2	A cross cultural group where two different demographics of people, for example those in poverty and middle class do a wilderness retreat together and then spend time at each of their respective communities throughout the year learning from one another	Community gardening program for at-risk individuals, riffing of equine therapy, physical fitness and learning permaculture techniques in gardening and building	Interfaith/ or world views groups backpacking trips that involve storytelling to bridge connections and understanding of people opposing views to find common ground
Stakeholder 3	What would the timeline look like for this? I think it is a great idea, but how many adults can take a lot of time away from work to go on a cross cultural experience like this. So maybe this would be for college age adults.	I love the idea of community gardening or urban gardening. Although this may not be a novel idea, I don't believe enough is being done in this area across the nation. Maybe the program would include teaching about the importance and sustainability of urban gardening. It would be awesome if school groups could get involved, but I am not sure how that would work with separation of church and state.	I think it would also be good to incorporate historical background of the faith.

Stakeholder 4	I love this idea and also wonder about the timeframe. I think an initial experience where groups can experience the other's reality is great. But I think it would take some intentionality to think about what it would look like to continue throughout the rest of the year. I think it can be done though and I think it would be powerful.	I think the gardening and therapy could be great for special needs groups as well. Also, for caretakers to do with their special needs family members.	I think story is powerful and that walking through how to tell your story would be an important part.
Stakeholder 5	Love the idea of wilderness retreat with different socioeconomic levels represented. Wilderness levels that kind of thing. Make sure participants have the same gear, etc. Focus on bringing people in with a guide who will help them process group experiences. Help discover how their poverty or affluence colors how they experience life. So even when they show up with the same	Gardening as guided meditation on soul care	Interfaith meditation guided with thoughtful conversation between individuals, and groups of like faith together for debrief. How is it we see God similarly? Differently?

	gear, food, do the same experience, they are still affected by their poverty or wealth. And help them process that and learn by the experience how to be the body of Christ, where the barriers can be handled with love. Then follow up with set times for being together in each other's homes after experience.		
Stakeholder 6	Great initial idea, what demographic would be most impacted by this (such as SES, gender, culture, etc.). What limitations would need to be considered in order to make this successful since this will be a long-term commitment	Love this concept of gardening. Could also use it as a time to talk about service if you used it as a community garden which would lead to easy conversations about others, and caring for others	Who would be telling the stories and how would storytelling occur? What particular topics would need to be part of the storytelling to help bridge those conversations
Stakeholder 1			
Inviting Different demographics to experience together			
Story telling (hearing and telling)			
Hearing the stories of cultures, traditions, communities			

Storytelling and pilgrimage		
accessible		
bring groups together for discussions.		

	5 Good Ideas:		
	1	Teaching and making accessible the disciplines of silence/meditation/mindfulness	
	2	How to handle aftercare-and before care/leading up to it	
	3	Combining storytelling and outdoors	
	4	Realistic expectations of participant outcomes and preparing experiences	
	5	Using the outdoors as a venue to connect different groups	

**Activity 5: 3-12-3 Brainstorm**

Think of Characteristics of the NPO. List as many of them as possible (Hint: Think in terms of Nouns and Verbs).						
active & passive			spiritual	intentional	intentional	
engaging with	experiential			mental work	parameters	
alert	silence	opportunity	guided	stretching		
thoughtful	meditation	intentional	active	transition		
reflective	mindfulness	accessible	connections	intentional		
connection	experience	guided		purpose		
alive	physical	self-awareness	aware	growth		
focused	detaching	connection	still	realignment		
spiritual	reconnecting	interactions	peace			
unplugged	holistic	spiritual	tension			
community	listening	worldview	focused	good discomfort		
healing	internal work	engaging	spiritual			
guided	metaphors	observation				
development	growth	applicable	opportunity			
observant	subtraction		intentional			
connection	sensory-deprivation		accessible			
integrative	theosis		guided			
	panentheism		self-awareness			
	facilitation		connection			
	recharging		interactions			
	therapeutic		spiritual			
	controlled fear		worldview			

				engaging		
				observation		
				applicable		

*Group 1*

Develop a Concept to Address the NPO:	
What's the Idea?	Intentional connect different demographics
Who's it for?	Adults that have relative stability and sobriety in their lives. Adults who are ready for a change. Not for people
How do they benefit?	addressing poverty at a holistic level
How does it work?	Using outdoors as container, storytelling, moderately risky outdoor experiences designed to push boundaries and create relationship
How do we measure success?	Surveys (pre & post experience). If it's usable as a tool in an ongoing program
What makes it stand out from other approaches?	Bringing together groups of people that don't normally interact on a daily basis

What stands out?		
------------------	--	--

Intentionality in connecting demographics	
Acknowledging our (different kinds of) poverty	
Ongoing program--before and after care is built in	
Integrate community garden with this	

*Group 2*

Develop a Concept to Address the NPO:	
What's the Idea?	Garden-end of summer dinner/meal with stuff you grew
Who's it for?	Families
How do they benefit?	They get fed, they have community, they are producing something that they and others can use
How does it work?	Different themes weekly that relate to family situations
How do we measure success?	
What makes it stand out from other approaches?	Intentional topics, caters to families

What stands out:	
Measuring success: Interior Castles	
End of summer meal based around family unit	

This could be done anywhere	
This could incorporate all groups of folks (intergenerational)	
Ongoing, continuity; not a one-time thing	
network of gardens; pilgrimage	
allows for flexibility; a lot of metaphors and teaching topics	
Connects to scripture	
applied broadly; simple and in-depth	

### Group 3

Develop a Concept to Address the NPO:	
What's the Idea?	A guided app for outdoors
Who's it for?	Anyone
How do they benefit?	Allows the user to go at their own pace. Helps them develop disciplines/practices over time.
How does it work?	Like a fitness app, or a couch to 5K app. Uses a graduated approach. Starts the user at basic levels of outdoor disciplines (silence, meditation), short amounts of time and works them towards longer/deeper.
How do we measure success?	Success would be user defined, but would be indicated by the user progressing to higher "levels" and longer amounts of time
What makes it stand out from other approaches?	It is completely accessible and transferable. Could be used by almost anyone, anywhere.

What stands out:
Integration of technology
accessibility
Tracking one's progress
Virtual spiritual group
Taking platforms that are working and adapting them
Downloading info to be used while disconnected from tech
This could be used on a personal level but also with in a larger network or local church

5 Good Ideas:	
1	Leveraging technology for guided spirituality in the outdoors and the ability to contact with likeminded ideological folks
2	Bringing communities from different demographics together for a common cause and understanding levels of growth
3	Sustainable: adding an outdoor retreat experience to existing local programs
4	Accessible: graduated steps, support (scaffolded approach to establishing spiritual steps or connection to God)
5	Using outdoor/community programs to build resiliency/empowerment in individuals and community and creating a better sense of community

### **Activity 6: 15 Good Ideas**

#### 15 Good Ideas

1. Balance of intention and openness

2. Good debriefing of event
3. Good protocol and distribution of protocol--accessible and transferable
4. Clarity around intentions and guidance -- why you are doing what you are doing
5. What are markers for success? Create space without controlling outcome. Did debriefing happen satisfactorily? Success is not measured by individuals 'tying everything up neatly in a bow.' Does group say this retreat was a success? Can individual list triumphs and areas of growth through experience?
6. Teaching and making accessible the disciplines of silence/meditation/mindfulness
7. How to handle aftercare-and before care/leading up to it
8. Combining storytelling and outdoors
9. Realistic expectations of participant outcomes and preparing experiences
10. Using the outdoors as a venue to connect different groups
11. Leveraging technology for guided spirituality in the outdoors and the ability to contact with like-minded ideological folks
12. Bringing communities from different demographics together for a common cause and understanding levels of growth
13. Sustainable: adding an outdoor retreat experience to existing local programs
14. Accessible: graduated steps, support (scaffolded approach to establishing spiritual steps or connection to God)
15. Using outdoor/community programs to build resilience/empowerment in individuals and community and creating a better sense of community

## 15 Good Ideas

1. Balance of intention and openness leading to well-articulated, realistic expectations of participant outcomes and preparing experiences XXXXX

2. Good protocol and distribution of protocol--accessible and transferable, with clearly defined markers of success, clarity around intentions and guidance -- why you are doing what you are doing; Good debriefing of event, X X
3. Accessible: graduated steps, support (scaffolded approach to establishing spiritual steps or connection to God) Teaching and making accessible the disciplines of silence/meditation/mindfulness XXXXXXX
4. Using outdoor/community programs to build resilience/empowerment in individuals and community and creating a better sense of community; Using the outdoors as a venue to connect different groups through storytelling; Bringing communities from different demographics together for a common cause and understanding levels of growth; making sure that there is a sustainable process to check in with others, and use preexisting programs X X X
5. Leveraging technology for guided spirituality in the outdoors and the ability to contact with like-minded ideological folks X

## **Activity 7: Concept Pitches**

### *Concept Pitch #1*

NPO Statement: Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

**What is the Big Idea:** Family unit community garden

**Who is it for:** Everyone

**How does the User Benefit:** Nutritional food, experiential grounding time, learning specific skills, building resilience with diversity, using gardening as an analogy for spiritual growth.

**Illustrate or Describe How it Works:** Community members would meet once a week to share a meal or come together for a work day. This would take place year-round.

Draw from professionals already in the community to help with different aspects of the work.

Each aspect of the process would relate back to a spiritual component.

**Why Might it Fail:** Lack of leadership or quality leadership. Time constraints and commitment levels

**What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming:** Food, Community, Relationships, Personal Growth

**How Might We Measure Success:** Participation, numbers/physical attendance, retention, amount of food grown, surveys to help gauge success

**What Makes This Stand Out From Other Approaches:**

Less of a one-time experience; ongoing

Broadly accessible

### *Concept Pitch #2*

**NPO Statement:** Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

**What is the Big Idea:** Outdoor Meditation

**Who is it for:** People who want to learn and grow their ability to engage with the Spirit of God through meditation and mindfulness.

**How does the User Benefit:** Growing meditative, contemplative toolbox while at the same time increasing community support.

**Illustrate or Describe How it Works:** Participants would meet once a week at a local park/outdoor area to practice meditation skills. As participants progress, there would be an increase of time and distance which would follow the scaffolded approach. This may include quarterly retreats to really hone in the meditative skills.

**Why Might it Fail:** Differing skill set, expectations, weather, interest, and participation, not a tangible reward or takeaway.

**What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming:** meditation skills by starting where you are and building up.

**How Might We Measure Success:** Increased times of meditation, personal dedication, surveys

**What Makes This Stand Out From Other Approaches:** broadly applicable, accessible, low cost, no extra equipment needed

*Concept Pitch #3*

**NPO Statement:** Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

**What is the Big Idea:** Contemplative walking group

**Who is it for:** Anyone

**How does the User Benefit:** Physical exercise, socialization, community building, learning mindfulness techniques.

**Illustrate or Describe How it Works:** Groups would meet up to go on walks together and have a debriefing session after the walk.

**Why Might it Fail:** Lack of interest;

**What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming:** Physical Health, Mental Health, Community, Contemplate skills and Spiritual Health

**How Might We Measure Success:** Participation, Surveys to test techniques learned, levels of happiness,

**What Makes This Stand Out From Other Approaches:** Broad accessibility; limited overhead; limited facilitation needed; Could be accomplished through an App; Community Development

## One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

Hello Everyone,

Thank you all again for your help this past weekend.

I just wanted to see if anyone has had any thoughts since we finished—Is there anything you would have added or have any new ideas come to mind in the last few days? If so, please let me know.

Attached to this e-mail is a summary of our workshop; if you would like, feel free to look over it and let me know if there is anything you would add or change.

Finally, there were a few more questions I was hoping you would be willing to answer (I promise it won't take a long time):

- In light of last weekend and what emerged...
- What should I be sure to examine?
- What are the potential blind spots that I best explore?
- What are the potential pitfalls that I best avoid?
- What *must* I research before I begin prototyping?
- How should I (and we) define "Done"?

Again, thank you so much for your time and help. I look forward to the next time I get to see each one of you Face-to-Face.

Sincerely,

Ben

## Design Workshop Summary

### OPPORTUNITY (NPO) STATEMENT:

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

### REVISITING AND UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITY

#### *Understanding the Root Cause*

At its most basic level, outdoor/nature/creation focused experiences seem to provide a sense of dependence on the other (whether that's God or people), space for personal growth and self-acceptance/knowledge, a sense of awe and a focus on the spiritual (i.e., communion with God). This is because the outdoors/nature/creation reminds us of the One who created it; it helps remember that we are part of the creation and we are dependent on our Creator.

#### *Understanding the Context*

In order to better understand the larger context of the opportunity we should remember:

Demographics: Geography, Accessibility, Interest and Desire

Cultural and Social Trends: Technology vs Unplugging, Mental Health, Historical/Cultural Context, Outdoor Culture, Survival/Homesteading/Life Skills, Seeking Purpose/Meaning

Spiritual and Theological Considerations: Inclusive Spirituality, Defining Spirituality, Intention vs Expectation, the Work of the Spirit, Experiencing the Divine in Nature, Barriers

What Others are Doing to Address the Opportunity: Camps/Retreats/Wilderness Programs, Media (Books, Movies, etc.), Gap Programs, Team Building, Indigenous Experiences

Rules, Regulations and Restrictions: Finances, Insurance, Liability/Safety/Consent, Technology, Certifications, Training, Gear, Transportation, Location/Access, Limitations (Physical/Mental)

Uncertainties: Weather, Availability, Interest/Response, Return on Investment

Things We Need to Think About: (1) People seeking something (Transformation); (2) Common Ideas: Accessibility, Definitions, Cost, Rest, Understanding, New ways of connecting with God; (3) Things to explore: Accessibility, Spiritual Context/Language, Good Challenge, Tools.

## EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITY

### What Do We Know? What Do We Not Know?

- Intention, thoughtfulness, reflection, and focus are essentials to any potential programs.
- An appreciation of the subjective experience; each person's experience will be unique.
- Preparation/Logistics/Structure vs giving up control to the experience/Spirit.
- What does Before and After care look like?
- What does this look like for those who don't like nature?

### What Ideas Do You Have?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Spiritual Markers</li> <li>• Curriculum for individuals/groups</li> <li>• Reciprocated Listening</li> <li>• Engaging the five senses/processing with your body</li> <li>• Value in having professional/trained facilitators who know how to adapt</li> <li>• Working with people's Strengths/Weaknesses</li> <li>• Slowing down/Engaging Mindfully</li> <li>• Imagination</li> <li>• Bring it home with you</li> <li>• Follow through from professionals</li> <li>• Combining Silence with Experience</li> <li>• Scaffolding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure, but not over programming</li> <li>• Pulling from the various traditions (k</li> <li>• Employ Metaphor</li> <li>• Don't be afraid of Technology</li> <li>• "Spiritual High" and "Normal Life"</li> <li>• Practical and Assessable</li> <li>• Debriefing and After care</li> <li>• Use local Parks, Labyrinths, "Tools"</li> <li>• Base Curriculum (something that can be widely used—think 12 steps)</li> <li>• Go Broad or Very Specific</li> <li>• Storytelling</li> <li>• Pilgrimage</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Bring folks together for discussion</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

### What Would You Create?

#### A Program/Experience/Project:

- That is intentional in connecting demographics, acknowledging our (different kinds of) poverty and is an ongoing program--before and after care is built in.
- That could be done anywhere and applied broadly, that could incorporate all types of folks (intergenerationally, ethnically, culturally, etc.), that is ongoing and not a onetime thing; something that is flexible and connects with others (Network and/or Pilgrimage).
- Integrates technology, tracks progress and is accessibility; A way to employ the virtual to engage the natural in order to connect with personal, spiritual, and social aspects.

## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

### 15 Good Ideas + 3 Take-Aways

1. Balance of intention and openness
2. Good debriefing of event
3. Good protocol and distribution of protocol--accessible and transferable
4. Clarity around intentions and guidance -- why you are doing what you are doing
5. What are markers for success? Create space without controlling outcome. Did debriefing happen satisfactorily? Success is not measured by individuals 'tying everything up neatly in a bow.' Does group say this retreat was a success? Can individual list triumphs and areas of growth through experience?
6. Teaching and making accessible the disciplines of silence/meditation/mindfulness
7. How to handle aftercare-and before care/leading up to it
8. Combining storytelling and outdoors
9. Realistic expectations of participant outcomes and preparing experiences
10. Using the outdoors as a venue to connect different groups
11. Leveraging technology for guided spirituality in the outdoors and the ability to contact with like-minded ideological folks
12. Bringing communities from different demographics together for a common cause and understanding levels of growth
13. Sustainable: adding an outdoor retreat experience to existing local programs
14. Accessible: graduated steps, support (scaffolded approach to establishing spiritual steps or connection to God)
15. Using outdoor/community programs to build resilience/empowerment in individuals and community and creating a better sense of community

1. A successful program will include stated intention while being open to varying results (i.e., not every participant outcome is going to look the same). Some type of Marker or Guidepost may be helpful along the way, though those markers may need to be subjective or personal (e.g., SMART Goals). These personal markers, in combination with good debriefing, can create an experience that is accessible and transferable to all.
2. Accessibility is key. Whatever is developed should include graduated steps or scaffolding to ensure that each participant is capable of participating where they are (e.g., outdoor skills, prayer/meditation, engagement with others, etc.), and then moving toward their next *personal marker*.
3. An outdoor-based program has the potential to introduce people to varying demographics through story-telling, i.e., hearing the stories/histories of participants, communities, places, and peoples. This aspect allows for community development and a sense of connection with oneself (telling your own story), others (hearing their story), the world (learning the stories of the places you find yourself) and God (recognizing the story of the Divine within all things).

## CONCEPT PITCHES

### **Concept Pitch 1:**

What is the Big Idea: Family unit community garden

Who is it for: Everyone

How does the User Benefit: Nutritional food, experiential grounding time, learning specific skills, building resilience with diversity, using gardening as an analogy for spiritual growth.

Illustrate or Describe How it Works: Community members would meet once a week to share a meal or come together for a workday. This would take place year-round; Draw from professionals already in the community to help with different aspects of the work; Each aspect of the process would relate back to a spiritual component.

Why Might it Fail: Lack of leadership or quality leadership. Time constraints and commitment levels

What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming: Food, Community, Relationships, Personal Growth

How Might We Measure Success: Participation, numbers/physical attendance, retention, amount of food grown, surveys to help gauge success

What Makes This Stand Out: Less of a one-time experience; ongoing; Broadly accessible

**Concept Pitch #2:**

What is the Big Idea: Outdoor Meditation

Who is it for: People who want to learn and grow their ability to engage with the Spirit of God through meditation and mindfulness.

How does the User Benefit: Growing meditative, contemplative toolbox while at the same time increasing community support.

Illustrate or Describe How it Works: Participants would meet once a week at a local park/outdoor area to practice meditation skills. As participants progress, there would be an increase of time and distance which would follow the scaffolded approach. This may include quarterly retreats to really hone in the meditative skills.

Why Might it Fail: Differing skill set, expectations, weather, interest, and participation, not a tangible reward or takeaway.

What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming: meditation skills by starting where you are and building up.

How Might We Measure Success: Increased times of meditation, personal dedication, surveys.

What Makes This Stand Out: broadly applicable, accessible, low cost, no extra equipment needed

**Concept Pitch #3**

What is the Big Idea: Contemplative walking group

Who is it for: Anyone

How does the User Benefit: Physical exercise, socialization, community building, learning mindfulness techniques?

Illustrate or Describe How it Works: Groups would meet up to go on walks together and have a debriefing session after the walk.

Why Might it Fail: Lack of interest.

What Specifically are we Testing/Developing/Forming: Physical Health, Mental Health, Community, Contemplate skills and Spiritual Health

How Might We Measure Success: Participation, Surveys to test techniques learned, levels of happiness,

What Makes This Stand Out: Broad accessibility; limited overhead; limited facilitation needed; Could be accomplished through an App; Community Development

## MY TAKE-AWAYS

Some Key Words/Ideas/Phrases That Stood Out to Me: Accessibility/ Scaffolding/Graduated Steps—Open to all with limited restrictions/barriers.

- Don't be Afraid of Technology—How can we use embrace technology to engage creation?
- Diversity/Inclusivity/Inclusive Spirituality—What can others teach us? What can we share with others?
- Work of the Spirit/Experiencing the Divine/Preparation vs Giving up Control
- Storytelling—How do we incorporate the stories of others/places into experience?
- Personal Spiritual Markers/Subjective Experience—Every person's experience will be unique.
- Combining Silence, Meditation, Mindfulness with Experience—Perhaps this whole opportunity revolves around contemplative spiritual experience?
- Pilgrimage—Think in terms of journeying/travel/going.
- Space—How do we use/create/develop space to encourage growth and formation?

## One-On-One Interviews Documentation

### 1x1 INTERVIEWS DATA COLLECTION –INTERVIEW 1

Based on the summary of the Design Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - Looks Good→ Liking descriptions, pitches, etc.
  - Good Questions, involvement, experience
  - 15 Good Ideas Section
    - Solid comprehensive list
  - Take Always→ Good summaries; Right Take-Aways
  - Shared Experience
  - Storytelling—outdoors helps create another backdrop
  - Preparation before Engagement
    - When we are prepared we are free to connect/receive
    - If we get folks to prepare (emotionally, spiritually, etc.) we receive.
  - Oriented—Clarity around purpose/goals
  - Using outdoors as venue to connect different groups
    - No one lives in this venue—shared experience
  - Combination of Nature and the Contemplative
    - Solo experiences→ the times alone in creation (centering) is some of the most impactful experiences
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - Nothing that stands out
- What is missing?
  - Scriptural Principal? What is the foundation of the program
  - Theme? What is the spiritual theme the group needs?
  - Match scriptural outcomes with activities→congruence→let the activity flow out of the theme/scriptural principal
- Anything Else?
  - A Good outdoor program creates disequilibrium
    - Good program creates imbalance
    - Engage participants into program
    - Create buy-in
  - Books
    - The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing→ Miyazaki
    - Your Brain on Nature
  - Front Porch Experiences→ Less Activity (Related to Scaffolding?)
    - People don't have the gear, or ability
    - The intro stuff is meeting the need
    - What is the appropriate level risk and skill for each participant
    - Sitting in a park might be as insightful as climbing a 14,000ft mountain

## 1x1 INTERVIEWS DATA COLLECTION—INTERVIEW 2

Based on the summary of the Design Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - Balance between preparation and Holy Spirit freedom to move
  - Centering is easier than we make it → we over program—distraction can be invasive
  - Familiar and unfamiliar setting (scaffolding)
  - Something to bring home (artifact) → “the post” event
  - Follow-up (with professionals)
  - Scaffolding/accessible
  - Pulling from other Traditions
  - Pilgrimage –(Invitational)
  - Take Away 13 (something sustainable), 14 (scaffolding/personal markers), 15 (building on existing spaces)
  - {Concept Pitch #2} → Liked it
  - Teachers → what does it mean for creation/nature to be our teachers
  - Story → Getting a sense of place; how do we belong to each other’s story?
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - Group 1 → A lot going on
  - Embracing Technology → Maybe not a good idea → caution. Does the technology distract us from seeing what’s going on around us?
  - Assessment → Caution → Sometimes Assessment limits us; we fail to see the value in the mystical; sometimes the things of God cannot be measured
  - Concept 1 → Community Gardens are not easy; hard work and hard to sustain
- What is missing?
  - Clarity Around Intentions and Guidance → What is your goal?
  - What is the nudging that draws me to this project?
  - Teachers living in the natural world (the trees, etc.)
  - What does it mean that we belong to the natural world (we are sustained by it; the tension that we as humans are separate, but apart)
- Anything Else?
  - Belonging →
  - Book → Kimmerer, “Braiding Sweet Grass”
  - Attunement → {Making it Simple is part of making it Accessible}

## 1x1 INTERVIEWS DATA COLLECTION—INTERVIEW 3

Based on the summary of the Design Workshop that was sent to you:

- With what do you agree? Why?
  - Intention-Most People like Nature→How do you capitalize on it?
  - How we structure→How Much; How much coaching?
  - Contemplative→ Trappists, 20 minutes
  - Walk outside→?Front porch experience? Finding value in anything outdoors?
  - Spirituality in Nature→Different Experiences
  - Benefit to hearing from other faith traditions; and perhaps the more we hear others, the more we become Jesus (See Merton for example)
  - Zoom meetings have successful→can have groups that are not local
    - For those willing to, you can go deep→you can accomplish (group) spiritual practices.
  - Stories are a big deal→stories help us find a way in or connect (we connect through story). Story helps us understand the other.
- What do you disagree with? Why?
  - Too much work→What qualifies as nature→anything outdoors?
  - Scaffolding→maybe jump into the deep end
  - Guided Meditation→ not a fan
    - We are bad at this (spiritual practices) because we are human beings
- What is missing?
  - What qualifies as nature→Temporal Differences→Walk outside vs pretty places
  - Failure is part of most spiritual endeavors→everyone is going to fail
- Anything Else?
  - Contemplative Spirituality→Some people have gone through stuff→Maybe age or hardships, disillusionments→this leads some folks to embrace silence
  - Disillusionment is not necessarily a bad thing
  - Age brings contemplative desires, perhaps
  - Book—Stages of faith, James Fowler→as you move through faith, you will experience silence?
  - Indigenous Traditions→What do they have to say?
  - Zoom can be difficult
    - You can't do all the normal friend/social stuff
  - Book→Blue Mind, Wallace J. Nichols; connection to spirituality, perhaps
    - Red Mind, Stressed→If we stay there, we go to gray mind
    - If we get outside, perhaps we can go to Green Mind or Blue Mind
    - Perhaps it is the Christians duty to be in Green/Blue mind
  - Any Nature helps us understand we are part of something bigger; we are not in it alone.

## Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report

# Design Research Report

## Prototype Summary and Findings

### PROTOTYPE 1: PROGRESSIVE MEDITATION PROGRAM

#### ***Prototype Description***

A half day (2-4 hours) experience in a public park that (1) introduces Christian contemplative/meditative prayer (e.g., a modified form of Lectio Divina) and (2) invites participants to engage in *solo* experiences to practice contemplative prayer through observing, interacting, and reflecting upon the natural world.

#### ***NPO Statement***

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

#### ***Research Question***

How might contemplative practices be connected to nature-focused experience and how might those experiences be best facilitated for a group/individual?

#### ***Assessment Benchmarks(s)***

(1) Participants have a basic understanding of contemplative spiritual practice. (2) Participants feel comfortable engaging in those practices while employing the natural environment as a source of revelation/interaction. (3) Participants recognize the creation as a source of wisdom/connection with God.

#### ***Participant Description***

The prototype experience included four individuals (three female and one male) all coming from evangelical Christian backgrounds. All participants were in their 40s or 50s and represented an educational (i.e., some college to doctoral) and a vocational (i.e., natural gas employee, marketing professional, college recruiter, university administrator) spectrum.

#### ***Learning Summary***

##### *What worked?*

The general feedback was extremely positive. All participants stated (in some way) that the opportunity to *intentionally* be outside and participate in a *structured* meditative/contemplative experience was beneficial. Along with an appreciation for the experience itself, some shared reflections that depict *what worked* include the *effectiveness*, the *ease*, and the *structure* of the experience.

*What could be improved?*

Three primary suggestions were expressed concerning improvement. First, using the model in a wilderness-based area was suggested; the implication being that the further one removes themselves from society/permanence, the greater the opportunity to connect with nature and God. The second was to break-up the experience into multiple segments or as part of a larger event for a more in-depth experience. The final was to simply provide participants with a journal.

*What matters to the participants?*

When asked, “what matters to you?”, the participants suggested three key things. First, the experience must be *effective*; there must be lasting takeaways. Second, it must be *biblically-based* and have a *spiritual impact*; it must be founded and structured around knowing God. Third, a conversational aspect; for this to be successful there must be some form of processing.

***Important Discovery***

There were several things that stood out as the participants discussed their individual experience(s) with the prototype, but the piece that was most interesting was their acknowledgment of how helpful a meditative/contemplative structure was. One individual described *how* she frequently takes walks in the woods, but she never had a structure to help her connect those walks to her spirituality and God. There seems to be a natural inclination toward experiencing God in natural settings, but folks do not know how to approach it. Perhaps a simple structure is an answer.

**PROTOTYPE 2: TRAVEL PROGRAM*****Prototype Description***

A storyboard that illustrates the experiences a participant would encounter while visiting *a new and novel place*; in detail, the story-frames would describe one’s complete experience e.g., pre-arrival, group orientation and development, spiritual development practices (silence, observation, reflection exercises), outdoor programming, cultural learning opportunities, group final debriefing and follow-up etc.

***NPO Statement***

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one’s interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

***Research Question***

Do novel and unique destinations, and the experiences associated with those destinations (particularly those connected to creation/nature) influence spiritual development?

***Assessment Benchmark(s)***

(1) Participants recognize a benefit in travel-based spiritual formational programming. (2) Participants show an appreciation for the connection between experiencing creation/natural beauty/new places and spiritual formation. (3) Participants will show an appreciation for the connection between learning about other people/cultures/places and spiritual formation.

### ***Participant Description***

The prototype experience included five individuals (three female and two male) all coming from evangelical/post-evangelical Christian backgrounds. All participants were in their 30s or 40s and college educated with similar vocational experience(s) (i.e., pastors, teachers, and camp workers).

### ***Summary***

#### *What worked?*

One piece that seemed to stand out among the participants was the balanced approach of the experience. It was suggested that there was good equilibrium between doing and reflecting, “solo” time and group time, classroom and experiential learning, & play and rest. The travel element made the experience appealing, but the retreat structure (in creation) was the connecting point.

#### *What could be improved?*

Three important suggestions came out of the interviews. First, the issues of safety were mentioned. How will the program be designed so that everyone feels safe during the experience (particularly during solo times in a wilderness setting)? Second, scheduling and logistics were discussed; it was suggested that sessions might need to be rearranged or combined to make the experience more compelling. Finally, it was suggested that training around *sabbath* be built into the educational part of the experience.

#### *What matters to the participants?*

When asked, “what matters to you?”, each participant suggested a unique element of the program: (1) Processing to internalize the experience, (2) Growth and personal formation, (3) Spiritual Renewal through connecting (even outside the church), (4) Being part of a community, (5) the work of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Important Discovery***

A question asked during the interviews was “...what aspect(s) [of the prototype] is most appealing to you?” Though each participant answered differently, there seemed to be a common concept that emerged in their answers: they found the idea of a wholistic experience appealing. There seemed to be an appreciation for a program that was structured around inviting the whole person to participate (e.g., classroom, adventure, and reflective experiences). This is perhaps not a novel discovery, but it is an important discovery (or reminder); programs designed to progress Christian spirituality must be wholistic.

## Background Research Essay on The Emerging Solution

### INTRODUCTION

Thomas Merton wrote, “In all created things...we find something that reflects the fulfillment of heaven...”<sup>1</sup> The context of this quote is an argument that the physical world is good, and that through created things humanity can enter the *life* and *love* of the Divine.<sup>2</sup> Though not necessarily discussing nature (e.g., agriculture, ecosystems, etc.), the point can be inferred that *all* the physical world, including nature (e.g., plants, animals, etc.) are means of knowing God. If this is true, why? And, if true, how might one approach connection with God through the created world?

The following pages will be concerned with these two questions: (1) How does nature influence human spirituality and (2) How might one employ creation in a way that fosters a (Christian) spiritual experience? To approach an answer, three primary perspectives will be invited to dialogue: neuroscience, historical and contemporary practices of Christian spirituality, and mystical and contemplative spiritual theology. In answering these questions, the goal is not to create a *theology of creation* or spirituality nor to develop a perfect program to be implemented, rather, the goal is to better understand and explore the questions above. Over the centuries, Christians have acknowledged that the natural world tends to be a tool for spiritual growth, but what is a way to best utilize that tool? That is our ultimate quest.

### HOW DOES CREATION INFLUENCE THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY?

Discussing the therapeutic benefits of being in nature, Eva Selhub (Medical Doctor) and Alan Logan (Naturopathic Doctor) make this observation: “Nature immersion...restores the brain, buffers the stress of environmental overload, affords opportunity for contemplation, and enhances altruism.”<sup>3</sup> Basically, being in nature is good for the whole person (i.e., mind, body, and spirit). With his reflections on the *good of the physical world*, Merton also stresses the *good* of the whole human being; to recognize the *image of God* is to recognize all aspects of an individual.<sup>4</sup> A proper understanding of human spirituality is wholistic. Creation influences human spirituality by positively affecting the entirety of a person.

#### ***Creation and the Mind***

Selhub and Logan describe a problem of contemporary culture—*fear*, and this *fear* is tied to an obsession with technology. Due to digital media, people live a world of notifications with a constant need to check their devices

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Merton, 21–36.

<sup>3</sup> Eva M. Selhub and Alan C. Logan, *Your Brain On Nature: The Science of Nature’s Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality*, Reissue edition (Ontario: Collins, 2014), 44.

<sup>4</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 27.

(because they *fear* missing something). This fear culture has resulted in a society with multiple stress related issues, both mental and physical.<sup>5</sup> Echoing these ideas, Wallace Nichols suggests that a large portion of contemporary society exists in a state he calls *Red Mind*—a mental condition of *stress, anxiety, fear, anger, and/or despair*.<sup>6</sup> Nichols explains that *Red Mind* is state of being that prehistoric humanity developed as a means of survival; in a harsh world defined by violence, early humans often needed the neurological responses produced by *Red Mind* to survive.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the same neurological response needed to survive in a prehistoric world are triggered by many contemporary circumstances, one of the most prevalent being technology.<sup>8</sup> Humanity's obsession with technology has resulted in a population that exists in a state of *anxiety* and *fear*.

What is the response to *Red Mind*? Nichols argues that getting outside is a means of transitioning from this state of stress. He suggests that nature-based experiences, whether active or passive, engage the human mind and in doing so provide the mind with both substance and sensation, elements needed for a sense of calm.<sup>9</sup> He says, "Being in the wilderness can [be restorative and] produce feelings of respect and wonder, a greater sense of connection with oneself and with nature, of renewal and greater self-awareness."<sup>10</sup> This condition he refers to as *Blue Mind*, "...a state characterized by calm, peacefulness, unity, and a sense of general happiness and satisfaction with life...."<sup>11</sup>

In many ways, Nichols's descriptions of *connection* and *awareness* resonate with those of the community of faith. Perhaps what Nichols understands through neuroscience is what Matthew Fox calls the *Mystical Brain*.<sup>12</sup> Fox suggests that the mind is capable of logical and mystical experiences, and when human-beings learn to tap into the mystical, they have the potential of experiencing a sense of *connection* with that which is beyond

---

<sup>5</sup> Selhub and Logan, *Your Brain on Nature*, 48–50.

<sup>6</sup> Wallace J. Nichols, *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*, Reprint edition (New York: Back Bay Books, 2015), 142.

<sup>7</sup> Nichols, 142–43.

<sup>8</sup> Nichols, 143–46.

<sup>9</sup> Nichols, 213–17.

<sup>10</sup> Nichols, 166.

<sup>11</sup> Nichols, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1988), 18.

themselves.<sup>13</sup> If this is true, then when outdoor-focused experiences influence the brain/mind, those experiences potentially become mystical experiences.

There may also be a connection between Nichols's *Red Mind, Blue Mind* and the *Reactive Mind, Receptive Mind* of Martin Laird. Describing Laird's paradigm, Matthew Moser defines *reactive mind* as a state of anxious existence, where *receptive mind* is the ability to *be present with oneself and God*.<sup>14</sup> This sense of *presence* leads to a state that may be described as fully connected (i.e., the *luminous mind*).<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the observations of Nichols parallel the concepts of Laird; perhaps one's experiences in nature are a means of connection and presence with the Divine. The parallels may not perfectly align, but the point to be made is that creation/nature does influence the human mind, and in doing so, spirituality.

### ***Creation and the Body***

For the interaction of neuroscience, spirituality, and creation to manifest, one must first actively interact with nature/creation. Selhub and Logan suggest multiple means of initiating this interaction, but the common denominator is active, tangible participation in nature.<sup>16</sup> This component of physical activity suggests a connection between one's spirituality, physical bodies, and the places in which one exists.<sup>17</sup> Spirituality is connected to the realm of the corporeal.

One practice of bodily spirituality is the experience of travel; through encountering new places and perspectives individuals are exposed to new ways of knowing and understanding both themselves and God.<sup>18</sup> Allison Williams suggests that spiritual travel is a practice that is ancient, occurring in all faith traditions, including Christianity.<sup>19</sup> The tradition of pilgrimage was a way of connecting with God, but also of connecting

---

<sup>13</sup> Fox, 18–19.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew A. Rothaus Moser, "'You Were Within, but I Was Outside and Sought You There': Martin Laird's Ressourcement of the Christian Contemplative Tradition," *Anglican Theological Review* 102, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 666.

<sup>15</sup> Moser, 667.

<sup>16</sup> Selhub and Logan, *Your Brain on Nature*, 126–74.

<sup>17</sup> Allison Williams, "Spiritual Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing: A Case Study of St. Anne de Beaupre, Quebec, Canada," *Social Science & Medicine* 70, no. 10 (May 2010): 1633.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory B. Willson, Alison J. McIntosh, and Anne. L. Zahra, "Tourism and Spirituality: A Phenomenological Analysis," *Annals of Tourism Research* 42 (July 2013): 163.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, "Spiritual Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing," 1635.

with the larger world; to travel was to open oneself to a sense of interconnectivity with the whole.<sup>20</sup> Through pilgrimage one became more aware of the vastness of the created world and the One who created it.

Perhaps this awareness is a result of the *awe* that is inspired when one enters a remarkable place. As mentioned earlier, wilderness and nature can produce perceptions of *connection and restoration*.<sup>21</sup> Maybe these feelings are possible due the *stimulation* one experiences when they are physically present in a location, e.g., the sounds, sights, and smells of a place.<sup>22</sup> In a way, being present in a specific location offers the opportunity to interact through one's senses.

There seems to be an association between the significance of sensory connection and the occurrence(s) of travel/pilgrimage.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps this is associated with the enjoyment of *novel experiences*; Nichols suggests that when a person engages in new, active experiences chemicals are produced triggering feelings of contentment.<sup>24</sup> When a person physically travels to a new place, they are creating a *novel experience* that prepares the brain/mind to interact with the sensory *stimuli* of the environment. Travel, thereby, becomes a venue and tool for *connection*.

The attribute that ties travel with spirituality is intention. Elizabeth Tisdell suggests that for any pilgrimage to be successful there must be an objective to connect or grow.<sup>25</sup> Spiritual growth does not happen by accident, intent is fundamental. When intent is incorporated travel can become a means of discovering purpose and self. Merton said, "Go into the desert not to escape other men but in order to find them in God."<sup>26</sup> Travel (and creation) experiences can be a type of escapism, but when done with spiritual intention, they are a means of more fully knowing God, others, and self. Tisdell says that travel (specifically to and in the natural world) leads to *wisdom*, and *wisdom* is understanding, in *love*, that everything is *connected*.<sup>27</sup> To physically go somewhere new is to engage the body in the process of spiritual formation; it is to invite the created to become a locality of spirituality.

<sup>20</sup> Bernadette Flanagan, "Pilgrimage: Spirituality on the Move," *Spiritus* 19, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 195.

<sup>21</sup> Nichols, *Blue Mind*, 166.

<sup>22</sup> Selhub and Logan, *Your Brain on Nature*, 81–104.

<sup>23</sup> Willson, McIntosh, and Zahra, "Tourism and Spirituality," 151.

<sup>24</sup> Nichols, *Blue Mind*, 58–59.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth J. Tisdell, "Re-Searching Spirituality and Culture: Transformative Pilgrimage Learning and Living Answers into Big Questions," *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 87.

<sup>26</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Tisdell, "Re-Searching Spirituality and Culture," 92.

### ***Creation and the Human Spirit***

As discussed, to enter nature is to involve one's mind and body in a restorative experience.<sup>28</sup> Why, though, should this restorative experience be viewed as more than a neurological or physiological response? What makes it a spiritual experience?

Selhub and Logan imply that for artists and dreamers, the connection between humanity and creation has long been observed.<sup>29</sup> The implication being that human culture instinctively believed that nature provides a means of understanding that which is beyond the corporeal. Nichols goes so far as to suggest links between nature, the mind, and a *sense of oneness* with the larger universe.<sup>30</sup> Coming from disciplines rooted in science and medicine, these researchers are reverberating what theologians have long suggested; creation provides access to the transcendent.

Merton says, "A tree gives glory to God by being a tree. For in being what God means it to be it is.... expressing an idea which is in God and which is not distinct from the essence of God, and therefore a tree imitates God by being a tree."<sup>31</sup> Fox echoes this when he says, "...every being in the universe is the image of God."<sup>32</sup> These two mystics are suggesting that all things possess the Divine imprint. To be what one is created to be is to reflect Divinity and when something is seen as it is meant to be, the Divine *image* can be observed. This paradigm invites human beings to exist and learn from nature just as they exist and learn from others. Because nature, like humanity, is subjective, it becomes an icon of God's presence.<sup>33</sup>

Just as one learns and grows through observing another, the same can be accomplished through noticing the practices and rituals of nature.<sup>34</sup> J. Philip Newell, the former Warden of Iona Abbey, says, "The deeper we move in the body of creation and in the inner landscape of the human soul, the closer we come to the Presence [of Christ]."<sup>35</sup> At the core of all things can be found the *Presence* (or Spirit) of Christ, and to seek that *Presence* is to understand more wholly what it means to possess the image of God. There is a perceived bond between

<sup>28</sup> Selhub and Logan, *Your Brain on Nature*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Selhub and Logan, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Nichols, *Blue Mind*, 232–33.

<sup>31</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Fox, "Love Is Stronger Than Stewardship: A Cosmic Christ Path to Planetary Survival," *Tikkun*, Spring 2015, 40.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 39.

<sup>34</sup> Chase, 94–109.

<sup>35</sup> J. Philip Newell, *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 96–97.

nature and humanity. Perhaps this bond is best understood as what Merton calls the *Source*.<sup>36</sup> The Spirit of God is the *Source/Presence* of all existence. At its most basic, spirituality is understood as connection.<sup>37</sup> Human life participates with other-than-human life, and in doing so, all life is invited to harmoniously commune with the Spirit of God who is the *Source and Presence of Life*. Humanity's engagement with nature is spiritual due to this connection.

### HOW MIGHT CREATION BE EMPLOYED TO FOSTER A SPIRITUALLY FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE?

A basic understanding of spirituality is connection, i.e., connecting with God, as well as others, nature, and oneself.<sup>38</sup> For Christians, these connections are objectives toward a greater goal, i.e., being formed into the image of Christ and union with the Divine.<sup>39</sup> Merton describes this greater goal as *contemplation*; he says, "Contemplation is the awareness and realization...[and] *experience*, of what each Christian obscurely believes: 'It is now no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.'"<sup>40</sup> How might creation encourage this *contemplative experience*?

Discussing contemplative spirituality, James Wilhoit suggests that awareness and receptiveness to the presence of God are elements fundamental to the contemplative tradition, and *Lectio Divina*, he proposes, is one means of entering that tradition.<sup>41</sup> *Lectio Divina* is a historic means of interacting with scripture focused on listening to, sitting with, and being present with God.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, it is a means of experiencing the presence of the Spirit.

A quote attributed to St. Augustine says: "Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it."<sup>43</sup> Just as the

---

<sup>36</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Willson, McIntosh, and Zahra, "Tourism and Spirituality," 153.

<sup>38</sup> Willson, McIntosh, and Zahra, 153.

<sup>39</sup> Moser, "You Were Within, but I Was Outside and Sought You There," 671–72.

<sup>40</sup> Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> James C. Wilhoit, "Contemplative and Centering Prayer," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 1 (2014): 108–9.

<sup>42</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005), 168–69.

<sup>43</sup> "Creation Care Quotes," Blessed Earth, 2, accessed April 16, 2022, <https://www.blessedearth.org/resources/creation-care-quotes/>.

Spirit is revealed through the books of scripture, the Spirit is also revealed through the *book of creation*; both can be approached in a *sacramental* manner, and both are conduits for detecting the presence of God.<sup>44</sup>

*Lectio Divina* is a model for approaching scripture, but could the movements be adapted to *read creation*? The concept of adaptation is not unheard of. In her discussions of integrating social work with contemplative spaces/practice, Carolyn Jacobs describes how *Lectio Divina* might be used to understand one's context and/or experience(s).<sup>45</sup> If *Lectio Divina* can be used to approach the therapeutic context of social work, then perhaps it is an appropriate model for encouraging contemplative experiences in nature. As a tool *Lectio Divina* encourages practitioners to pay attention, ponder and pray, but ultimately experience the presence of the Spirit. If the Spirit is present in nature, then *Lectio Divina* is an appropriate tool.

Though the structure and movements of *Lectio Divina* will remain similar, each unique context will require adaptation. The practice of reading creation (i.e., *Lectio Creatio*) and engaging the Spirit through nature is going to be somewhat different from *Lectio Divina*. Table A illustrates how the traditional movements of *Lectio Divina* might be adapted for *Lectio Creatio*.

**TABLE A**

<b>Traditional Lectio Divina Movements</b>	<b>Lectio Creatio</b>	
<b>Lectio</b>	Observation	Lectio is the act of paying <i>attention</i> to scripture. <sup>46</sup> <i>Lectio Creatio</i> also invites one to <i>pay</i> attention, but to their surroundings. The goal is to observe and identify a <i>metaphor</i> that one is drawn to. <sup>47</sup>
<b>Meditatio</b>	Imagination	Eugene Peterson says, "Meditation is the prayerful employ of imagination...." <sup>48</sup> Where <i>Lectio Divina</i> asks one to ponder a text through imagination, <i>Lectio Creatio</i>

---

<sup>44</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised Edition (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 111–19.

<sup>45</sup> Carolyn Jacobs, "Contemplative Spaces in Social Work Practice," *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 49, no. 1 (January 2015): 153.

<sup>46</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 168.

<sup>47</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 94.

<sup>48</sup> Peterson, 101.

		invites one to examine and explore the attributes of a metaphor by interacting with it through imagination.
<b>Oratio</b>	Conversation	Dialogue with God is essential to both paradigms. This is an opportunity for one to consider what they have observed and imagined, and to take their apprehensions and delights <i>truthfully and authentically</i> before God. <sup>49</sup>
<b>Contemplatio</b>	Contemplation	The core and culmination of both experiences is contemplation. As stated earlier, connection and union with God is the goal. In contemplation one learns to simply be present with God, and in doing so move toward union with the Divine.

## Conclusion

How might creation influence human spirituality and be employed to cultivate a Christian spiritual experience? Though concerning the same basic topic, the questions approach the subject from two directions. The first concerns itself with how creation might interact and impact humanity while the second focuses on how humanity might approach and initiate that interaction. In some sense, the questions (and answers) are a type of dialogue, and what is discovered is that humanity and creation are mutually intertwined within the experience of spirituality.

Nature can influence a person's mind, body, and spirit; the very act of physically placing oneself in a natural setting can shape one's mind and unite spirits, potentially leading to change in actions and behavior. When understood in concert with contemplative spirituality, this sets the stage for preparing a person to know and connect with God. Adapting and utilizing historical models for entering contemplation, nature becomes a means for hearing and engaging the Spirit, and as one connects with God, and the world, they continue to be changed and formed. The realms of creation exist in cooperation with humanity, and when humanity approaches creation with respect and appreciation, the Divine becomes knowable.

## MVP (Most Viable Prototype)

Early during the designing of the prototypes, as well as throughout the testing and research phases, it became apparent that the two prototypes had the potential to become one. The travel program (which functionally operates as a retreat) provides a means of encouraging participation while also delivering the space needed for training/education, community interaction, and most importantly wholistic (mind, body, and spirit)

---

<sup>49</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 169.

engagement with God through creation. The structure and means of fostering this engagement are found in the modified *Lectio Divina* (Lectio Creatio) of the meditation program.

All participants of the mediation prototype agreed that the experience, specifically the structure, was beneficial, but they also observed that encouraging participation would potentially be difficult. Travel and retreat become a means of encouraging folks to quiet themselves, listen and sit in the presence of God through engaging in an experience that they may not realize they need to experience. Travel becomes a draw to a retreat where *reading creation* is the core experience, an experience that culminates in contemplation; travel and retreat become the structure, *Lectio Creatio* the core of the structure, and contemplation the core of the core.

Perhaps the advantage of this type of program is its flexibility. A *travel retreat* program that encourages engagement through Lectio Creatio can be a weeklong (as prototyped), a short weekend, or an extended program, and the travel itself could be to a local setting or an international expedition. Their length and location are not the defining elements; the significance is found in understanding the parts and sessions of the retreat, but most importantly, the movements of the core experience. With this understood, and considering needed skillsets and resources, this program is feasible; though there would be logistics to consider, the program could be developed and implemented almost immediately.

## Design Research Report Appendices

### Prototype 1: Progressive Meditation Program

#### PROTOTYPE DOCUMENTATION

Progressive Meditation Program (Prototype)

Pulaski County Public Library

Rocky Hollow Park

Somerset, KY

April 02, 2022

## Progressive Meditation Program (Prototype)

### Need, Problem, or Opportunity Statement

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

### Program Concept

A meditation program that encourages contemplative practices through observation of the creation in local parks and recreation areas

### Foundational Information

#### Phase I: Discovering & Defining the Opportunity

- Rooted in Uncertainty
- Lack of Connectedness (or Understanding of Connectedness)
- Prioritizing False Values

#### Phase II: Theological Insights and Guiding Themes Concerning the Opportunity

- All Created Things are Interconnected
- The Holy Spirit is Emphasized
- The Ultimate Goal of Creation is Union with God

#### Phase III: Designing for the Opportunity

- A Work of the Spirit/Experiencing the Divine
- Storytelling—Incorporating the Stories of Others/Place
- Combining Silence/Meditation with Experience
- Pilgrimage and Space
- Personal Spiritual Markers/Subjective Experience & Scaffolding

#### Phase IV: Prototyping Programs

- Travel Based Program

- Progressive Meditation Program  
Lectio Divina (Sacred or Divine Reading)

Lectio Divina is one of the oldest means of interacting and engaging scripture. For 1,500+ years Christian (lay, clergy/priests, and monastics) have used the movements of Lektion Divina to enter into the narratives of scripture, listen to the Spirit and connect with God through being aware of the Divine Presence.

#### Traditional Movements:

- Lectio (Reading)—Lectio Divina begins with simply reading and hearing the text of Scripture. A passage is read out loud multiple times. As the passage is read, the reader/listener pays attention to what stands out to them (i.e., what word, phrase or idea are they drawn to). The point is not to scrutinize the *word*, but rather be observant and aware.
- Meditatio (Meditation)—In meditation, the reader/listener is invited to ponder the word, phrase, or idea. The reader/listener reflects on how the specific *word* might interact with their life and what it might mean for them at that point in time.
- Oratio (Prayer)—In this movement the reader/listener engages in dialogue with God. The point of this movement is to be honest with both oneself and the Spirit; the reader/listener communicates their feelings of excitement, hesitation, fear, joy, etc.
- Contemplatio (Contemplation)—This is a time of sitting and resting in the presence of God. The goal of contemplation is to simply *be* with God.

#### Additional Movements:

- Silencio (Silence)—The movement is sometimes used as a precursor to the traditional four. In silence, the reader/listener takes a few moments to silence themselves, i.e., momentarily calm down and intentionally let go of any stress they may be dealing.
- Actio (Action)—The final movement is sometimes added at the end. The reader/listener is invited to ask themselves: Who is God calling me to be as a result of this experience?

\*Adapted from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*

—Silence—

“...quiet preparation of the heart.” —Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

Take a few minutes to walk and breathe. Let this be a time of letting go of any stresses or worries that may be on your mind. As you walk pay attention for a place that looks inviting, a place where you can comfortably sit for a few minutes. When you are ready, quit walking and take a seat. Pray this prayer: “God, open my heart, my mind, and my senses to know you in this place. Amen.”

—Observation—

“By means of metaphor we see far more than discrete *things*, we perceive everything in dynamic tension and relationship with everything else.” —Eugene Peterson

Pay attention to your surroundings. Look around. Don’t rush. What do you notice? What stands out? What might the Spirit be drawing your attention to? This might be an animal or a plant or a sound or a movement, or something else. Once you feel yourself drawn to something, focus your attention on that thing. Watch it. Observe it. Let this thing become a metaphor or symbol for you.

—Imagination—

“God created us with an imagination, and, as Lord of his Creation, he can and does redeem it and use it for the work of the kingdom of God.” —Richard Foster

Continue to focus your attention. Close your eyes. Picture your symbol in your mind. Replay your observations in your mind. Do it again. And again. What was it that caught your attention? What were the characteristics of the thing that stood out? What attributes of that thing might the Spirit be pointing you toward? How might these attributes connect with where you find yourself today? Who might God be calling you to be or become based on these attributes?

—Conversation—

“Prayer...is the most universal of all languages....” —Eugene Peterson

Now is the time to authentically respond to God. Consider (and listen to) the thoughts that have come to mind as you have *observed* and *imagined*. What feelings have emerged? Do you feel encouragement? Do you feel fear? Perhaps you feel something else. Articulate (either silently, vocally or written) what you believe God is calling you to do or be as a result of this experience. Express to God your thoughts, excitements and/or concerns. Now, stop and listen. Open your heart, mind, and senses to the presence of the Spirit. Listen. How might God be responding to your prayer?

—Contemplation—

“God consecrates rest and calls it holy. Rest is for wholeness.” —MaryKate Morse

The goal of contemplation is to simply *be with God*. The early monastics used to describe contemplation using the image of a child who crawls into her mother’s lap and simply sits; the child is not trying to do or say or gain anything, the only goal is to sit with her mother. Stop *observing, imagining, and conversing*. Take several minutes and simply sit with God. Acknowledge the presence of the Spirit in this place. Breathe in and out. Recognize the Spirit of God is at the same time in you and around you. Rest in that knowledge. Be present with God.

#### —Application—

“We do well also to remember that the process...is not concluded until it arrives at action...which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.” —Pope Benedict XVI

As this experience comes to a finish, ask yourself some question: (1) Who is God calling me to be? (2) What is God calling me to do? (3) What action(s) am I being asked to take? Take a few moments to ponder these questions and then fill in the blank the best you can: God is calling me to \_\_\_\_\_.

#### —Reflection—

“Experience without reflection is a happening, and no learning can be reaped from it.” —Elizabeth Conde-Frazier

**To be completed at a later time:** After the experience has concluded it is wise to take some time to process and think through what you have learned about yourself and God (and others and the world). The act of reflection is important for many reasons, but two primaries are orthodoxy and confirmation. As a member of a larger Christian community, you do not exist in a vacuum, it is important to ensure that the insights you are experiencing align with the larger traditions of faith; the voices of the community of faith (1) help to keep you grounded theologically and (2) verify your intuitions by echoing what you are experiencing.

Two Methods of Reflection:

*Group Reflection* — As a group, gather and share about your experience. What grabbed your attention? What did you hear or feel? What do you believe God is calling you to do or be? Perhaps you didn’t hear or feel anything. That’s OK. After sharing about your experience, allow others to speak into your experience.

*Personal Reflection* — If you practiced this as an individual and you are not part of a group, one way to reflect on your experience is by looking at through various lenses.

- Scripture—How does your experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture? Do any stories or characters from the Bible provide any contributions to your experience?
- Christian Tradition—How does Christian Tradition (History, Theology, etc.) inform your experience?
- Logic—Do the outcomes of your experience make sense? Do they seem reasonable or farfetched?
- Personal Experience—How do your life experiences (or your story) enlighten what you heard or felt? How do the experiences or stories of those you trust enlighten what you heard or felt?

Lectio Creatio

Three Metaphors to consider as you enter this experience:

1. Creation as God’s first **book** of revelation.

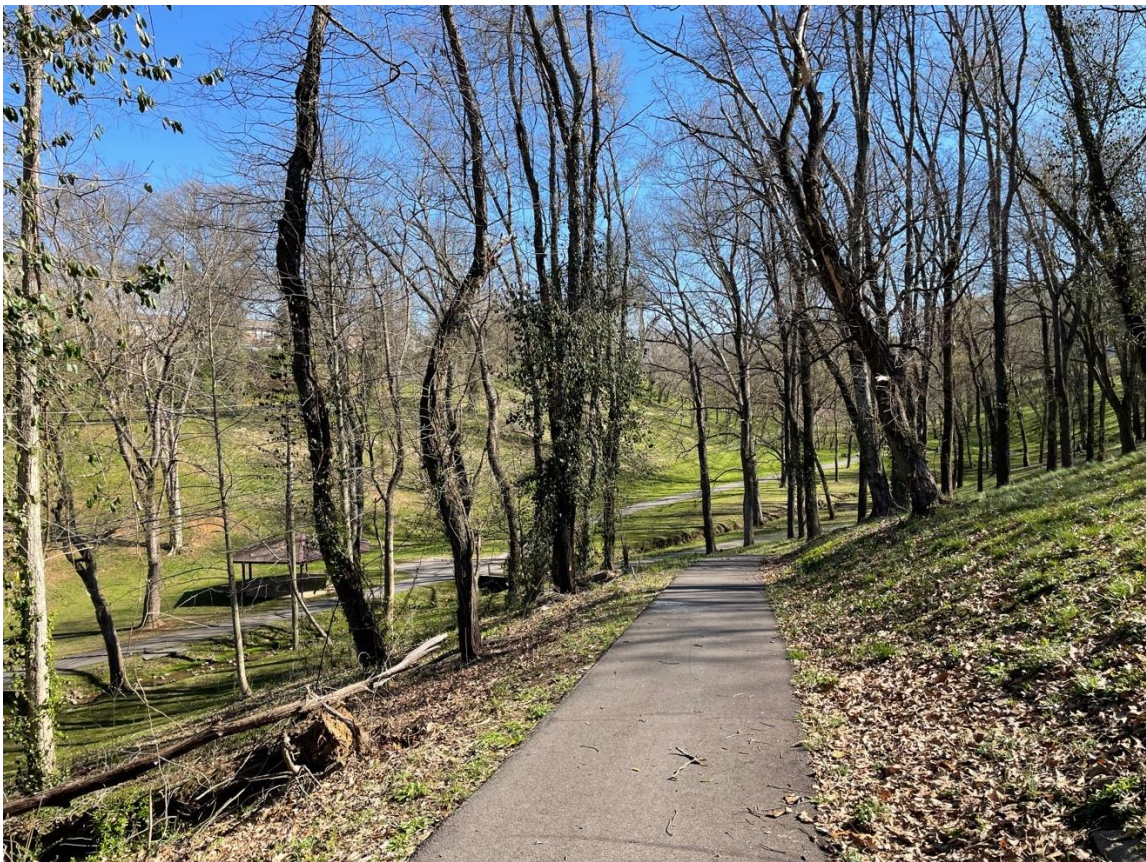
- Acts 14:15-17— “...turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.”
- Romans 1:20—For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.
- Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? —St. Augustine

2. Creation as a **partner or sibling** of humanity.

- Genesis 9:9-10— “I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth.
- Romans 8:19-21— For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
- All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing...O brother wind, air, clouds, and rain, by which all creatures ye sustain...O sister water, flowing clear, make music for thy Lord to hear...Dear mother earth, who day by day unfoldest blessings on our say...O praise ye! Alleluia! —Francis of Assisi

3. Creation as a **teacher** to humanity.

- Job 12:7-10— “Just ask the animals, and they will teach you. Ask the birds of the sky, and they will tell you. Speak to the earth, and it will instruct you. Let the fish in the sea speak to you.... For the life of every living thing is in his hand, and the breath of every human being.
- Psalm 97:6—The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory.
- Nature is school-mistress, the soul the pupil; and whatever one has taught or the other has learned has come from God – the Teacher of the teacher. —Tertullian







## PROTOTYPE INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

- Initial Thoughts?
  - Why do we not do this more often?/Need to do this more often.
  - Actually got something out this (?a word?)
  - Intentionality/Intention!!!!!!!
  - Grateful/Thankfulness
  - Perfect Timing/Perfect Space/(Novel environment)—Doing this in this space was significant
  - Good Structure
  - Growth Moments
  - A bit surprised how quickly things came (i.e., progressed through movements)
  - Being intentionally spiritual vs, the world pulling your attention (hearing cars/seeing airplanes in the background)→staying on task; an allegory: the world tries to pull as away from God
  - Natural things vs Human-made→ Natural things are “flowing” will artificial things are crumbling/splintering
  - Amazed how quick the time went by so fast.
  - Not having time limits was good/helpful
  - Amazed how safe you can feel.
  - Natural things and how artificial things can complaint the natural (but also the trash and how we mess things up sometimes)
  - Movements
    - Loved how the movements listed→caused to pause and see
    - Structure/Questions/Instructions were helpful
      - Structure→ “I go on walks all the time, but I don’t stop and think” (Structure helps with the intention)
      - Encouraged to be still
  - Nature/Creation metaphors were helpful (especially after the fact)
  - The experience overall was helpful
  - Movements that were more helpful
    - Observe→ multiple metaphors
    - Mediation→we don’t take time to be still
    - All are sort of meditation, but finer points are helpful
    - All the movements seem important/connected
    - Imagination→ didn’t expect to be able to it, but it was great
- Prior to participating in this experience (prototype), how familiar were you with contemplative spirituality?
  - Don’t know if I ever had it defined, but it’s something I’ve -----; it’s connected to being a person of faith. But no has ever said this is what it is
  - Same here...never had it defined, but through out walk as Christian, I’ve found more meaning when I’ve slowed down, especially when out in nature. But not nearly as structured as this experience
  - Similar to “Walk to Emmaus”→Solitude and reflection themes

- Now that you have been introduced and practiced a form of contemplative prayer, how would you describe your comfort level? Is contemplative prayer something you would continue to pursue? Why?
  - Comfort—Yes (everyone)
  - Do it again—Yes (everyone)
  - Why?
    - Reflection
    - Makes you stop and get out of your routine
    - Connection/Allows you to be closer to God→by being intentional
    - Effective
    - Even when we plan on being intentional, the intention gets lost in the day to day→Commitment is important
    - At first seemed challenging, but It's simplistic enough...I can do this→I want to share this husband, kids, small group, my inner circle etc.
  - Commitment is essential to getting folks involved in order to keep focus. Also trust.
  - Interactive and engaging even though didn't talk to others
- This experience (prototype) asked you to intentionally practice this form of spirituality/prayer in a natural setting, how would you describe that *experience*? How was the setting beneficial? How was the setting a distraction?
  - The natural setting is essential.
  - The imperfections weren't noticed outside→they weren't imperfections they were just nature
  - Awesome because it pulls nature and spirituality together
  - You couldn't get this experience in another environment, perhaps not even in a church
  - Just being in Awe of creation.
  - You've got actual immersive experience and visual cues→in one little space you've got so much going on.
  - Distractions→
    - I wouldn't call them distractions. The added to it.
    - Juxtaposition of creation and artificial things—humanity has put its spin on God's creation, but at the end of the day we are still tiny
  - Nature helps us see that we are part of something larger→this experience has the potential to reinforce that or circle back to that or focus on that idea
- After participating in this experience, how would you describe the relation between spirituality, creation, and God?
  - Interconnected→ seeing nature in front of you helps contemplate the Creator
  - You can't have one without the others→ because of Him
  - It is a good visual reminder of our faith
  - Helpful to recognize the connection→grateful of that connection→God is control of all
  - God knows us (at all times in all places)
  - Reminder that this world is not an accident—God is there
  - Purpose (circle of life)→God is there in all seasons
  - Nature points is to God even when we don't feel it.

- Overall, what went well during the experience (prototype)? What did not go well? What could be improved?
  - What went well?
    - Everything
    - Location→outside→Beautiful place
    - Timing (Season (Spring) and time of day (morning) and length (hour))
    - Effectiveness of desired goal→getting closer to God/Spirituality
    - Small Group→large group may have been difficult
    - Busyness of place
    - Solitude
  - What did not go well?
    - Dropped Pen in water
    - Journal or something to write on
    - If the weather were different
      - Baseline comfort (weather/temp)
      - But different weather may have a different, good experience
  - What could be improved?
    - Further out in nature you push the better (wilderness area)
    - Serious of event (do this, then lunch, then something else that builds on it, etc.)
    - Breaking it up (silence and observation→come back→now imagination and conversation→) Full day experience? Weekend retreat.
    - Team building or marriage retreat?
    - It could be later
- When considering the type of program, what matters to you?
  - Effectiveness→What's the takeaway going to be→ fruit→lasting implications
  - Foundation→Being sure it's Biblically based
  - Spiritual impact→You've gotta have God
  - Conversation Aspect→desire product; being able to process the individual experience
  - Secretive→not explained until it's time to participate
  - Would like to hear other's thoughts (i.e., age groups). Someone's take based on where they are in faith/life.
- Final Thoughts?

## Prototype 2: Travel Program

### PROTOTYPE DOCUMENTATION

# Spiritual Formation Through Travel & Retreat

CONNECTING WITH GOD, OTHERS, SELF, AND THE WORLD

## Foundational Information

### A Need, Problem or Opportunity

Intentional, outdoor-focused experiences, coupled with guided reflection and thoughtful observation of one's interactions, have the potential to cultivate engagement with the Spirit of God, leading to spiritual development by creating opportunities for self-awareness and a sense of connection with God, others, and the world.

# Foundational Information

## Research Process and Insights

### Phase I: Discovering & Defining the Opportunity

- Rooted in Uncertainty
- Lack of Connectedness (or Understanding of Connectedness)
- Prioritizing False Values

### Phase II: Theological Insights and Guiding Themes Concerning the Opportunity

- All Created Things are Interconnected
- The Holy Spirit is Emphasized
- The Ultimate Goal of Creation is Union with God

### Phase III: Designing for the Opportunity

- A Work of the Spirit/Experiencing the Divine
- Storytelling—Incorporating the Stories of Others/Place
- Combining Silence/Meditation with Experience
- Pilgrimage and Space
- Personal Spiritual Markers/Subjective Experience & Scaffolding

### Phase IV: Prototyping Programs

- Travel Based Program
- Progressive Meditation Program

# Program Concept

A multi-day, destination/travel-based program that invites participants to experience new and novel places through local, regional, and remote expeditions. Through (1) visiting new places, particularly those associated with a sense of awe, transcendence, and/or natural beauty (e.g., a national park, a backcountry hut in the mountains, an eco-resort in a jungle, a vineyard, etc.), (2) appreciating the natural environment through recreation, sightseeing, relaxation/rest, etc. (3) learning the histories/stories of the places, people and cultures connected to the region/environment, and (4) discerning the presence of God through silence, observation, listening and reflection, participants are invited to better know, and connect with, the world, oneself, and the Divine.

## Program Overview (Basic Schedule)

- Arrival Day
  - Group Orientation & Education Day
  - **Adventure & Initial Experiences Day**
  - **Sabbath Day**
  - **Solo Day**
  - Reflection Day
  - Departure Day
- Daily Schedule (Basic)
    - Free Time/Breakfast
    - Session 1
    - Session 2
    - Lunch
    - Session 3
    - Break
    - Session 4
    - Session 5
    - Dinner/Free Time

## Day 1 Arrival



- Welcome
  - Purpose: The Arrival Day is intended to be nothing more than a welcoming experience that invites participants to take part and invest in the communal, environmental and spiritual experiences that are to come.
  - Experiences: Check-In, Welcome Dinner, Worship & Campfire

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education

### Group Orientation and Education Schedule

- Free Time/Breakfast
- Session 1—Team Development
- Session 2—A Practical Pneumatology
- Lunch
- Session 3—Listening to the Spirit through Lectio Divina
- Break
- Session 4—The Story of this Place and People
- Session 5—Engaging the Spirit through Lectio Creatio
- Dinner/Free Time

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education



- Session 1: Group Development
  - Purpose: Crucial to this whole endeavor is the realization that community is essential to the spiritual life. The very first session is dedicated to (temporary) community development.
  - Experience: An of a many Team Building exercises.

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education



- Session 2: A Practical Pneumatology
  - Purpose: At its core, this entire experience is a Practical Pneumatology (Theology of the Spirit); an experience of knowing and connecting with the Spirit who is present in all things.
  - Experience: Session 2 is a brief educational/classroom period dedicated to introducing participants to the Person of the Holy Spirit.

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education

### Lectio Divina

[Silencio—Silence]  
 Lectio—Read  
 Meditatio—Meditate  
 Oratio—Pray  
 Contemplatio—Contemplation  
 [Actio—Action]



- Session 3: Listening to the Spirit through Lectio Divina
  - Purpose: Again, at its core, this experience is about connecting and interacting with the Spirit of God. The practice of Lectio Divina serves as a historic means/model of doing that.
  - Experience: In a classroom environment, participants will be introduced and will practice the traditional movement of Lectio Divina.

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education



- Session 4: The Story of this Place & People
  - Purpose: Every place has a story, as do the people who live (and lived) there. Hearing the stories of the land and communities provides context, appreciation, a sense of connectedness that extends beyond the individual/group.
  - Experience: Local historians/experts will be invited to share with the group the local history/stories of the place and people.

## Day 2 Group Orientation and Education

### Lectio Creatio

Silence  
 Observation  
 Imagination  
 Conversation  
 Contemplation  
 Application  
 Reflection

- Session 5: Engaging the Spirit through Lectio Creatio
  - Purpose: The Spirit of God is present in and around all things. One of the goals of this program is learning to connect with the Spirit through engaging the natural world.
  - Experience: In an outdoor classroom environment, participants are invited to adapt the movements of Lectio Divina in order to read God's first book of revelation (i.e., creation)

## Day 3 Adventure & Initial Experiences

### Adventure and Initial Experiences Schedule

- Free Time/Breakfast
- Session 1—Adventure Programing
- Lunch
- Session 2—First Solo Experience—Lectio Creatio
- Break
- Session 3—Connecting with God through Place and People
- Session 4—End of Day Solo Reflection
- Dinner/Free Time

## Day 3 Adventure & Initial Experiences



### • Session 1: Adventure Programming

- Purpose: (1) Intentionally create an incident of high(er) stress. Intentional high stress experiences (outside one's comfort zone) potentially allow the mind to more easily transition to states of peace and/or calmness during subsequent times. (2) Fun.
- Experience: Any of number of adventure based programs.

## Day 3 Adventure & Initial Experiences



- Session 2: First Solo Experience –Lectio Creatio–
  - Purpose: To connect with God by engaging with the Spirit through interacting with the creation.
  - Experience: Using the movements learned the day before, participants will be asked to go off by themselves for a short period to practice hearing from God through reading creation.

## Day 3 Adventure & Initial Experiences



- Session 3: Connecting with God through Place and People
  - Purpose: This session will focus on how the communities of this place have understood God, faith, and spiritual experience.
  - Experience: This will be another classroom experience. Building upon the stories and histories learned the day before, participants will be invited to hear and discuss the spirituality of the local context.

## Day 3 Adventure & Initial Experiences

### Personal Reflection

Scripture: How does your experience or insights line up with the stories of scripture?

Christian Tradition: How does Christian Tradition/Faith inform your experience?

Logic: Do the outcomes of your experience(s) make sense? Do they seem reasonable or farfetched?

Personal Experience: How do your life experiences (or those of someone you trust) enlighten what you have heard or felt?

### • Session 4: End of Day Solo Reflection

– Purpose: Participants will be asked to take some time to reflect on the day's events, but especially their experience of Lectio Creatio. Intentional reflection is a means of viewing ones experience in the context of the larger community of faith.

– Experience: Participants will be asked to examine their experience(s) through the lenses of Scripture, Tradition, Logic and Personal Experience.

## Day 4 Sabbath

### Sabbath Day Schedule

No Schedule

## Day 4 Sabbath



- Rest and Renewal
  - Purpose: Rest and Renewal.
  - Experience: Nothing is planned this day. Optional Activities may be provided.

## Day 5 Solitude

### Solitude Day Schedule

- Free Time/Breakfast
- Session 1—Review and Discussion of Lectio Creatio
- Session 2—A Day of Solitude (Packed Lunch)
- Session 3—End of Day Group Reflection
- Dinner/Free Time

## Day 5 Solitude



- Session 1: Review & Discussion of Lectio Creatio
  - Purpose: (1) An opportunity to review the movements of Lectio Creatio and clarify any questions. (2) An opportunity for participants to briefly share about their previous attempt.
  - Experience: This will be less of a classroom environment and more of a informal setting; less instruction, more conversation/dialogue.

## Day 5 Solitude



- Session 2: A Day of Solitude
  - Purpose: To connect with God by engaging with the Spirit through interacting with the creation.
  - Experience: Using the movements of Lectio Creatio, participants will be asked to go off by themselves for an extended period (six hours) to practice hearing from God through reading creation.

## Day 5 Solitude



- Session 3: End of Day Group Reflection
  - Purpose: Participants will be asked to take some time to reflect as a group on their experience of Solitude and Lectio Creatio. Intentional reflection is a means of viewing ones experience in the context of the larger community of faith.
  - Experience: Participants will be asked to gather, share and process their experience(s) while also listening to others and allowing others to speak into their experience.

## Day 6 Reflection

### Reflection Day Schedule

- Free Time/Breakfast
- Session 1—Solo Experience—Lectio Creatio
- Session 2—Group Debrief I
- Lunch
- Session 3—Group Debrief II
- Break
- Session 4—Final Solo Reflection
- Session 5—Closing Worship
- Dinner/Free Time

## Day 6 Reflection



- Session 1: Solo Experience
  - Lectio Creatio–
    - Purpose: To connect with God by engaging with the Spirit through interacting with the creation.
    - Experience: Using Lectio Creatio, participants will be asked to go off by themselves for a short period to practice hearing from God through reading creation.

## Day 6 Reflection

### Session 2

- What went well this week?
- What didn't go so well?
- What did I learn to do?
- How can I apply this to my life?

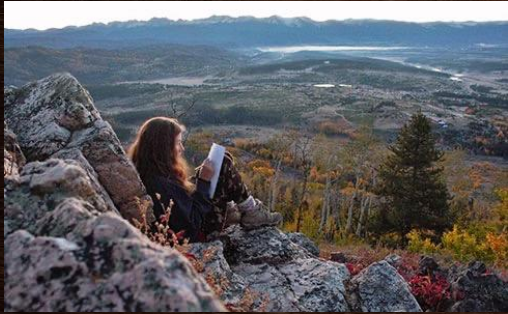
### Session 3

- What did I learn about myself?
- What did I learn about God?
- Who am I learning to be?

### • Sessions 2 & 3: Group Debriefs

- Purpose: As the experience nears an end, it is wise to reflect and ask, “how has this experience impacted me (us)?” These sessions will focus on both practical skills learned as well as internal insights.
- Experience: In a formal, yet casual environment, participants will be asked to reflect on their over all experience.

## Day 6 Reflection



### • Session 4: Final Solo Reflection Experience

- Purpose: Participants will be asked to take some time to reflect on the day's events, but especially their experience of Lectio Creatio.
- Experience: Participants will once again be asked to examine their experience(s) through the lenses of Scripture, Tradition, Logic and Personal Experience.

## Day 6 Reflection



### • Worship Together

- Purpose: A means of closing the experience. Worship is focused on God, yet in that focus there is a realization that all of creation is invited to participate. Humanity and the other-than-human creation join together, moving toward union with God.
- Experience: A simple ecumenical worship service.

## Day 7 Departure



- Breakfast and Goodbyes
  - Purpose: Final Things
  - Experience: Breakfast, Check-outs, and Goodbyes.

## A Word on Meals



- Breakfasts, Lunches, & Dinners
  - Purpose: Along with the exercises designed for “connecting with God”, the meal times are one of the more important aspects to the overall experience; it is often during meals that human relationships developed and strengthened.
  - Experience: Gatherings where local food, drink, community and conversation are held up as sacramental.

## PROTOTYPE INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

### **1x1 Interview #1**

- After seeing the storyboard/presentation and hearing the descriptions, what are your initial thoughts concerning a travel-based spiritual development program?
  - Love it
  - Sounds really cool
  - Appreciate the Structured but also open→Good Balance
    - Guidance and structure are good
    - We don't want to manipulate or bias
  - We should be aware of our theological bias
    - Maybe simply naming "this is my background"
    - Giving people to permission to disagree
  - Safety? —Personal Safety→Guides, area, etc.
    - Nothing will ruin it like someone getting hurt
    - We're trusting that people can go off on their own?
  - Logistics→travel, food, etc.
    - everything matters→It's all part of it
    - weather?
    - If logistics have not been thought through, the experience fails.
  - Anything can be the thing that distracts
  - Number of People?
    - Is this a large group of people or small group
  - Love the built-in time for reflection
    - Do you encourage folks to bring their own journal, or do you give them something when they arrive?
    - Process: Think, Write, Share
  - Story of place→share and allow folks to take what is helpful
  - The more we can be aware and share our bias, the more we can allow folks to not be constrained
- This story-board/presentation (prototype) implies a connection between beautiful and awe-inspiring locations (unique and novel destinations) and spirituality. Do you see benefits in traveling to new locations for this reason? What are they? What is the downside to a travel-based program?
  - Yes
    - "Getting ready to travel and I'm excited"
    - There is an inherent desire
    - Get out of rut
    - Desire for novel
    - See this in kids as well
    - If we can this inherent desire for new things and use it to draw folks to God and deeper connection...

- We need the reminder that we are part of something larger and we have a place in creation
  - Downsides:
    - Logistics: planning, money, it's hard, lodging, etc.
      - If logistics aren't done well, it could be thing that distracts (though these things could be opportunity as well)
    - You must care about doing, but that means folks will be all in
- Along with traveling to beautiful and awe-inspiring locations, this story-board/presentation (prototype) suggests the inclusion of geographic and cultural learning opportunities. Do you see a benefit to including these opportunities in a spiritual development program? What are they?
  - Sure→it could be a good component. Don't know how much it must be included, but it does provide some context
  - See our place in the larger story (place, culture, etc.)
  - We are not the first to experience problems and question what I am doing and if we are doing life correctly.
  - People have struggled with the same things for a long time, and this helps us learn from them.
  - We are doing this in community (also historical community)
- Based on this story-board/presentation (prototype), what aspect(s) is most appealing to you? What part(s) do you feel would be less beneficial or you would be less inclined to participate in? What would you change?
  - Getting to do somewhere new, somewhere in the beauty of creation
    - Getting away
  - Balance of time to learn, time to have fun, experience, free time
    - There's a good mix→to things but also time to rest, time alone, but also time with people.
  - Solitude (intentional)
    - Whatever logistics are to make this safe, this is needed. Solitude is lacking in most of our experiences.
    - Intentional solitude→ being connected by being by yourself. This is needed.
- - Less Beneficial/Get rid of:
    - Dial back some of the educational component
      - There is value→but it could be lessened if needed
    - Adventure component
      - It's fun if you can, but being outside and somewhere new could stand on its own without the stressful adventure component
    - Full week timeframe
      - Giving a full week for some could be hard

- A shorter version could be more assessable, though you may lose something
- When considering this type of Program, What Matters to You?
  - Power in the processing → Guiding the reflection
    - You can have the greatest experience in the world, but without the processing in probably won't sink in.
    - It in reflection that we get to life change
    - Not trying to steer processing, more making sure the process happens
  - This needs to not be just an escape from reality. Bring the experience back with us.
  - If you just want to escape or get away, go on a vacation.
  - The purpose needs to be more than escape, there needs to be internalization and life change.

### 1x1 Interview #2

- After seeing the storyboard/presentation and hearing the descriptions, what are your initial thoughts concerning a travel-based spiritual development program?
  - Sign me up
  - Like the way it is structured
  - Like mix of instruction, practice, and repetition
    - Like the opportunity to group reflect and say this works or it doesn't, but then get to try it again.
  - Like Relaxed pace
  - Awe→sometimes the veil lifts when we get outside or in new place
    - Novel→getting out of normal environment
    - Like when we drive to the same place every day→when we get into new places it helps us to open our minds
  - Like the structure
  - Group Reflection, Personal Reflection→liked a few different ways to reflect
    - Different forms of reflecting (and journaling) connect with different people.
  - Adventure Day (Red Mind, Blue Mind)→Adventure helps us to engage the body (mind, body, spirit)
    - Engage mind with learning, engage spirit with reflection, engage body with fun
  - Will there be guide or handout?
  - A journal would be a good idea, but maybe also a voice recorder
    - A nice journal could be an artifact to take home
  - What is Sabbath?
    - Maybe some training on what sabbath is.
    - People don't know how to sabbath
    - By teaching about sabbath folks can choose what might work best for them.
  - On Solitude Day→ Maybe Worship/prayer experience on thanks to God for what God is giving/revealing→a thanksgiving experience
  - Ritual→on welcoming day we entering a holy place—maybe a reverse ritual as we leave; how do we take this with us?
  
- This story-board/presentation (prototype) implies a connection between beautiful and awe-inspiring locations (unique and novel destinations) and spirituality. Do you see benefits in traveling to new locations for this reason? What are they? What is the downside to a travel-based program?
  - Yes→ New environment makes us observant
    - We can experience God anywhere, but new environments make us observant
  - New places rock our minds
  - Downsides:
    - Cost and Length
    - Logistics (if international: passports, etc.)

- Camp high vs incorporation into permanent environment
  - Temporary Community→pros and cons
- Along with traveling to beautiful and awe-inspiring locations, this story-board/presentation (prototype) suggests the inclusion of geographic and cultural learning opportunities. Do you see a benefit to including these opportunities in a spiritual development program? What are they?
  - Yeah→we think in terms of lifetime (what I've experienced)→this helps us think bigger (what has the land experienced?). How has the land influenced the community and spirituality of the people?
  - We approach our spirituality from our geography and going somewhere different gives us a different perspective.
- Based on this story-board/presentation (prototype), what aspect(s) is most appealing to you? What part(s) do you feel would be less-beneficial or you would be less inclined to participate in? What would you change?
  - Knowledge Part (Learn and practice)
    - Learn on day 2 and then practice over the next few days.
  - Intentional time away for growth (investment).
    - We'll invest in school or learning a new skill, this is a way to invest
  - Less-Beneficial/Get rid of:
    - Team Building?
    - Maybe--Incorporate some of the solitude day into sabbath?
    - Optional Activities on Sabbath→Not free day→Sabbath day is intentional
      - Sabbath training: what is it that gives me rest?
      - Self-Awareness of what gives me rest
- When considering this type of Program, What Matters to You?
  - Growth→what's the point of the experience if you are not changed in some way.

### 1x1 Interview #3

- After seeing the storyboard/presentation and hearing the descriptions, what are your initial thoughts concerning a travel-based spiritual development program?
  - Sounds Amazing—Where do I sign up?
  - Draw on a lot of things
    - Solitude/Silence→this is idea shows in other traditions (and there are good things)
    - Book→Dharma Bums
    - Nature is not always pleasant, Nature can be brutal
    - Christian aspect
    - Like the idea of bringing in traditional things
    - Like the language of pilgrimage or spiritual journey
  - How might this be used in the classroom?
    - Kids, teenagers, and middle schoolers don't have this connection with nature
    - Could be adapted for different age groups and different demographic groups
  - Who is the audience? Who are you trying to reach?
  - Appeals to me
  
- This story-board/presentation (prototype) implies a connection between beautiful and awe-inspiring locations (unique and novel destinations) and spirituality. Do you see benefits in traveling to new locations for this reason? What are they? What is the downside to a travel-based program?
  - There is an argument for traveling, but also doing local stuff
  - This could be adapted to city/urban settings (take pictures of things that are awe inspiring or make you notice the divine). Finding the sacred in the everyday
  - Traveling is more beneficial
    - Deeper Experience
    - But travel doesn't have to be far...there are beautiful places in every region and state.
  - Downsides:
    - Money and Time, but people are open to opportunities for self-care
    - Might be hard sells to individuals→churches/large groups will write it off
  
- Along with traveling to beautiful and awe-inspiring locations, this story-board/presentation (prototype) suggests the inclusion of geographic and cultural learning opportunities. Do you see a benefit to including these opportunities in a spiritual development program? What are they?
  - Understanding how different cultures connect with the divine
    - Knowing how they interact with nature and use nature to interact with God
    - How cultures have connected with nature and God in the past and why would we reject that in our culture.
    - How do we make it flow with the greater experience?

- Based on this story-board/presentation (prototype), what aspect(s) is most appealing to you? What part(s) do you feel would be less-beneficial or you would be less inclined to participate in? What would you change?
  - Sabbath Day
  - Adventure (high stress event)
  - Debriefing and Reflection Piece
  - Add:
    - Maybe add Journals
    - Team Games for the adventure/stress piece/team building
  - Less-Beneficial or Get Rid of:
    - 
    - Combine: Sabbath Day & Self-Reflection
- When considering this type of Program, What Matters to You?
  - Spiritual Renewal→Realizing that we can connect/commune with God outside the church, and there are groups of folks that believe that.

### 1x1 Interviews #4

- After seeing the storyboard/presentation and hearing the descriptions, what are your initial thoughts concerning a travel-based spiritual development program?
  - Coaching and Content is helpful/needed
  - Afternoon period and people's energy (session 4 & 5)
    - Daylight or evening session can be low energy → people may need to do something to re-energize
  - Big Fan of Lectio Divina
    - Easy handrail for people to start
    - Good way to teach folks how to engage Lord
  - Teambuilding World → we use imagination. Imagination is good.
  - Like Story of Place/People
    - Incorporating the ways, we connect with God/others/self/community
  - Love Sabbath Day → How do we Sabbath?
  - Book → Ruthless Elimination of Hurry
  - How to Sabbath
    - Teach folks how to sabbath
    - What does sabbath look like for different folks
    - Vision Casting
    - Options without over programming
  - Love reflection times
    - Good amount of group vs solo time
    - Small groups → varying how you do groups/reflections
  - Adventure Day → Value of Play
    - Bonding with people
    - Dealing with stress
    - Should solo time be right after "adventure" → can switch effectively?
  - Scheduling? Pay attention to this → pay attention to flow of energy and stay on point
  - Love the intentional shared meal
  
- This story-board/presentation (prototype) implies a connection between beautiful and awe-inspiring locations (unique and novel destinations) and spirituality. Do you see benefits in traveling to new locations for this reason? What are they? What is the downside to a travel-based program?
  - Maybe → Depends on person
    - People respond differently to traveling to different places based on their comfort zones
    - For some, the travel is part of the fun/adventure; for others, the travel is stress
    - New, awe inspiring that leads to a greater story beyond ourselves.
  - Downsides:
    - Stress of traveling
    - Health related stuff

- Lot of planning/logistics
- Along with traveling to beautiful and awe-inspiring locations, this story-board/presentation (prototype) suggests the inclusion of geographic and cultural learning opportunities. Do you see a benefit to including these opportunities in a spiritual development program? What are they?
  - Metaphors→stories help with the metaphors
  - Seeing and interacting→content and visual are helpful
- Based on this story-board/presentation (prototype), what aspect(s) is most appealing to you? What part(s) do you feel would be less-beneficial or you would be less inclined to participate in? What would you change?
  - Kinesthetic way of connecting with the Lord and doing it with others
  - Practical Pneumatology→the church just doesn't know what to do with the Holy Spirit, creating a great foundation for that.
  - There's something about getting away, but also coaching people how to connect with God when they get home.
  - Most think getting outside is a good thing, but this helps to think (and gives structure) to how to connect with God when we do that.
  - Play and Adventure
  - Less-Beneficial/Get Rid of:
    - Consolidate
      - Long Solitude shortened
      - Reflection Day
      - Shortened Sabbath
    - Change afternoon?
    - Always do something outside in the afternoon
    - Would you incorporate Spiritual Direction?
- When considering this type of Program, What Matters to You?
  - Location!!!
  - Not Knowing vs Group of friends→who is there matters→equal footing
  - Shared Community→shared meals→shared camaraderie
  - Safety→safe place
  - Lectio Divina
  - --Lectio 365--

### 1x1 Interviews #5

- After seeing the storyboard/presentation and hearing the descriptions, what are your initial thoughts concerning a travel-based spiritual development program?
  - Sounds like unique/fun opportunity.
  - Who is your intended audience? What is their Experience? Education?
  - Event Planning→Scheduling
    - Some places Too Much
    - Some Places Not Enough
    - Sabbath and Solitude could be combined
      - “Form, Norm, Storm, Perform”
        - Forming group
        - Normalizing
        - Storming→Conflict
        - Performing→Execute the goal
      - Maybe think through scheduling
  - History →
    - What History?
    - Whose history?
    - History that is not commonly known
    - Reconciliation→How the Holy Spirit works in reconciliation
      - What the goal to bring this into the conversation
- This story-board/presentation (prototype) implies a connection between beautiful and awe-inspiring locations (unique and novel destinations) and spirituality. Do you see benefits in traveling to new locations for this reason? What are they? What is the downside to a travel-based program?
  - Yes→Our soul is primed to engage
  - Travel produces that awe-inspiring experience
  - Any area that is different than your area has the potential to create that awe (Novel Experience)
  - Downsides?
    - If group is all strangers, it will affect relational piece and how you do things.
      - Day 2 team development might not be best
      - How you do group stuff might be different depending on the group
      - Pulling folks out of normal space→how do you modify based on the group?
    - Logistics→Transportation, get sick (while they are there), how far they are traveling, international vs. domestic, right historian, right adventure program

- Along with traveling to beautiful and awe-inspiring locations, this story-board/presentation (prototype) suggests the inclusion of geographic and cultural learning opportunities. Do you see a benefit to including these opportunities in a spiritual development program? What are they?
  - Absolutely→100%
    - If we are traveling to a new place, we must interact with history/culture
    - We often just consume; we don't see the people, their histories, struggles, victories
    - We must get past our own cultural lenses
    - We are often just tourists
    - Book→Indigenous Peoples Bible
- Based on this story-board/presentation (prototype), what aspect(s) is most appealing to you? What part(s) do you feel would be less-beneficial or you would be less inclined to participate in? What would you change?
  - Appealing
    - Experience of it
    - Travel is appealing→Travel that has purpose; travel that engages culture
  - - Less-Beneficial or would change
      - Combine Days→ Sabbath and Solitude could be one day
      - Reflection could be done differently→ Post experience reflection though e-mail/follow-up
      - Shorten or adjust first day→ Perhaps team-building/bonding could be moved (first experience of first day might be too much for some folks).
- When Considering this type of Program, What Matters to You?
  - If I were to attend, the experiences would be the most important (Experience with Holy Spirit, culture, area, rest, adventure, etc.) ...Experience in all the different ways
  - From a ministry perspective: Incorporating the work of the Holy Spirit.
    - Making sure the “core” of the program is emphasized and matters; everything you are doing points toward the core/emphasis

# Bibliography

- Anderson, Clifford V. "Camping History." In *Introduction to Christian Camping*, edited by Werner C. Graendorf and Lloyd D. Mattson. Chicago: Moody Press, 1979.
- Arnold, Lane M., and Valerie Hess. *The Life of the Body: Physical Well-Being and Spiritual Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013.
- Austin, David, and Michael E. Crawford. *Therapeutic Recreation: An Introduction*. 3rd edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.
- Ayres, Jennifer R. "Cultivating the 'Unquiet Heart': Ecology, Education, and Christian Faith." *Theology Today* 74, no. 1 (April 1, 2017): 57–65.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2014.
- Becker, Christoph, Gabriele Lauterbach, Sarah Spengler, Ulrich Dettweiler, and Filip Mess. "Effects of Regular Classes in Outdoor Education Settings: A Systematic Review on Students' Learning, Social and Health Dimensions." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14, no. 5 (May 2017): 485.
- Bedford, Nancy Elizabeth. "Unfinished Choreographies: Divinization as a Theme and a Challenge." *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41, no. 2 (2014): 169–81.
- Benner, David G. *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*. Expanded edition. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015.
- Berry, Wendell. *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*. Edited by Norman Wirzba. 1st edition. Washington, D.C: Counterpoint, 2003.
- . *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009.
- . *This Day: Collected & New Sabbath Poems*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2014.
- . *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*. Reprint edition. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2015.
- . *What Are People For?: Essays*. Second edition. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010.
- Birch, Bruce C., Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Blenkinsop, Sean, John Telford, and Marcus Morse. "A Surprising Discovery: Five Pedagogical Skills Outdoor and Experiential Educators Might Offer More Mainstream Educators in This Time of Change." *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* 16, no. 4 (2016): 346–58.
- Blessed Earth. "Blessed Earth." Accessed December 26, 2022. <https://www.blessedearth.org/>.
- Blessed Earth. "Creation Care Quotes." Accessed April 16, 2022. <https://www.blessedearth.org/resources/creation-care-quotes/>.

- Bobilya, Andrew J., Lynn D. Akey, and Donald Mitchell. "Outcomes of a Spiritually Focused Wilderness Orientation Program." *Journal of Experiential Education* 33, no. 4 (May 1, 2011): 301–22.
- Bolsinger, Tod E. *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*. Praxis. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian in Community*. Translated by John Doberstein. New York: HarperOne, 1954.
- Brailey, Geoffrey Samuel, and Stephen Douglas Parker. "The Identity Imperative: Mentoring as a Tool for Christian Young Adult Identity Formation." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 25, no. 2 (2020): 109–23.
- Bramer, Paul. "Christian Formation: Tweaking the Paradigm." *Christian Education Journal* 4, no. 2 (2007): 352–63.
- Briguglio, Marie, Teresa Garcia-Muñoz, and Shoshana Neuman. "Environmental Engagement, Religion and Spirituality in the Context of Secularization." *Environmental Research Letters* 15, no. 10 (October 2020).
- Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York: Avery, 2015.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Revised edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.
- Brunner, Daniel L., Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda. *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005.
- Chan, Francis, and Danae Yankoski. *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009.
- Chase, Steven. *Nature as Spiritual Practice*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011.
- Center for Action and Contemplation. "Who We Are." Accessed November 13, 2022. <https://cac.org/about/who-we-are/>.
- Cherry, Constance M. *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Chittister, Joan. *The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010.
- The Close Retreat Center. "Accommodations." Accessed December 4, 2022. [www.theclose.org/accommodations.html](http://www.theclose.org/accommodations.html).

- Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett. *A Many Colored Kingdom: Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2004.
- Coogan, Michael D., and Cynthia R. Chapman. *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Crossman, Joanna. "Environmental and Spiritual Leadership: Tracing the Synergies from an Organizational Perspective." *Journal of Business Ethics* 103, no. 4 (October 12, 2011): 553.
- Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Delio, Ilia, Keith Douglass Warner, and Pamela Wood. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. Illustrated edition. Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2008.
- Denton, Ashley. *Christian Outdoor Leadership: Theology, Theory, and Practice*. Fort Collins: Smooth Stone Publishing, 2011.
- Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. First Touchstone Edition. New York: Free Press, 1997.
- Dickerson, Matthew T., and David L. O'Hara. *From Homer to Harry Potter: A Handbook on Myth and Fantasy*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.
- Di Giovine, Michael A., and Jaeyeon Choe. "Geographies of Religion and Spirituality: Pilgrimage Beyond the 'Officially' Sacred." *Tourism Geographies* 21, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 361–83.
- Downs, Perry G. *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Drescher, Elizabeth. *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Duncan, Graham. "Celtic Spirituality and Contemporary Environmental Issues." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 1–10.
- Ferguson, Nancy, and Jennifer Burch. "Religious Camps: Common Roots and New Sprouts." *The Camping Magazine* 84, no. 6 (2011): 48–53.
- Field, David N. "I Believe in the Holy Earthy Church: Toward an Ecological Reinterpretation of the Holiness of the Church." *Scriptura* 111, no. 3 (2012): 333–47.
- Flanagan, Bernadette. "Pilgrimage: Spirituality on the Move." *Spiritus* 19, no. 2 (Fall 2019): 181–98.
- Ford, Phyllis, and Jim Blanchard. *Leadership and Administration of Outdoor Pursuits*. Second Edition. Andover: Venture, 1993.
- Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Vol. Third Edition. San Francisco: Harper, 1998.
- . *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992.

- Fox, Matthew. "Love Is Stronger Than Stewardship: A Cosmic Christ Path to Planetary Survival." *Tikkun*, Spring 2015.
- . *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1988.
- Frankena, William. "Introduction." In *Philosophy of Education*, 1–18. New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, 1965.
- Freyer, Bernhard, Valentina Aversano-Dearborn, Georg Winkler, Sina Leipold, Harald Haidl, Karl Werner Brand, Michael Rosenberger, and Thomas Wallnig. "Is There a Relation Between Ecological Practices and Spirituality? The Case of Benedictine Monasteries." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 31, no. 5 (October 1, 2018): 559–82.
- Gellel, Adrian-Mario. "The Language of Spirituality." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 17–29.
- Graendorf, Werner C., and Lloyd D. Mattson. *Introduction to Christian Camping*. Duluth: Camping Guideposts, 1984.
- The Green Bible*. Reprint edition. HarperOne, 2010.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.
- . *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011.
- Hage, Elias. "The Modern Boy's Rite of Passage and the Lacking Component of Transcendental Death Acknowledgement." *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 58, no. 2 (2018): 214–233.
- Harris, Maria. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.
- Hedin, Norma. "Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges." *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 107–18.
- Helm Stevens, Roxanne, Dan Kipley, and Todd Pheifer. "The Impact of a Service-Learning Project on Undergraduate Students' Faith Development and Spiritual Formation: Outcomes of an Organization and Administrative Behavior Course." *International Journal of Educational Methodology* 4, no. 3 (2018): 187–194.
- The Holy See. "Verbum Domini: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (30 September 2010) | BENEDICT XVI." Accessed April 16, 2022. [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html).
- HoneyRock: A Place Set Apart*, 2021. <https://vimeo.com/564192391>.

- Hrynkow, Christopher, Sean Byrne, and Matthew Hendzel. "Ecotheology and Inculturation: Implications for Theory and Practice in Peace and Conflict Studies." *Peace & Change* 35, no. 2 (2010): 295–327.
- Jacobs, Carolyn. "Contemplative Spaces in Social Work Practice." *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 49, no. 1 (January 2015): 150–54.
- James, Joan K., and Theresa Williams. "School-Based Experiential Outdoor Education: A Neglected Necessity." *Journal of Experiential Education* 40, no. 1 (2017): 58–71.
- Janusz, Bernadetta, and Maciej Walkiewicz. "The Rites of Passage Framework as a Matrix of Transgression Processes in the Life Course." *Journal of Adult Development* 25, no. 3 (2018): 151–159.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002.
- . *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Kellert, Stephen R., and Timothy J. Farnham. *The Good in Nature and Humanity: Connecting Science, Religion, and Spirituality with the Natural World*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2002.
- Kimbrough, S. T., ed. *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. First Paperback edition. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2015.
- Kinslow, R. W. "An Adaptation to Environmental Education in Judeo-Christianity." *Organization Development Journal* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 43–55.
- Knight, George R. *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*. Fourth Edition. Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2006.
- Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Second edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 2015.
- Larsen, Josh, and Matt Zoller Seitz. *Movies Are Prayers: How Films Voice Our Deepest Longings*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2017.
- Lenow, Joseph. "Christ, the Praying Animal: A Critical Engagement with Niels Henrik Gregersen and the Christology of Deep Incarnation." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20, no. 4 (2018): 554–78.
- Loder, James E. *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Updated and Expanded edition. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2008.

- Martin, Miriam K. "The Cry of Earth and Conflict with Human Cultures: A Reflection for Christian Religious Educators." *Journal of Religious Education* 63, no. 1 (April 1, 2015): 25–36.
- May, Scottie. "Learning Styles and Lesson Preparation." Small Groups. Accessed November 20, 2022. <https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2008/learning-styles-and-lesson-preparation.html>.
- McMinn, Lisa Graham. *To the Table: A Spirituality of Food, Farming, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016.
- McVey, Kathleen E. "Ephrem the Syrian: A Theologian of the Presence of God." In *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, edited by S. T. Kimbrough, 241–63. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- Menning, Nancy. "Narrating Climate Change as a Rite of Passage." *Climatic Change* 147, no. 1 (2018): 343–353.
- Merton, Thomas. *Contemplative Prayer*. Reissue edition. New York: Image Books, 1971.
- . *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New York: New Directions, 2007.
- . *The Seven Storey Mountain: An Autobiography of Faith*. Fiftieth Anniversary Edition. New York: Mariner Books, 1999.
- Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004.
- Miller, Craig. "Schools for the Lord's Service: The Rule of St. Benedict for Christian Camping." *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014): 300–317.
- Miller, George Tyler. *Environmental Science*. 14th ed. Belmont: Brooks/Cole, 2012.
- Miyazaki, Yoshifumi. *Shinrin Yoku: The Japanese Art of Forest Bathing*. Illustrated edition. Portland: Timber Press, 2018.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. 1st Fortress Press edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Morse, MaryKate. *A Guidebook to Prayer: 24 Ways to Walk with God*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013.
- Moser, Matthew A. Rothaus. "'You Were Within, but I Was Outside and Sought You There': Martin Laird's Ressourcement of the Christian Contemplative Tradition." *Anglican Theological Review* 102, no. 4 (Fall 2020): 657–74.
- Newell, J. Philip. *Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008.
- Newstrom, John, and Edward Scannell. *The Big Book of Team-Building Games: Trust-Building Activities, Team Spirit Exercises, and Other Fun Things to Do*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1998.

- Nichols, Wallace J. *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*. Reprint edition. New York: Back Bay Books, 2015.
- Niemandt, Cornelius J. P. "Rooted in Christ, Grounded in Neighbourhoods – A Theology of Place." *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40, no. 1 (2019).
- Nossaman, Lucas. "The Wisdom of 'the Farm': Sabbath Theology and Wendell Berry's Pastoralism." *Renascence* 70, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 3-22,86.
- O'Shea, Joseph. "Delaying the Academy: A Gap Year Education." *Teaching in Higher Education* 16, no. 5 (October 1, 2011): 565–77.
- Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. 10th Anniversary Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006.
- Pierson, Mark. *The Art of Curating Worship: Reshaping the Role of Worship Leader*. Minneapolis: Sparkhouse Press, 2010.
- Pinnock, Clark H. *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1992.
- . *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Plueddemann, James E. *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Ramírez, Rafael Robina, and Manuel Pulido Fernández. "Religious Travellers' Improved Attitude towards Nature." *Sustainability* 10, no. 9 (2018): 3064.
- Rasmussen, Larry L. *Earth Community, Earth Ethics*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Ribbe, Rob. "Redefining Camp Ministry as Experiential Laboratory for Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development." *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 144–62.
- Robinson, Timothy H. "The Role of Nature in Spiritual Formation." *Leaven* 22, no. 1 (2014): 7.
- Rohr, Richard, and Mike Morrell. *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. SPCK Publishing, 2016.
- Schut, Michael, ed. *Food & Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread*. Denver: Living the Good News Inc, 2002.
- Seaman, Jayson, this link will open in a new window [Link to external site](#), Robert MacArthur, and Sean Harrington. "Dartmouth Outward Bound Center and the Rise of Experiential Education, 1957–1976." *History of Education Review* 49, no. 1 (2020): 9–29.

- Setran, David P., and Chris A. Kiesling. *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College and Young Adult Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Selhub, Eva M., and Alan C. Logan. *Your Brain on Nature: The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality*. Reissue edition. Ontario: Collins, 2014.
- Sell, Phillip. "A Map for Ministry: Constructing a Philosophy and Strategy of Ministry." *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2003): 67–85.
- Sheltowee Trace Adventure Resort. "White Water Rafting Cumberland Falls, KY." Accessed December 4, 2022. <https://www.ky-rafting.com/summer-and-fall--cumberland-below-the-falls.html>.
- Sittser, Jerry. *The Will of God as a Way of Life: How to Make Every Decision with Peace and Confidence*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Sleeth, Matthew. *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012.
- . *Reforesting Faith: What Trees Teach Us About the Nature of God and His Love for Us*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2019.
- Smith, Thomas E., and Christopher S. Leeming. "Kurt Lewin: Another Kurt for Experiential Educators to Know." In *Sourcebook of Experiential Education: Key Thinkers and Their Contributions*, edited by Thomas E. Smith and Clifford E. Knapp, 173–79. London: Taylor & Francis, 2010.
- Sorenson, Jacob. "The Logic of Camp in Christian Education." *Theology Today* 76, no. 1 (2019): 50–62.
- Steinaker, Norman, and M. Robert Bell. *The Experiential Taxonomy: A New Approach to Teaching and Learning*. Educational Psychology. New York: Academic Press, 1979.
- Swinton, John, and Harriet Mowat. *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press, 2006.
- Swoboda, A. J. *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2018.
- . *Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology*. Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2013.
- Tisdell, Elizabeth J. "Re-Searching Spirituality and Culture: Transformative Pilgrimage Learning and Living Answers into Big Questions." *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 84–94.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Lord of the Rings*. One-Volume Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1994.
- USDA Forest Service. "Daniel Boone National Forest - Natural Arch Scenic Area." Accessed December 4, 2022. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/dbnf/recarea/?recid=39726>.
- Veenstra, Kassidy. "What Is Ecotheology?" *Alternatives Journal* 42, no. 1 (2016): 45.

- Ware, Kallistos. *The Orthodox Way*. Revised Edition. Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995.
- Wilhoit, James C. "Contemplative and Centering Prayer." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 7, no. 1 (2014): 107–17.
- Williams, Allison. "Spiritual Therapeutic Landscapes and Healing: A Case Study of St. Anne de Beaupre, Quebec, Canada." *Social Science & Medicine* 70, no. 10 (May 2010): 1633–40.
- Williams, Bud. "Theological Perspectives on the Temporary Community/Camping and the Church." Unpublished Paper, 2013. [https://6cf42bdc-ccab-4227-8493-cad1f2d5d20a.filesusr.com/ugd/f01f78\\_b5140d09439b4ccab3b2ee163b66c9c3.pdf](https://6cf42bdc-ccab-4227-8493-cad1f2d5d20a.filesusr.com/ugd/f01f78_b5140d09439b4ccab3b2ee163b66c9c3.pdf).
- Williams, Dilafruz R. *Learning Gardens and Sustainability Education: Bringing Life to Schools and Schools to Life*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2011.
- Willson, Gregory B., Alison J. McIntosh, and Anne. L. Zahra. "Tourism and Spirituality: A Phenomenological Analysis." *Annals of Tourism Research* 42 (July 2013): 150–68.
- Woodley, Randy. *Indigenous Theology and the Western Worldview: A Decolonized Approach to Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.
- . *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.
- Wright, N.T. *Mark for Everyone*. 2nd edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- "YMCA of the Rockies Snow Mountain Ranch." Accessed December 26, 2022. <https://ymcarockies.org/Locations/Snow-Mountain-Ranch>.