

10-1-2007

# Maintaining Spiritual Connectedness Over an Entire Ministry by Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Charles W. Green

George Fox University, [charles.green@ngumc.net](mailto:charles.green@ngumc.net)

This research is a product of the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

---

## Recommended Citation

Green, Charles W., "Maintaining Spiritual Connectedness Over an Entire Ministry by Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church" (2007). *Doctor of Ministry*. Paper 201.  
<http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/201>

This Dissertation 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 [arolf@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolf@georgefox.edu).

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL CONNECTEDNESS  
OVER AN ENTIRE MINISTRY  
BY ELDERS IN THE NORTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
CHARLES W. GREEN

NEWBERG, OREGON  
OCTOBER, 2007

Copyright © 2007 by Charles W. Green

All rights reserved.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc. Publisher: NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from The Holy Bible, King James Version, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc. Publisher: NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Scripture quotations marked TMNT are taken from The Message: New Testament, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc. Publisher: NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Scripture quotations marked TMWB are taken from The Message: The Wisdom Books, Copyright © 1996 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc. Publisher: NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Scripture quotations marked RSV are taken from Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1998, Parsons Technology, Inc. Publisher: NavPress Publishing Group, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

# DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE

**CHARLES WAYNE GREEN**

**DATE: OCTOBER 30, 2007**

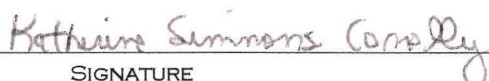
**TITLE:**  
**MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL "CONNECTEDNESS" OVER  
AN ENTIRE MINISTRY BY ELDERS IN THE NORTH GEORGIA  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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

  
SIGNATURE

10-30-07

DATE

  
SIGNATURE

10-30-07

DATE



**GEORGE FOX**  
EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	vi
Preface.....	vii
Abstract.....	xi
Chapter 1.....Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2.....Biblical Materials.....	11
Moses the Lawgiver.....	12
Samuel the Judge and the Anointer.....	15
Jeremiah the Prophet.....	17
Barnabas the Evangelist and Missionary.....	20
Saul/Paul the Evangelist and Missionary.....	22
Conclusion.....	25
Chapter 3.....Historical/Theological Materials.....	27
History.....	28
Theology.....	32
The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.....	33
Grace and Its Manifestations.....	35
Christian Perfection.....	39
The Class System.....	41
Conclusion.....	43
Chapter 4.....The Problem in the North Georgia Annual Conference.....	47
Chapter 5.....Survey Results and Interviews.....	62
Results of the Survey.....	68
Interviews of Those Who Left.....	84
Interviews of Those Who Maintained Connection.....	87
Conclusions Drawn from the Survey and Interviews.....	91
Chapter 6.....Conclusion and Recommendations.....	94
Recommendation #1: Screening Candidates.....	98
Recommendation #2: A Return to the Class System.....	104
Recommendation #3: Accountability Groups.....	108
Conclusion.....	113
Bibliography.....	116

# FIGURES

1. Time spent vs. Ideal Time.....	7
2. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.....	34
3. Ordinands.....	49
4. Ordinands vs. Retirees.....	50
5. Total Joining Annual Conference.....	51
6. Leaving Conference by Transfer.....	52
7. Withdrawals from Conference.....	53
8. Deaths.....	54
9. Total Losses.....	55
10. Leave of Absences.....	56
11. Family & Incapacity Leave.....	57
12. Appointments to Other Annual Conferences.....	58
13. Honorable Location.....	59
14. Total “Ins” vs. Total “Outs”.....	60
15. Elder Survey.....	64-67
16. Sex of Respondents.....	68
17. Sex of Elders in the Annual Conference.....	69
18. Age of Respondents.....	70
19. Years of Service.....	71
20. Status of Elders.....	71
21. Retirees vs. Actives.....	72

22. Racial Breakdown of Elders in the Annual Conference.....	73
23. Racial Breakdown of Respondents.....	73
24. Racial Breakdown Percentages Comparison.....	74
25. Response to “At My Ordination I Felt”.....	75
26. Response to “My Spiritual Health”.....	76
27. Response to “Description of My Ministry”.....	77
28. Response to “Most of My Ministry Time”.....	78
29. Response to “How Often We Practice the Spiritual Disciplines.....	79
30. Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Respondents.....	80
31. Prayer Life of Respondents.....	81
32. Overall Spiritual Health of Elders.....	82
33. Response to “Most Elders in the Conference”.....	83
34. Cancer.gov Chart on Spiritual Assessments.....	102

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Undertaking a task such as this reminds one of how much we depend upon one another. Paul was so right when he compared the workings of the Church to the human body.<sup>1</sup> The results contained in this document are the collective work of so many different people and groups. Without any of them, the finished product would have been vastly different. Thanks be to God for each of the following, and for their contributions:

- The praise, the honor and any glory goes to God, who planted the seed for this research in the first place, and who made it so that even I might care about the subject, research it, and arrive at the conclusions.
- I also must give thanks to my loving and lovely wife, Phyllis Ann, who put up with me and my abundance of words on why I was doing this and why someone my age would even begin the process.
- I thank my “\$18,000 friends” who journeyed with me through the DMin program at George Fox Evangelical Seminary. The friendship, care and prayers of Cohort F got me through this thing.
- Thanks to Dr. Larry Shelton, whose affirmation and encouragement kept me going when all I wanted to do was stop worrying about it and move on to something else. Also, thanks to Dr. Chuck Conniry, whose encouragement throughout reminded me that God could work through me. And a word of thanks to Dr. Kate Conolly, who helped me make this the best paper that I am capable of writing by holding me accountable.
- I must thank the Board of Elders of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church, who jointly sponsored the survey that makes up such a large part of Chapter Five. And, of course, I thank all those Elders who took the time to fill out the survey. Their input was invaluable.
- I also offer thanksgiving for the Lithia Springs United Methodist Church, who aided me tremendously by allowing me to attend classes and miss Sundays, and offered me much encouragement. The Cornelia United Methodist Church has been wonderful in allowing me time to write, edit, and put this whole thing together.
- Finally, I thank my brothers and sisters who are Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference. I have come to truly understand that we are all “members” together, and that we **are** a church family.

Charles W. Green

---

<sup>1</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NRSV)



## PREFACE

Most ordained persons can remember with clarity the very moment, when their calling from God to ministry was affirmed by a representative from the Church. The struggling to get to that point, all of the wondering about the validity of the call, all of the wandering that had been the seminary/study experience, and even the reams of paper that had been read and written seemed to have been worthwhile when the authority is granted to become an ordained minister of the Church of Jesus Christ. In the United Methodist tradition the Bishop lays hands upon the ordinand's head and says, "Take thou authority as an elder in the Church to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy Sacraments in the congregation. AMEN"<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after ordination, the routine of serving the church, attending meeting after meeting after meeting, and going from Sunday to Sunday to Sunday with something different, profound and unique to say, takes a toll upon the newly ordained person. Soon, the worries of day-to-day church life supplant the excitement of the ordination service, and before long the routines become a rut and the not-so-newly ordained person can forget the electricity which seemed to flow from the fingertips of the Bishop. New congregations soon become those "same old people." Exciting opportunities for worship and growth degenerate into just another Sunday. "Too much of how we lead in the church is based on trying to please everyone but the One who matters."<sup>3</sup> Friends' good appointments give

---

<sup>2</sup> The Methodist Church, *The Book of Worship for Church and Home* (Nashville, The United Methodist Publishing House, 1945), 48.

<sup>3</sup> Sweet, Leonard, *Summoned to Lead*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), 39.

way to “why-did-they-get-such-a-good-church?” In short, a mountain top experience can morph into a 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm valley.

Bill Boatright and Sue Schmee had gone to seminary together and graduated in 1985. For the past twenty plus years they had been engaged in a yearly ritual of getting together at Annual Conference to discuss old times, ministry and the state of the Church. Their lunch meeting on this second day of the Conference found them doing just that.

Bill—*Do you remember the night that Bishop Fitzgerald ordained us?*

Sue—*Remember? How could I forget it? It felt like a living out of that Charlie Daniels’ song where “fire flew from his fingertips” when he laid his hands upon my head. But wait that song was about the Devil wasn’t it?*

B—*Cute, Sue, but you do make a point. All I could think about was the Acts 2 passage where it talks about “tongues of fire resting upon their heads”. I could really feel it! Man, we were really “fired-up” for Jesus, weren’t we?*

S—*You bet. What has happened to us since then, Bill? I mean, where is that “fire” now?*

B—*I don’t know. It seems like all that really matters now is numbers. Attendance figures, professions of faith vs. transfers, and percentages of apportionments paid are all anyone worries about these days.*

S—*Yea, that and who is climbing up the ladder, as well as who is being left in the wake. Most of us from our class are more concerned about who’s making District Superintendent and who’s serving the largest churches than about who is truly living out their ordination vows.*

B—*Ain’t it the truth! Professions of faith are treated like trophies to be mounted on the wall, rather than souls that have been added to the Kingdom of God! It’s a takeoff on that old cliché that says, “He who dies with the biggest church and the most apportionments paid wins!”*

{Both sit silently and stare into space for a few moments.}

S—*When did it happen, Bill? When did we forget that we all promised to follow Jesus wherever He led us? What made us lose our first love?*

*B—I don't know! It seems as if most of us have bought into that other old cliché—"God called me into ministry, but the Bishop surely does pay better!"*

Neither Sue nor Bill ate much lunch that day because they rambled on for the entire time they were together, going back and forth between bemoaning the loss of a sense of calling and talking about what was happening to other members of the Annual Conference.

Bill and Sue's struggle strikes close to home for many North Georgia United Methodist Elders. The author of this paper doesn't know what it's like throughout the country in United Methodism, and surely can't speak for other denominations, but the sense persists that similar situations occur all over the USA (perhaps even throughout the world). The scope of this paper's analysis, however, will be limited to the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, of which the author is an Elder in Full Connection with almost twenty-five years experience in serving the local church. In the author's experience, many colleagues have asked these same questions, such as: What happened to steal the enthusiasm and the spark? Why did it happen? Can't anything be done? Meanwhile, the word from the Bishop's Office constantly and consistently emphasizes numerical and financial growth, new buildings, and a steady increase in the amount of paid apportionments. By the time an Elder reaches twenty years of service to the Conference, one notices how many have dropped out, burned out or flamed out. It is also obvious how difficult it is to stay

focused, and not participate in the comparisons, the gossip and the back-biting which seems to run rampant.

Just before returning to the floor of the Conference, Bill and Sue ask some further questions of each other.

Bill—*Sue, do you think there is anything that could help us to reignite the flame?*

Sue—*I don't know. Why isn't there something that can prevent the "flameout" in the first place?*

B—*Maybe someone will do a DMin project on this and come up with some solutions.*

This dissertation is the answer to their plea, an attempt to prove that a problem exists, and the offer of a solution to the problem.

# ABSTRACT

Title: MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL CONNECTEDNESS OVER AN ENTIRE  
MINISTRY BY ELDERS IN THE NORTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Author: Charles W. Green

Degree: Doctor of Ministry

Year: 2007

Institution: George Fox Evangelical Seminary

What can be done to maintain the spiritual connectedness of pastors over their entire ministerial career? Can the focus remain on fulfilling the call and not on climbing the ladder? United Methodist pastors begin their journey amidst the excitement of allowing their *strangely warmed hearts* to be used by and for the purposes of God and the furthering of God's Kingdom. There is something mystical and mysterious that transpires when the Bishop places hands on the heads of the ordinand that fairly screams of something much larger than self. In other words, there is an overwhelming feeling of the presence of the Holy Spirit as the journey begins.

Unfortunately, the experiences of serving in the local church, the day-to-day encounters with the processes of planning, budgeting, counseling, etc., and the routine of being the *pastor in charge* exact a heavy burden upon the spiritual connectedness of many United Methodist Elders. Soon the issues of appointment, apportionments, adjudicating disagreements, and advancement by serving on various Conference committees seem to take precedence over

serving God and God's people in the place where one has been sent. This situation leads to key questions: Why is this so? Where does the priority of the Spirit give way to the precedence of the moment? What can be done to prevent this from happening?

In order to address this problem, this paper will examine the Wesleyan concept of "connectedness." The author of this paper believes the isolation that comes from being a part of the United Methodist system and the "Lone Ranger" mindset is a huge part of the problem, as well as a loss of "connectedness" to the One who calls in the first place. This paper proposes the thesis that a more thorough examination by the Board of Ordained Ministry and accountability partners through a return to the Wesleyan class system with a twenty-first century twist will help Elders maintain focus throughout their ministerial careers.

Chapter 1 identifies the problem, relates it to the concept of burnout, and offers evidence that it exists for many ordained ministers, particularly for United Methodists. Chapter 2 presents biblical materials that demonstrates the Bible's basis for receiving a call in the first place and for maintaining the validity and vitality of that call throughout one's lifetime and ministry, and that the struggle as well as the solution has been present since Biblical times. Chapter 3 uses materials from *Christian History and Thought* that confirm that the call has been received and maintained by followers of Jesus for thousands of years, and by Wesleyans in particular. This chapter examines Wesleyan history and theology so as to shed light upon the subject, with a special emphasis upon Wesley's "means of grace," and how that can help to maintain connectedness. Chapter 4

provides historical statistics to show that the problem exists in the North Georgia Annual Conference. Chapter 5 reports the results of a survey of North Georgia Annual Conference United Methodist Elders conducted in conjunction and cooperation with the Board of Elders of the North Georgia Annual Conference in early 2007, as well as personal interviews with Elders who have dropped out of the system and those who have maintained spiritual connection throughout their ministry. As a solution in Chapter 6, this paper offers some suggestions to the Board of Ordained Ministry of the Conference, advocates a return to the Wesleyan class system that was instrumental in the beginning of Methodism, with a twenty-first century twist, and suggests a renewed emphasis upon accountability for the Elders of the North Georgia Annual Conference.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

United Methodist Pastors begin their ordained ministry with a fire and a “strangely warmed heart.” Within a few years, however, they can become distracted by appointments, apportionments and achievements. This dissertation examines this problem and proposes a solution that could offer help and hope for maintaining spiritual connectedness, to the end that Elders can hold onto the sense of “strangely-warmed hearts” that John Wesley described in his Journal entry for May 24, 1738.

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my **heart strangely warmed**. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added)

The problem is multi-faceted, and there are no cheap, easy answers. No “one thing” can be attributed to this loss of enthusiasm and purpose. Many authors have offered different approaches to the solution. Henri Nouwen suggested that an attempt at separation of “spiritual guidance and professional formation in the ministry”<sup>5</sup> is a major factor in the loss of purpose. Wayne E. Oates alluded to the demands that are placed on a pastor being a major issue in

---

<sup>4</sup> Outler, Albert C., ed., *John Wesley* ( New York, Oxford University Press, 1964), 66.

<sup>5</sup> Nouwen, Henri, JM, *Creative Ministry* (Garden City, NJ, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971), xvi.



this struggle when he said, "Demands cannot be allowed to obscure the succor and support offered [the minister] by his community of faith and by the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> Many authors discuss the idea of "burnout," and that subject will be discussed later in this chapter.

Whatever the cause, a problem exists. Dr. Albert Hager and Chaplain Thomas Klink (who worked with pastors at the Menninger Foundation) write:

[One of the top five reasons why pastors seek consultation is] a desperate groping for relevant religious faith. Pastors themselves are subject to so many demands from others that they begin to feel in need of a pastor themselves. Many experienced this as a gradual sense of losing the reality of the faith that they proclaimed, related to their own tendency to give up on really important central tasks in favor of becoming mere functionaries, playing their roles with decreasing involvement, commitment, and integrity.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of spirituality appears repeatedly in attempts to explain this subject. Losing the "heart warmingness" of ordination seems to be tied into losing connectedness with the One who called the ordained to the task in the first place. Gray Harbaugh writes, "Spirituality is really an orientation to life. Spirituality grows out of our individual and corporate perception and reception of the spiritual as the integrating center of the physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of our lives."<sup>8</sup> Spirituality is more than Bible reading, daily prayer and being open to the Holy Spirit, although all of those are necessary. Allan H. Segar puts it thusly, "Where Christ is active in the life of a believer, the

---

<sup>6</sup> Oates, Wayne E., *The Christian Minister* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1964), 98.

<sup>7</sup> Hager, Alfred and Thomas Klink (unpublished paper), quoted in Houts, Donald C., "Pastoral Care for Pastors: Towards a Church Strategy," *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 25(3), Spring 1977: 190.

<sup>8</sup> Harbaugh, Gary L., *God's Gifted People: Discovering Your Personality as a Gift* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Press, 1990), 100.

most ordinary of human activities can be an expression of spirituality.”<sup>9</sup> He goes on to state that spirituality is multi-faceted, in that it 1) sustains us inwardly; 2) requires surrender to God; 3) is a “holistic, lifelong response to the grace of God”; 4) requires that we trust God in all things; and 5) means that we go on in spite of the circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

The overwhelming duties of an ordained pastor can leave little time for spirituality, and as a result, all too often, the demands of reports, committee meetings, the color of paint in the ladies’ restroom, and the duties of congregation, community, and cognomen supplant the promised time spent with God. James D. Glasse writes, “Ministers falter...because in practice the forces active in their recruitment are not supported by their institutional responsibilities, and the patterns set in their seminary education are not supported by their ministerial functions.”<sup>11</sup> This sense of being overwhelmed can then lead to “the disease of over commitment.”<sup>12</sup> This over commitment is especially evident in ordained ministers “who view their ministry as not simply a vocational choice but as a divine mandate informing their identity.”<sup>13</sup> This factor can lead to burnout.

---

<sup>9</sup> Allan H. Segar, *Gospel-Centered Spirituality: An Introduction to Our Spiritual Journey* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Press, 1990), 9-10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Glasse, James, D., *Profession: Minister* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1968), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Freudengerger, Herbert J., *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement* (New York, Doubleday & Co., 1980), 22.

<sup>13</sup> Golden, J., Ralph L. Piedmont, Joseph W. Ciarrocchi, and Thomas Rodgerson, “Spirituality and Burnout: An Incremental Validity Study”, *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, no. 2 (2004), 116.

Burnout is a concept that was popularized by the work of Christina Maslach and her Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which was first developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It wasn't long before her hypotheses of burnout being a by-product of those involved in the "helping professions" was applied particularly to those in the ultimate helping profession—ordained ministry.<sup>14</sup> Many researchers have determined that clergy are those most susceptible to the devastation of burnout, and we will look at the issue because it relates to the notion of losing connection with the God who calls the Elder into the ministry in the first place.

One big factor in burnout for ordained ministers is that they have a difficult time leaving work-related problems at work. Gary R. Collins says it thusly:

Burn-out occurs when we work closely with troubled human beings over long periods of time and with little opportunity to retreat. When a helper can leave his or her work at the office and return to a stable and relaxing home situation, burn-out is less likely to occur. But leaving the work behind is difficult, often impossible, for a church leader. The ministry is with us wherever we go.<sup>15</sup>

Maslach defines burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind. A key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion...and the development of negative, cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients."<sup>16</sup> Couple this definition with the unique demands of the

---

<sup>14</sup> There are numerous examples, but one of the best would be Harbaugh, Gary L., "Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary", *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 38, No 2, 1984, 99-106.

<sup>15</sup> Collins, Gary R., "Burn-out: The Hazard of Professional People-Helpers", *Christianity Today*, no. 21 (April 1, 1977), 12.

<sup>16</sup> Maslach, Christina, and Susan E. Jackson, "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout", *Journal of Occupational Behavior* 2 (1981), 99.

ordained ministry, and it is obvious that a recipe for disaster is brewing. John A Sanford lists nine special circumstances that contribute to ministerial burnout:

1. A minister's job is never finished. There are no real "off" days for those called to ordained ministry. Crises do not always come at convenient times or on a coordinated schedule.

2. One cannot always tell if one's work is producing any results. Much of the work of an ordained person involves "seed planting" which may take years or even decades to produce any visible results.

3. The work of the Pastor is extremely repetitive. Sunday follows Sunday, and Advent is followed by Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, and Advent once again.

4. An ordained person is constantly dealing with people's expectations. Living up to the varying expectations of the congregation is hard enough, until one also factors in the community, the denomination, and the self-imposed expectations that can be one's biggest struggle.

5. A minister must work with the same people year in and year out. Not only do the Sundays happen with regularity, but the people sitting in the pews are the same people, and they expect something new, unique and profound, every time the ordained person steps into the pulpit.

6. When dealing with people in need, there is a huge demand on the energy of the helper. Working with a family through a crisis, helping a young person discover a relationship with God, or merely trying to get the bulletin "right" can take quite a toll upon the ordained person.

7. Many of the people asking for help are, in reality, looking for "strokes" not spiritual food. Convincing people that true spiritual growth comes about only with difficult struggles, is about as easy as convincing an overweight person that the key to losing weight is to not eat as much as they have been eating.

8. An ordained minister must function "en persona" and "on cue." One can be in the midst of clowning around with the office staff, and when someone comes in who is in need of spiritual counsel, the minister must take on his/her role at once.

9. An ordained minister may become exhausted by failure. No one can make a difference one-hundred percent of the time, and a series of misses can cause one to adopt an attitude of defeatism.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Sanford, John A., *Ministry Burnout* (New York, Paulist Press, 1982), 5-16.

For many ordained ministers, this burnout can lead to depression, doubt, despair, and leaving the parish ministry. Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, in their major contribution to the Duke Divinity School's *Pulpit & Pew* (a multi-year research project on Protestant and Roman Catholic pastoral leadership) state, when talking about the effects of burnout on those who left the ministry, "They were frustrated and saw no solution to their malaise except to leave parish ministry. They expressed feeling of hopelessness and isolation."<sup>18</sup> Almost 25 percent more of those who left the ministry claimed that challenges from the congregation caused them stress, and 17 percent of the "leavers" claimed disagreement over pastoral role as a primary factor in their leaving. Loneliness and isolation accounted for a disparity of 19 percent between the "leavers" and the "stayers."<sup>19</sup> According to the research, pastors as a whole are caught up in the dilemma of "ideal versus real ministry."<sup>20</sup> This dilemma is caused by expectations that those entering the ministry have as to the ideal amount of time that should be spent upon various tasks of ministry, as opposed to the actual amount of time that is spent upon these tasks, as Figure 1 shows.

---

<sup>18</sup> Hoge, Dean R. and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 115.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

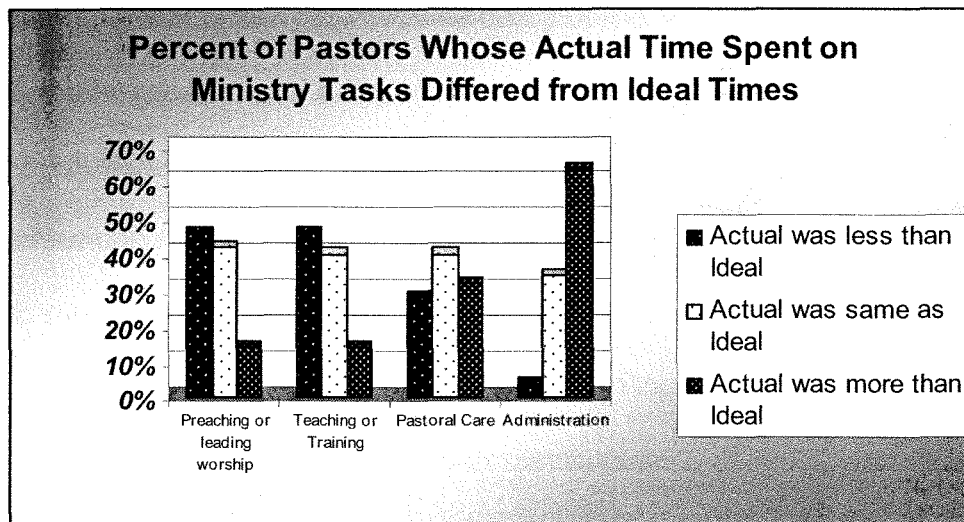


Figure 1. Time Spent Vs. Ideal Times

Hoge and Wegner conclude, “The greater the difference between actual time and ideal time...the lower the ministerial satisfaction and the more stress they felt....It is a structural problem contributing significantly to burnout.”<sup>21</sup>

Another contributing factor to burnout is the fact that the ordained minister is made to feel responsible for the spiritual well-being of a particular group of people (and perhaps for an entire community)<sup>22</sup>. This expectation can cause stress and strain and many studies “list the responsibility for another’s well-being as a primary source of strain leading to burn-out. If that is indeed the case, how much greater is the strain when one ‘feels’ responsible for an entire church. The

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>22</sup> Collins, “Burn Out”, 13.

pastor has the responsibility for the well-being of the flock, but in practice does not have the freedom to make the often-needed changes.”<sup>23</sup>

The author of this paper believes the only possible counterbalance to this stress is found in overcoming the idealism and the self-imposed stress that seems to run rampant in newly ordained persons, thus leading to a loss of spiritual connection. Gary L. Harbaugh and Evan Rogers conducted a study of seminarians and new graduates and they concluded:

[It is necessary] “to integrate...faith and life. One point of such integration is in pastoral self-care, without which long-term and effective ministry is potentially compromised. In this respect, we concur with those who assert that the single most important person to address, if there is to be a resolution to pastoral stress, is the person of the pastor himself or herself.”<sup>24</sup>

The focus of this paper is the importance of overcoming burnout and the loss of spiritual connection, and the author believes the following methods are necessary in solving these issues. The first (and foremost) help is found in the pastor remembering why one entered the ordained ministry in the first place, and who began the process of calling them into the ordained ministry. Spiritual strength is paramount to overcoming burnout. Pastors can become overwhelmed by the daily activities of being in ministry and forget the reason behind it, therefore, prayer, the spiritual disciplines, and being prayed for are foundational to overcoming burnout.

---

<sup>23</sup> Daniel, Stephen and Martha L. Rogers, “Burn-Out and the Pastorate: A Critical Review with Implications for Pastors,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9, no. 3 (Fall, 1981), 245.

<sup>24</sup> Harbaugh, Gary L. and Evan Rogers, “Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 38, no. 2, (1984), 104.

Second, pastors can discover the power of support in someone or a group with whom the ordained person can share the frustrations and the joys of serving God and God's people. This practice can help to overcome the "Lone Ranger" mentality that so many ministers proudly display. Collins sums it up like this, "We all need at least one person with whom we can be open, honest, and completely free from any pressure to succeed or perform."<sup>25</sup>

Third, pastors can avoid burnout by taking time away from people. This means that sometimes it is advantageous for ministers to do some tasks that do not require them to deal constantly with people and their problems. Perhaps the administration end of ministry could contain a constructive purpose if thought of in this light, as time away from people. Fourth, ordained persons can share the load of ministry by allowing and training others to be in ministry (a popular topic of books and seminars in the world of the ordained minister today). It would seem that there is more to this than merely being a "hot topic." Fifth and finally, training/awareness concerning burnout is a method of overcoming it. Learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of burnout is one of the first steps towards being able to do something about it.<sup>26</sup> Archibald Hart writes, "Ministers are particularly vulnerable to burnout because they experience the greatest exposure to the needs of people and often have the least resources, from a human standpoint, to offer."<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Collins, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Gary Collins article has a full discussion of this means of overcoming, and was influential in this treatment of the subject.

<sup>27</sup> Hart, Archibald, "Preventing Burnout." *Theology News and Notes* (March, 1984), 6.



A distinction must be made between the traditional concept of burnout or “wasteout” as Richard D. Blackmon and Archibald D. Hart call it, and “controlled burning out” or giving all that one has and feeling that it has all been worth it in the end.<sup>28</sup> This distinction is necessary because without it, the very concept of living out Mark 12:30<sup>29</sup> would be nonsensical and non-desirable. To give one’s all in fulfilling God’s call is a marvelous way to spend one’s time, energy and life. To wind up defeated, deflated, and depressed is NOT what God has in mind when God calls someone into specialized ministry.

This paper asserts there is a problem with maintaining a “strangely warmed heart” over the course of one’s ministry, and that something can be done about the problem. Chapter 2, then, explores the Bible for foundational reasons of experiencing a call to ordained ministry and examples of those who have struggled with and successfully achieved that goal.

---

<sup>28</sup> Blackmon, Richard A. and Archibald D. Hart, “Personal Growth for Clergy,” in *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, ed. Richard A. Hunt, John E. Hinkle, Jr., and H. Newton Malory (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1990), 36.

<sup>29</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ Mark 12:30 (NRSV)

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL MATERIALS

This paper stresses that the call of God can and does come to human beings, and this call can lead one to be “set apart” (or ordained) to a specialized ministry that involves representation of God to others and the performance of certain duties or rituals that assist others in their discernment of God’s call upon their lives. Faithfulness to the calling and to the One who issued the call assures that the receiver of the call maintains the strength and the courage to live out the call all the days of his or her life. Maintaining faithfulness requires staying connected with the One who issued the call.

This chapter explores biblical examples of those who have received a specialized call, struggled to live out the call, and maintained the faithfulness of that calling throughout their ministry. It examines five characters from the Bible; three of them will be from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament; Moses the lawgiver, Samuel the judge and anointer, and Jeremiah the prophet will be our Hebrew Scripture examples; while Barnabas and Paul (evangelists and missionaries) will be the examples from the life of the early Christian Church. Each of these characters remained faithful in the midst of their struggles and difficulties in rising to the task to which God had called them.

## MOSES THE LAWGIVER

From his slave-born birth in Egypt to his “not-quite-there” death on Mt. Nebo, Moses responded to God’s call to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. Moses had been set apart and prepared from birth for his task as the one who would speak to and for God on behalf of God’s chosen people. Moses was a reluctant leader who often argued with God, but, in the end he was faithful to his calling, maintaining a close relationship with Yahweh throughout his ministry, and therefore, was used mightily by God.

Moses’ birth came at a time when the children of Abraham were living in Egypt as slaves under an oppressive system that made their lives miserable.<sup>30</sup> Pharaoh, like many rulers before and since, distrusted those who were different from himself, and became so paranoid about the Hebrews that he ordered all of the male children killed.<sup>31</sup> Baby Moses’ mother and sister concocted a successful ploy that convinced the daughter of Pharaoh to rescue the baby and raise him as part of the royal family.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, Exodus 1:13 (NRSV)

<sup>31</sup> Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.” Exodus 1:22 (NRSV)

<sup>32</sup> When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, “because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.” Exodus 2:10 (NRSV)

Moses' call reads almost like a scene from a Laurel and Hardy movie.

The reluctance on the part of Moses to answer God's call is reminiscent of the slapstick that Ollie and Stanley made famous many thousands of years later. Moses did **not** want to take on the responsibility of the task that God was calling him to pursue. Over and over again, Moses offered arguments as to why he could not fulfill his calling. No less than four times did Moses offer a "but" to God's request: So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10 (NRSV).<sup>33</sup> Finally, after Moses had dropped all pretenses and simply begged: But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else." Exodus 4:13 (NRSV), "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses."<sup>34</sup>

Once convicted of the necessity of the task and the Lord's promise to see him through, Moses was willing to represent "in germinal form the whole future life of Israel."<sup>35</sup> Moses accomplished this by consistently and constantly refusing to forget that it was all about God, not about Moses, or even about the people that God had chosen. Moses became an "authentic prophet [who] is the one who points away from himself to the divine word and deed."<sup>36</sup> Moses remained faithful and steadfast to the task to which God had called him throughout the ups and downs, the highs and lows, the times of authenticity and the times of phoniness that accompanied the people of Israel on their forty year wandering.

---

<sup>33</sup> Exodus 3:13, 4:1, 4:10, and 4:13.

<sup>34</sup> Exodus 4:14 (NRSV).

<sup>35</sup> Buttrick, George Arthur, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, K-Q, (New York, Abingdon Press, 1962), 441.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Moses understood the vital concept of sharing the load of ministry. And had the help of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. Moses explained to Jethro the administrative workings of the people, and particularly the way in which disputes were handled and Jethro pointed out to Moses the necessity of sharing the load in ministry: Jethro said to him, “What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Exodus 18:17-18 (NRSV).

Moses also demonstrates how one called into specialized ministry maintains that steadfast faithfulness by his constant speaking to and with God. No fewer than 182 times in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy did God and Moses converse. A key example of this conversation is found in Exodus 33:11a, Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend (NRSV). Over and over in Leviticus, chapter after chapter all begin the same way, “The Lord spoke to Moses.”<sup>37</sup> This familiarity with God demonstrates steadfast faithfulness which is required of those called into specialized ministry.

---

<sup>37</sup> Chapters 11-25 all begin this way. The LORD spoke to Moses: Leviticus 17:1 (NRSV).

## SAMUEL THE JUDGE AND THE ANOINTER

Samuel, like Moses, was set apart for his specialized ministry as a baby. In Samuel's case, he was ordained even before he was born.<sup>38</sup> As a result of his mother's vow, he was given to the Israelite Judge, Eli, who trained him and tutored him in the ways of the Lord.

While serving in his acolyte role with Eli Samuel received his call to specialized ministry for the Lord. At first, he did not understand it, but once it became clear to him, he served the Lord so steadfastly that he apparently did not give much attention to his own family.<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that God's ordained are not perfect in all they do and say; they are merely faithful to the task to which God calls them.

Samuel's steadfast faithfulness and spiritual connection was a direct result of his prayer life, and his willingness to both seek and serve the Lord God. Samuel's reputation as an intercessor was later seen as second only to Moses.<sup>40</sup> On sixteen separate occasions, Samuel and the Lord had conversations. A key example of Samuel's prayer life is found in 1 Samuel 3:21: The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the

---

<sup>38</sup> She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head." 1 Samuel 1:11 (NRSV)

<sup>39</sup> Yet his sons did not follow in his ways, but turned aside after gain; they took bribes and perverted justice. 1 Samuel 8:3 (NRSV)

<sup>40</sup> Then the LORD said to me: Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! Jeremiah 15:1 (NRSV)

LORD. (NRSV) Samuel was installed as judge of Israel because he spent time in prayer.<sup>41</sup> Before he would agree to the request of the people for a king, Samuel spent time in prayer.<sup>42</sup> Before Samuel would anoint David as the replacement for Saul, he spent time in prayer.<sup>43</sup> Even in Samuel's farewell address to the people, he could not stop praying for them.<sup>44</sup> His promise to "instruct them in the good and the right way" is also tangential evidence that Samuel understood the necessity of praying for one another. Since he could not help himself but pray for the people, they too should be praying for one another.

Samuel is an example of someone who was called by God to specialized ministry. His ministry was not perfect, but it was faithfully steadfast. He was able to maintain his ministry by constantly and consistently staying in touch with the One who had called him into ministry in the first place.

---

<sup>41</sup> As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. 1 Samuel 3:19 (NRSV)

<sup>42</sup> But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to govern us." Samuel prayed to the LORD, 1 Samuel 8:6 (NRSV)

<sup>43</sup> "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night. 1 Samuel 15:11 (NRSV)

<sup>44</sup> Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 1 Samuel 12:23 (NRSV)

## JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

Jeremiah, the son of a priest of Anathoth, is another example of God's calling an unlikely and unwilling person to specialized ministry. Jeremiah was set apart before birth<sup>45</sup> (like Samuel), and like Moses, Jeremiah was quick to argue with God about his calling at first.<sup>46</sup> Jeremiah is unique among the prophets, because from "no other prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures do we have a comparable reflection of the spiritual struggle with God."<sup>47</sup> Throughout his ministry, Jeremiah felt troubled and afflicted. Some of the best examples of this alienation are found in chapter 14, verses 8 and 9 where Jeremiah wonders if Yahweh has forsaken His people,<sup>48</sup> and in chapter 20, verse 7 where Jeremiah adopts a whining attitude with the Lord.<sup>49</sup>

Although Jeremiah was unlikely and unwilling, he became the voice of the Lord to the Israelites because he was in almost constant conversation with the One who had claimed him and set him upon this road. A careful study of

---

<sup>45</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5 (NRSV)

<sup>46</sup> Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." Jeremiah 1:6 (NRSV)

<sup>47</sup> Metzger, Bruce M. and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV, Old Testament*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1991), 960.

<sup>48</sup> O hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, why should you be like a stranger in the land, like a traveler turning aside for the night? Why should you be like someone confused, like a mighty warrior who cannot give help? Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name; do not forsake us! Jeremiah 14:8-9 (NRSV)

<sup>49</sup> O LORD, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. Jeremiah 20:7 (NRSV)



Jeremiah reveals that he relayed the Word of Yahweh to the people of Israel no fewer than 352 times and 315 times he says openly and plainly, “says the Lord.” He uses the past tense (“said the Lord” or “the Lord said to me”) eighteen times. There are five examples of either “the word came to Jeremiah” or “the word that the Lord” offered, and fourteen times he offers words to the people based upon a direct command from Yahweh (“this you shall say to them” or “speak to them this word”). Klaus Koch writes, “Jeremiah is constantly overwhelmed and mastered by Yahweh,”<sup>50</sup> because he is in constant conversation with the Lord. This specialized ministry to which the Lord had called him and upon which he had reluctantly agreed to journey, caused Jeremiah to be bold and assertive in his pronouncements on behalf of Yahweh. Koch goes on to say:

Jeremiah is convinced that he quite clearly hears actual Hebrew words with his physical ears, and that he feels the nearness of the speaker, who has to be the familiar God of his people. He for his part calls up God in intercession, and is convinced that, as prophet, his prayers have more prospect of being heard than those of other people, and that he is listened to directly.<sup>51</sup>

Although Jeremiah was a “loner,” in the tradition of the prophets, he understood that he was unable to carry the burden all alone. He did not have many close friends, except his scribe, Baruch. Jeremiah’s memoirs, though most likely written by Baruch at the dictation of Jeremiah<sup>52</sup>, mention Baruch’s name

---

<sup>50</sup> Koch, Klaus, *The Prophets: The Babylonian and Persian Period (II)*, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1982), 43.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>52</sup> The word that the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: Jeremiah 45:1 (NRSV)

twenty-one times. At the close of the book, Jeremiah even makes some promises to Baruch for his faithful sharing in the ministry.<sup>53</sup>

Jeremiah, like Moses and Samuel before him, maintained his steadfast faithfulness by emphasizing his relationship with the Lord who had called him into this specialized ministry in the first place. Jeremiah himself said, It was the LORD who made it known to me, and I knew; Jeremiah 11:18a (NRSV). Jeremiah's example demonstrates to those ordained to a specialized ministry the importance of steadfast faithfulness and the maintaining of spiritual connection.

---

<sup>53</sup> but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go." Jeremiah 45:5 (NRSV)

## BARNABAS THE EVANGELIST AND MISSIONARY

Barnabas was born Joseph, and given the surname of Barnabas because of his positive attitude.<sup>54</sup> Although Barnabas was of a priestly heritage, he was a native of Cyprus and therefore a Jew of the Diaspora. This made him a Hellenistic Jew, and as such he was able to reach out to the Gentiles in a fashion second only to Paul. He did have standing among the Palestinian Jews led by Peter, as is evidenced by his being the one who was able to introduce Paul to the Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that “Barnabas thus belongs to the company of first converts in Jerusalem who were won by the apostolic preaching, if not by Jesus himself.”<sup>56</sup>

Barnabas first appears when the early church is conducting its experiment in communal living.<sup>57</sup> His formal ordination came as a direct result of worship and fasting by his home Church at Antioch, and this time must have included prayer, since he and Paul were then given their specialized ministry on orders from the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). Acts 4:36 (NRSV)

<sup>55</sup> But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. Acts 9:27 through Acts 9:28 (NRSV)

<sup>56</sup> Buttrick, *Interpreter's Dictionary* A-D, 356.

<sup>57</sup> He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:37 (NRSV)

<sup>58</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Acts 13:2 (NRSV)

Barnabas shows an understanding of the concept of sharing the burdens of ministry. After being sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem believers, Barnabas, realized the scope of the work before him, and sought help from Saul of Tarsus.<sup>59</sup> After he and Paul decided to “agree to disagree” and went their separate ways, Barnabas took John Mark to mentor, to train, and to rely upon for assistance.<sup>60</sup>

Barnabas founded many churches, and even after his split with Paul, he continued to live out the ministry to which he had been called in the first place.<sup>61</sup> Acts does not include information about Barnabas after he and Paul parted company. Legend, however, says that Barnabas went back to the Church in his hometown of Cyprus, where he became the first Archbishop of Cyprus and was later stoned to death during the time of martyrdom.<sup>62</sup>

As with the Old Testament examples, Barnabas maintained his steadfast faithfulness by staying in touch with the same Holy Spirit that had set him apart for his specialized ministry as an evangelist and missionary.<sup>63</sup> He was not perfect, as his split with Paul showed, but Barnabas, like so many before him,

---

<sup>59</sup> Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, Acts 11:25 (NRSV)

<sup>60</sup> The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. Acts 15:39 (NRSV)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Cross, F. L., ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997). 159.

<sup>63</sup> And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe. Acts 14:23, (NRSV)

maintained his spiritual connection with the God who had called him into specialized ministry by remembering why he was doing what he was doing.

## SAUL/PAUL THE EVANGELIST AND MISSIONARY

Saul enters the scene as a zealous follower of Yahweh who described himself as “a stalwart Pharisee from a long line of Pharisees.”<sup>64</sup> He first appears at the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.<sup>65</sup> He was more than merely the holder of the coats of the witnesses, as Acts 8:1 vividly points out, And Saul approved of their killing him. (NRSV)

Soon afterwards Saul begins to persecute those who were followers of The Way.<sup>66</sup> This persecution would intensify until he encountered the Risen Christ on the Damascus Road, as he journeyed there to arrest more followers of The Way. His experience is well worth repeating:

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” Acts 9:3-6 (NRSV)

---

<sup>64</sup> Acts 23:6 TMNT

<sup>65</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. Acts 7:58 (NRSV)

<sup>66</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison. Acts 8:3 (NRSV)

Saul had a very difficult time convincing his former enemies that he was now one of them, but Barnabas helped Saul escape from the Jews in Damascus that had been expecting him to come to help them destroy the followers of The Way.<sup>67</sup> Paul (as his name was soon known)<sup>68</sup> went on to found congregations throughout the Mediterranean Basin.

More than any of the biblical characters examined in this paper, Paul was steadfastly faithful because he remembered his experience with the Risen Christ on the Damascus Road and constantly communicated with the Lord. This allowed him to maintain his spiritual connection with the One who called him. Immediately following his conversion experience, he began praying.<sup>69</sup> Paul and Silas were miraculously released from the Philippi prison because of prayer.<sup>70</sup> While on the island of Melita, Paul was able to overcome the bite of a deadly viper and restore a sick man back to health by prayer.<sup>71</sup> As Paul himself would write to the Church at Thessalonica: “pray without ceasing,” 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NRSV). Paul was, in the tradition of the prophets, able to hear directly from the Lord.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, Acts 9:23 (NRSV)

<sup>68</sup> But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him Acts 13:9 (NRSV)

<sup>69</sup> The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, Acts 9:11 (NRSV)

<sup>70</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:25 (NRSV)

<sup>71</sup> It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. Acts 28:8 (NRSV)

<sup>72</sup> One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; Acts 18:9 (NRSV)

Paul understood the concept of having others pray for him, and the necessity of that prayer. While writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul instructed them to continue this tradition.<sup>73</sup> Paul's concept of prayer and its necessity can be summed up in the words he wrote to the Church at Thessalonica, when he said: "Beloved, pray for us." 1 Thessalonians 5:25 (NRSV)

Paul lived his entire life as one who desperately wanted to live out his calling to the specialized ministry to which God had called him. "Paul's participation in The Way was not as a 'walk on,' but as one overpowered by the summons of his call by Jesus."<sup>74</sup> Richard Bell suggests this took more than his training, experiences or even his character: "Clearly his upbringing in a law keeping family and his Pharisaic education stamped his intellect and character. But for the Christian Paul, there is one experience which towered over everything else: his meeting with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road."<sup>75</sup> When some of his company tried to convince Paul to stay away from Jerusalem for fear of being arrested, he answered them, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts 21:13 (NRSV).

---

<sup>73</sup> Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. 2 Corinthians 9:13-14 (NRSV)

<sup>74</sup> Talbert, Charles H., "Discipleship in Luke-Acts" in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985), 69.

<sup>75</sup> Bell, Richard H., *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel*, (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Germany, 2005), 36.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided evidence that the call from God is a Biblical concept, and that maintaining that call is not only a possibility but that it has been accomplished by our biblical examples. We have seen the living out of the call and the staying connected to the source of the call even in the midst of struggles, through the five characters that have been examined.

Moses, the reluctant prophet, was nevertheless, a most important figure for the chosen people. Many years later, another prophet, Hosea, would remind his fellow Israelites that Moses was God's chosen instrument.<sup>76</sup> As George Buttrick reminds us, "Hosea....calls him a prophet, because the authentic prophet is the one who points away from himself to the divine word and deed."<sup>77</sup>

Samuel, though not perfect, did, in fact, stay connected to the One who had called him as an acolyte for Eli, as was pointed out on page 15. As *The Interpreter's Bible* says, Samuel "may have blundered, but he never wavered in his loyalty to his God."<sup>78</sup>

As was shown on page 19, Jeremiah was faithful to his calling throughout his ministry, and that steadfast faithfulness is a marvelous example to all who serve the same God. Some of the last words we hear from Jeremiah, contain

---

<sup>76</sup> By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded. **Hosea 12:13 (NRSV)**

<sup>77</sup> Buttrick, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, K-Q*, 441.

<sup>78</sup> Schroeder, John C., "1 Samuel," *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 2*, George A. Buttrick, ed., (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1953), 1011.



oracles against the enemies of Israel; in other words, more speaking for God, which proves Jeremiah's continued conversations with Yahweh.<sup>79</sup>

Barnabas serves as an excellent example for all whose fame may never spread far and wide, but whose calling is real and convincing (which would include most Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference). He maintained his connection to God throughout his entire career, at least as far as written sources and legend tells us. Luke summed up Barnabas very well when he said in Acts 11:24, "for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord." (NRSV)

Paul is arguably the second most influential figure in all of Christian history. His missionary efforts "released the universal message of Jesus from Jewish limits, laying the foundation for Gentile Christianity, and at the same time he planted little Christian churches in the strategic centers of the NW Mediterranean world."<sup>80</sup> He was able to accomplish this by holding tightly to his call from Jesus, as described on page 23. As George Buttrick explains:

He knew an inner center of peace and joy "in Christ." Outward turmoil, external circumstance, whether of plenty or hunger, abundance or want, did not disturb him....Whatever scars, whatever memories of tumultuous life, still plagued him, Paul knew a radiant oneness and wholeness of life so that nothing "in all creation" is "able to separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39)<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Jeremiah 46:1-51:64 are examples of his oracles against foreign nations.

<sup>80</sup> Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, K-Q*, 704.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 688.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL/THEOLOGICAL MATERIALS

The United Methodist Church, as the major descendant of the Wesleyan Movement of the eighteenth century, is founded upon the unbroken line of those who began the Church, such as Peter, Paul, the other disciples, Jesus, and the heritage of the people of Israel. The Wesleyan Movement began as a result of John Wesley's search "for a meaningful understanding of the demands of Christian living [which] eventually led him to tie together the perfection of the pietists, the moralism of the Puritans, and the devotion of the mystics in a pragmatic approach that he felt could operate within the structure and doctrine of the Church of England."<sup>82</sup> Wesley found himself in a time of social upheaval and religious paradox (like many reformers before and since), and as a result was paradoxical in both his theology and his life.<sup>83</sup> The following section describes a brief history of John Wesley and his movement.

---

<sup>82</sup> Heitzenrater, Richard P., *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1995), 31.

<sup>83</sup> Heitzenrater, Richard P., *The Elusive Mr. Wesley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2003), 32.

## HISTORY

Little Jacky (John Benjamin Wesley) was born June 17, 1703,<sup>84</sup> as the fifteenth of nineteen children born to Samuel and Susannah Wesley. Samuel was a priest in the Church of England; therefore, John grew up in the rectory provided by the church that his father served.<sup>85</sup> The most memorable event of his childhood proved to be one that would later inspire him to feel that God had something very special for him to accomplish. At the age of five, he was miraculously saved from a devastating fire that destroyed the rectory. He would later write in his Journal that he considered himself, “a brand plucked from a burning.”<sup>86</sup> He was home schooled by his mother, Susannah, along with the other eight siblings who survived infancy, and she is credited with having had a huge influence upon his theological understandings.<sup>87</sup> She “left her mark on John, who ever after was imprinted with a passion for piety, order, method, and detail.”<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> In 1752, when Great Britain changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, the date was shifted to June 28<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Louisiana Annual Conference Archives of the United Methodist Church web site. <http://www.iscuo.org/300th.htm> (accessed June 20, 2007).

<sup>87</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 26.

<sup>88</sup> Maas, Robin, “Wesleyan Spirituality”, in *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, edited by Robin Maas and Gabriel O’Donnell, OP, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1990), 305.

In 1720, Wesley entered Oxford University; six years later he became a fellow of the college, and was ordained a priest of the Church of England in 1728.<sup>89</sup> His younger brother, Charles, joined him at Oxford in 1729, and John along with Charles and a small group of underclassmen met regularly for prayer, Bible study and works of mercy. They called themselves “The Holy Club” but their methodical regularity caused many of the other students to derisively label them as “Methodists”.<sup>90</sup>

In 1736, John and Charles joined General James Oglethorpe and his company of entrepreneurs and adventurers on their journey to establish the new colony of Georgia. Throughout this period John desperately searched for some sense of assurance and certainty concerning his salvation.<sup>91</sup> Albert Outler writes, “The Methodist mission to Georgia was a fiasco.”<sup>92</sup> John Wesley returned to England a failure in both career and in his relationship with God.<sup>93</sup>

May 24, 1738, is a day that changed much for John Wesley and for the subsequent Wesleyan Movement. On that day, he had “the center of his life changed.” He went through “an intellectual and spiritual revolution.” He was “genuinely converted.”<sup>94</sup> As Bishop William R. Cannon put it:

---

<sup>89</sup> Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 37.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 59 ff.

<sup>92</sup> Outler, Albert C., *John Wesley*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1964), 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>94</sup> Cannon, William Ragsdale, *The Theology of John Wesley: With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification*, (University Press of America, New York, 1974), 66.

John Wesley, on the eve of the year 1738, was the spiritual prisoner of his age. He was bound by the fetters of a theology the precepts of which he sought to obey. He possessed a knowledge of religion, “a form of godliness” prescribed in the gospel of Christ. He took care to avoid even the appearance of disobedience.... He engaged in good works.... In all these endeavors he was sincere. His actions sprang from a real desire to please God and to do his will. And yet, according to his own words, he was an “almost Christian”....John Wesley, at the close of the year 1738, was spiritually free. He had been delivered from the fetters of his old theology, totally emancipated from a slavish obedience to precepts which he had found impossible to fulfill. Now he knew what it was to be an “altogether Christian.”<sup>95</sup>

Wesley’s Aldersgate Experience was an invaluable part of the process of his salvation. He realized that God breaks into the lives of those who actively seek, and that God chooses the time and the place. To Wesley the important part was the seeking, because that is the bailiwick of the created. As we will discover shortly, God takes care of all of the rest.

John Wesley developed a movement that swept through England, albeit not without much trouble and controversy, and eventually to the colonies in the New World. According to historian David Lowes Watson, the Wesleyan Movement formed the trunk for the family tree which spawned what we know today as the United Methodist Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal-Zion Church, and many Pentecostal Churches.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>96</sup> Watson, David Lowes, “Methodist Spirituality” in *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, ed. F. C. Senn, (Paulist Press, New York, 1986), 238-239.

The genius of the movement is that John Wesley never intended to do anything other than to reform the Church of England, and return said Church to holiness and righteousness.<sup>97</sup> Even when, towards the end of his life, John Wesley took it upon himself to ordain Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as priests to the recently separated colonies so that the Methodists in America could receive the sacraments of holy communion and Christian baptism, and even after he commissioned Thomas Coke (already a presbyter in the Church of England) as a “superintendent” to the Methodists in America, and even after the Christmas Conference of 1784 at Baltimore elected and consecrated Francis Asbury along with Coke as Bishops of the Church, Wesley still insisted that he was not breaking with the Church of England (“the best constituted national church in the world”), but rather exercising “ecclesiastical authority” in the newly liberated country “wherewith God has so strangely made them free.”<sup>98</sup>

In summary, Richard P. Heitzenrater said it best:

In his various reflections upon the rise and growth of Methodism, Wesley often emphasized the spontaneity of its origins and the “openendedness” of its development. In his view, God raised up the people called Methodists for a purpose that was specific and appropriate but in a manner that was not necessarily predictable or predetermined.”<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Newman, Albert Henry, *A Manual of Church History, Vol. II, (AD 1517-1903)*, American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1903), 704, <http://books.google.com/books?id=bh18g4PcuJMC&pg=PA704&lpg=PA704&dq=wesley+ordains&source=web&ots=7Fr4JhB2S&sig=VddeiRcL011kFTfokz6vs5-UIXk#PPR1.M1>, accessed June 22, 2007.

<sup>98</sup> From *Wesley's Letter To Our Brothers in America, September 19, 1784*, as quoted in Outler, *John Wesley*, 83-84.

<sup>99</sup> Heitzenrater, *The People Called Methodists*, 33.

## THEOLOGY

Now, let us shift our focus from history towards theology. In order to understand those who claim the Methodist heritage, we must grasp the foundational spiritual understandings of the movement. What makes Methodism distinct and unique among the many other doctrines, denominations and distinctions within the Church of Jesus Christ?

Four aspects of Wesleyan theology differentiate it from other creedal statements. None of these are unique to Wesleyans, but the emphasis and prioritizing of them help to explain the atypical underpinnings of Methodism. There are, of course, many other concepts that could be explored. This list is not exhaustive, but it is illuminative in discussing the foundational spiritual understandings of followers of John Wesley. These concepts will help us to grasp how Wesley stayed connected and how he taught his followers to do the same. These four aspects are: 1) The Wesleyan Quadrilateral; 2) Grace and its Manifestations; 3) Christian Perfection; and 4) the Wesleyan Class System.

## The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is, admittedly, not a concept that John Wesley ever defined or developed. He never used the phrase in any of his writings. It is, however, consistent with his understanding of how and why beliefs are formed and the basis for all theological discussion. Albert Outler is credited with coining the phrase in his work, *John Wesley*, in 1964.<sup>100</sup> The official web site of the United Methodist Church defines The Quadrilateral thusly:

Building on the Anglican tradition, Wesley added a fourth emphasis, experience. The resulting four components or “sides” of the quadrilateral are (1) Scripture, (2) tradition, (3) reason, and (4) experience. For United Methodists, Scripture is considered the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine. Tradition is experience and the witness of development and growth of the faith through the past centuries and in many nations and cultures. Experience is the individual’s understanding and appropriating of the faith in the light of his or her own life. Through reason the individual Christian brings to bear on the Christian faith discerning and cogent thought. These four elements taken together bring the individual Christian to a mature and fulfilling understanding of the Christian faith and the required response of worship and service.<sup>101</sup>

The Quadrilateral holds together the diverse beliefs and positions of the contemporary United Methodist Church, which contains a broad spectrum of theological views, and the Quadrilateral “serves to hold the line on the integrity of the tradition. If there can be no agreement on what to believe, it is implicitly said, then let there at least be an agreement on the context or the criteria of Christian

---

<sup>100</sup> Outler, *John Wesley*, iv.

<sup>101</sup> UMC.org, the official web site of the United Methodist Church, <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=258&GID=312&GMAD=VWD&GCAT=W>, accessed July 13, 2007. Source listed as: *A Dictionary for United Methodists*, Alan K. Waltz, Copyright 1991, Abingdon Press. Used by Permission.



believing.”<sup>102</sup> Bishop Jack M. Tuell, in his *The Organization of the United Methodist Church: 2005-2008 Edition* discussed the future of the Church’s unity and the debate over homosexuality which was threatening to split the Church. Tuell mentioned a resolution that aimed at uniting the entire denomination, following the upheaval and the divisiveness of the debate. A vote was taken concerning the “Unity Resolution”, and the results were an astounding 869-41 in favor of the resolution. Bishop Tuell said that this vote “made clear in an unmistakable way that the UMC in spite of disagreement (when has Christ’s church ever *not* been in disagreement during its long and noble history?) intends to stay together around its central mission of making disciples.”<sup>103</sup> Figure 2 illustrates the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

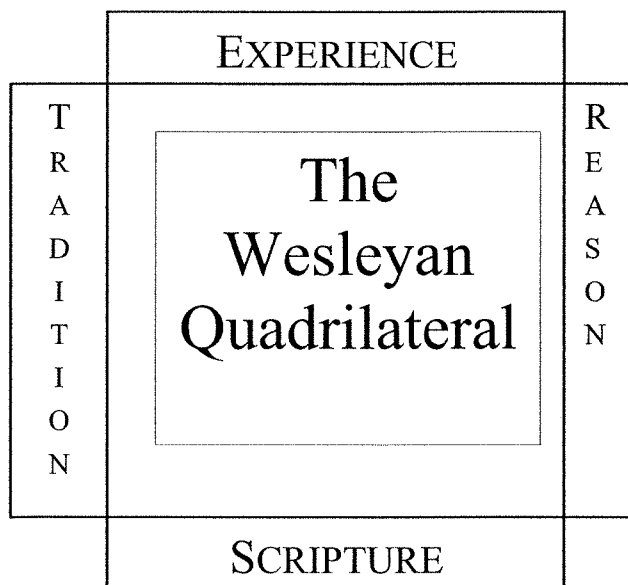


Figure 2. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

<sup>102</sup> Abraham, William J., “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.” In *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, edited by Theodore Runyon, Nashville, TN, Kingswood Books, 1985, 119.

<sup>103</sup> Tuell, Jack M., *The Organization of the United Methodist Church: 2005-2008 Edition*, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005), 8.

## Grace and Its Manifestations

Wesley had a unique grasp of the concept of “grace.” For much of his adult life he had struggled with the notion of God’s grace and the human being’s responsibility for the reception of salvation. At the tender age of twenty-three, he writes: “[I realize] the absolute impossibility of being *half a Christian*, and I determined, through his grace (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of) to be *all-devoted* to God: to give him *all* my soul, my body and my substance.”<sup>104</sup> John Wesley had read extensively from the Eastern tradition, the classical Protestant strain, and was influenced by the quietist movement championed by the Moravians. “The unique mixture of theological notions thus far accumulated was now to be smelted and forged into an integral and dynamic theology.”<sup>105</sup>

Wesley understood grace to contain three different, inextricably bound manifestations. They were not different “graces,” but they were guideposts on the way to becoming “all-devoted to God.” The first manifestation was known as “prevenient” or preventing grace. This is best understood as the grace that goes before, or as an “antecedent” or “anticipatory” manifestation.<sup>106</sup> Wesley developed this concept in his attempt to discredit the doctrine of predestination

---

<sup>104</sup> Wesley, John. *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M. A, XI*, edited by Thomas Jackson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (T. Mason, London, 1840), 366-367.

<sup>105</sup> Outler, *John Wesley*, 14.

<sup>106</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, accessed July 18, 2007. <http://www.m-w.com>.

without throwing out Romans 8:29-30.<sup>107</sup> The best example of his own words on this subject is found in his sermon #128 ("Free Grace"), preached at Bristol, 1740.<sup>108</sup> He suggests this manifestation is present, whether or not it is accepted, and it is continually offered to all. Wesley emphasizes the part of the human being without diminishing the offer of God, and asserts that prevenient grace is offered, continuously. If individuals accept it, then they take the first step on the journey towards God.

From there, God's grace changes its manifestation to that of justifying grace which cleanses the sinner, and makes them fit to stand in the presence of God. This is the "new birth" and the "conversion" discussed over and over again in the Gospels.<sup>109</sup> Here the individual either accepts or rejects the new life in Christ, but the act itself is an act of God!

Acceptance, however, is merely the beginning. Wesley suggests that from this point one moves on to sanctifying grace. This is the manifestation of the grace of God that leads one from being a "babe" in Christ, towards that "all-devoted" goal. In the words of Wesley:

It is generally supposed, that repentance and faith are only the gate of religion; that they are necessary only at the beginning of our Christian course, when we are setting out in the way to the kingdom.... And this is undoubtedly true, that there is a repentance and a faith, which are, more especially, necessary at the beginning: a repentance, which is a conviction of our utter sinfulness, and

---

<sup>107</sup> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:29-30 (NRSV)

<sup>108</sup> <http://new.gbgn-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/128/> accessed July 18, 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' John 3:7 (NRSV)

guiltiness, and helplessness.... But, notwithstanding this, there is also a repentance and a faith (taking the words in another sense, a sense not quite the same, nor yet entirely different) which are requisite after we have "believed the gospel;" yea, and in every subsequent stage of our Christian course, or we cannot "run the race which is set before us." And this repentance and faith are full as necessary, in order to our **continuance** and **growth** in grace, as the former faith and repentance were, in order to our entering into the kingdom of God.<sup>110</sup> (emphasis added)

Or as Albert Outler puts it, "Salvation is a process: one that begins with justification but that continues thereafter as the regenerate person grows in grace towards sanctification as a flying goal."<sup>111</sup>

This process is the part of the human being in this dance of grace. God has provided all of this, and the human's part is to participate via the "means of grace." Wesley defined the "means of grace" thusly, "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the *ordinary* channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace."<sup>112</sup> This is a most important concept that we will see later described as "spiritual disciplines," for Wesley classified prayer, Scripture reading and the sacrament of Holy Communion as specific means of grace.<sup>113</sup>

Wesley's concept of grace is of the utmost importance to the thesis of this paper, in that by participating in the "means of grace," one who has been set

---

<sup>110</sup> <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/serm-014.stm> accessed July 18, 2007. Emphasis added.

<sup>111</sup> Outler, Albert C., *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, (Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 1975), 57.

<sup>112</sup> Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley: The Jackson Edition, Volume Eight, Sermon 16, The Means of Grace*, edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005), CD-ROM.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

apart by God for a specific purpose (i. e. to preach the Gospel), is able to maintain that connection with God. As will be pointed out in Chapter 5, “spiritual disciplines” is an important factor in remaining connected with God. Participation in the “means of grace,” then, helps the Elder to continue on the path that God has laid out for the ordained person. That leads us very nicely to our next section on Wesleyan theology—Christian perfection.

## Christian Perfection

The concept of sanctification became wrapped up in the notion of perfection. In other words, if one was being sanctified, then one was moving on towards a goal, and that goal was perfection. Wesley wrote and preached extensively on perfection throughout his lifetime. His *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (last edited in 1777), was his *summa theologica* on the subject. He wanted to explore numerous passages in the Scriptures that called for perfection; most particularly Hebrews 6:1.<sup>114</sup> Wesley defined it as, “By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.”<sup>115</sup> He continually struggled with this notion, and he waffled on its achievability in this life; a fact ignored by some of his later followers. Outler writes, “For him...*perfection* meant *perfecting* (*teleiosis*), with further horizons of love and of participation in God always opening up beyond any given level of spiritual progress.”<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, Hebrews 6:1 (NRSV)

<sup>115</sup> <http://gbgm-umc.org/Umhistory/Wesley/perfect8.html> accessed July 18, 2007.

<sup>116</sup> Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 73.

The very notion of “going on to perfection,” then, relates to the thesis of this paper by providing the foundation for maintaining connectedness with the God who called the Elder in the first place. It is important to maintain this connection because in order to achieve perfection, one must “keep an eye on the prize and, press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14 (NRSV)

## The Class System

All of Wesley's theological understandings are bound together by one of his most ingenious administrative tools that would prove to be the glue that held together the Wesleyan Revival, and is a necessary additive to solving the dilemma of maintaining spiritual connectedness by United Methodist Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference. This tool divided the people up into classes that would meet weekly for accountability, growth in discipleship ("on to perfection"), and maintaining the vows of membership that had been taken upon first joining the Church of Jesus Christ. The class system "expressed, and in turn affirmed and enriched, his theological emphases on prevenient grace and Christian perfection; and most especially w[as] an embodiment of his doctrine of justification by faith."<sup>117</sup> It began as a tool by which a collection could be received to help defray the debt of the Methodist movement, rather than as a means of spiritual growth, because at the time Methodists were members of the Church of England, and their tithes were given to the Anglicans. Once established, the class system was quickly seen as a valuable tool to "watch over the souls of the brethren."<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Watson, David Lowes, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance*, (Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock, 1985), 39.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 93.



The genius of the class meeting catechesis as Wesley prescribed it was the proper synthesis of two priorities: responsiveness to the immediacy of Christian discipleship in the world, and responsibility to the doctrines and ordinances of the church—spirit and structure, prophetic and priestly ministry, *eccessiola in ecclesia*, all under the sovereignty of grace.<sup>119</sup> In chapter 6 this paper will discuss the class system, and offer it as part of the solution to the problem of loss of “spiritual connection.”

---

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 147-148.

## CONCLUSION

Historically, it has been most difficult to live out the call and to maintain the sense of “connectedness” throughout one’s ministry **perfectly** and **continuously**. In 1977, Bishop Norris Samuel Curry (Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) discussed Wesley’s “Address to the Clergy” given on February 6, 1756: “Did the ministers of Wesley’s day measure up to the standard? Not according to Wesley in the later pages of his treatise.”<sup>120</sup> William Parker, a contemporary of John Wesley who preached an ordination sermon just before Christmas in 1745, to the Christ Church in London, wrote, “The effect of the blessing depends much upon the moral fitness of the person ordained.”<sup>121</sup> This does not, however, relieve one from the necessity to continue to strive towards perfection and to participate in God’s sanctifying grace.

This cyclical understanding of ministry, wherein the ordained has managed to maintain “connectedness” for a season and lose it for a while, predates Wesley and his movement. We have already seen it evidenced in our discussion of Biblical characters in Chapter 2. In *The Future Shape of Ministry* Urban Holmes traces the rise and fall of the ordained. Writing about a priest of the later middle ages, Holmes asserts, “He did *holy* things, but it was difficult to think of him as the *holy man*.”<sup>122</sup> Of the seventeenth century, Holmes continues,

---

<sup>120</sup> Curry, BNS, *The Methodist Preacher: Prophet, Priest and Pastor*, (Los Angeles, MC Printing and Publishing, 1977), 9.

<sup>121</sup> Parker, William, *The Nature and Reasonableness of the Inward Call and Outward Mission to the Holy Ministry Considered*, (London, England, Printed at the Theatre for James Fletcher and sold by J & J Rivington, 1746), 31. Found in the Special Collection Section of the Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

<sup>122</sup> Holmes, Urban T., *The Future Shape of Ministry*, (New York, Seabury Press, 1971), 47.

“Ministerial function in the seventeenth century, the period of transition from the Reformation to Scholastic Protestantism, [has] the effective clergyman, according to the spirit of the times, as the learned man.”<sup>123</sup> In *A Hundred Ministers and How They Switched Off*, Estes and Lauriat lament how in 1873, the biggest problem with ordained clergy was “the secularizing of the minister and his holy office.”<sup>124</sup>

John Wesley’s traveling preachers spoke of problems during the time of the establishment of Methodism. Mr. John Murlin, who frequently traveled with Wesley, wrote to him about a former preacher, John Tremboth, “Once an eminent preacher, and an instrument for good to thousands; but now miserable in his own mind, and, I fear a slave to sin.... Shall he, after preaching to others, become a castaway himself? Rather, let him once more awake and strive to save his own soul with those who have heard him.”<sup>125</sup> By 1758, pamphlets were being published detailing the experiences of Methodist preachers. One such pamphlet stated:

Some of the prerequisites of a Methodist preacher: namely, 1. A knowledge of God as his God, as having pardoned all his sins. 2. A life and conversation suitable thereto. 3. A clear conviction that he was called of God to the work; otherwise he could not bear the crosses attending it. 4. Some fruit of his labor, in convincing and converting of sinners.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>124</sup> Estes and Lauriat, *A Hundred Ministers and How They Switched Off*, (Boston, Estes and Lauriat, 1874), 298.

<sup>125</sup> Wesley, John A., Rev. AM, *The Experience of Several Eminent Methodist Preachers with an account of their call to and success in the ministry: in a Series of Letters written by themselves to the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, (New York, T. Mason & G. Lane, J. Collard, printer, 1837), 64.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 137-138.

Problems continued to exist after Wesley's death and the establishment of the Methodist Church in the United States and in England. T. Proctor printed a treatise concerning the relieving of a class leader, Mr. Robinson, from the Methodist Church in Beverly, England, in 1824. In it, class members bemoaned the state of the Church, "Some think the time has not yet come for attempting to remove the evils which have crept in amongst us; and others believe that it is too late, and regret that nothing can be done."<sup>127</sup>

Wesley's movement focused in on experiencing change in the life of the believer. Millard writes, "For Wesley, preaching was directed to achieving a change in the hearer. His sermons went beyond the moralizing that characterised much of the preaching of his day."<sup>128</sup> It was not enough to simply "talk" about one's faith, but action was necessary. "Wesley's spirituality was accountable to a disciplined theological reflection."<sup>129</sup> "Orthokardia" (right heart) and "Orthopraxis" (right actions or works) were not only interrelated, but they were both necessary in order to achieve the *all-devoted* to God status that Wesley and his followers were striving to achieve.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> *An Address to the Methodist Societies in Beverly and the Vicinity: from the Members of Mr. Robinson's class, occasioned by the late attempts to exclude him from the society for having published "Observations on the System of Wesleyan Methodism,* (Beverly, England, T. Proctor, 1824), 48.

<sup>128</sup> Millard, J., "A Response to L. Jafta's Paper on Methodist Spirituality", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Volume 18:2, 1992), 79.

<sup>129</sup> Watson, David Lowes, "Methodist Spirituality," *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, edited by Frank C. Senn, (New York, Paulist Press, 1986), 224.

<sup>130</sup> Clapper, Gregory S., *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality*, (Nashville, The Upper Room Press, 1997), 110-111.

John Wesley set a marvelous example for Wesleyans to follow. His life was far from perfect, and he did not do everything exactly right. He did, however, live out that which he often preached. He showed that it was possible to achieve the “New Birth,” and that this could make an eternal difference in the life of one who was attempting to be an “altogether Christian.” As he said in his sermon entitled, *New Birth*:

God is continually breathing, as it were, upon his soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained: and the child of God grows up, till he come to the “full measure of the stature of Christ.”<sup>131</sup>

The time has come, now, to relate the issues of loss of connectedness and burnout (as discussed in Chapter 1), the biblical foundations of maintaining connection even during struggles (laid out in Chapter 2), and the historical significance and the theological underpinnings (of this chapter’s discourse) to the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and the problems of Elders in maintaining spiritual connectedness. The next chapter will show, with statistics, the depth and the breadth of the problem, as it is experienced among the Elders of the North Georgia Annual Conference.

---

<sup>131</sup> Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley: The Jackson Edition, Volume Eight*, “Sermon 45, The New Birth,” edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005), CD-ROM.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE PROBLEM IN THE NORTH GEORGIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Wesleyan Movement of today, as it is lived out and practiced in the United Methodist Church, has some very distinct advantages. The appointive system as opposed to the call system has some definite pluses for both the clergy and the church. The organizational structure allows each local church to be connected to all the other local churches, fosters a real sense of camaraderie and enables The United Methodist Church to respond to disasters and catastrophes in a meaningful way that would be impossible for individual churches, of any size.

Methodists refer to this as “connectionalism” and it is felt very strongly among the clergy. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* states, “Connectionalism is an important part of our identity as United Methodists. It provides us with wonderful opportunities to carry out our mission in unity and strength. We experience this connection in many ways, including our systems of episcopacy, itineracy, property, and mutual support.”<sup>132</sup> The church membership of the clergy does not lie with the local church to which they are assigned; rather, their membership is in the Annual Conference.<sup>133</sup> This leads to the meetings of

---

<sup>132</sup> *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004*, edited by Harriett Jane Olson, (Nashville, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2004), Paragraph 701.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, Paragraph 140, Paragraphs 140, 306 and 309.1.

the Annual Conference possessing almost an air of a family reunion or as celebrated in the South, a homecoming. Clergy are moved rather frequently, and because of the difficulty in making friends among parishioners, the vast majority of clergy friendships are among other clergy within the Annual Conference.

When Elders “drop out” of the system, for whatever reasons, a sense of loss is felt throughout the ranks of the clergy. When ordained persons give up their clerical orders for reasons of moral turpitude, loss of meaning and purpose, or simply refusing to “play the game” any longer, an overwhelming sense of bereavement envelops all who have come into contact with the former member of the “family.”

The numbers of ordained who have left the system provide some insight into the problem of clergy who have lost their sense of calling and the anointing of the Holy Spirit that led them to start down the path of ordination in the first place. The numbers and statistics in this chapter come from *The Annual Conference Journals of the North Georgia Annual Conference*, and are only related to Elders in the Conference. The various categories describe the years between 1995 and 2006. This information is readily available in the Journals located in many libraries and in the personal libraries of many clergy.

The first category describes the number of ordinands who have joined the Conference. For the twelve year period under consideration, an average of twenty-two persons were ordained Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference (see figure 3).

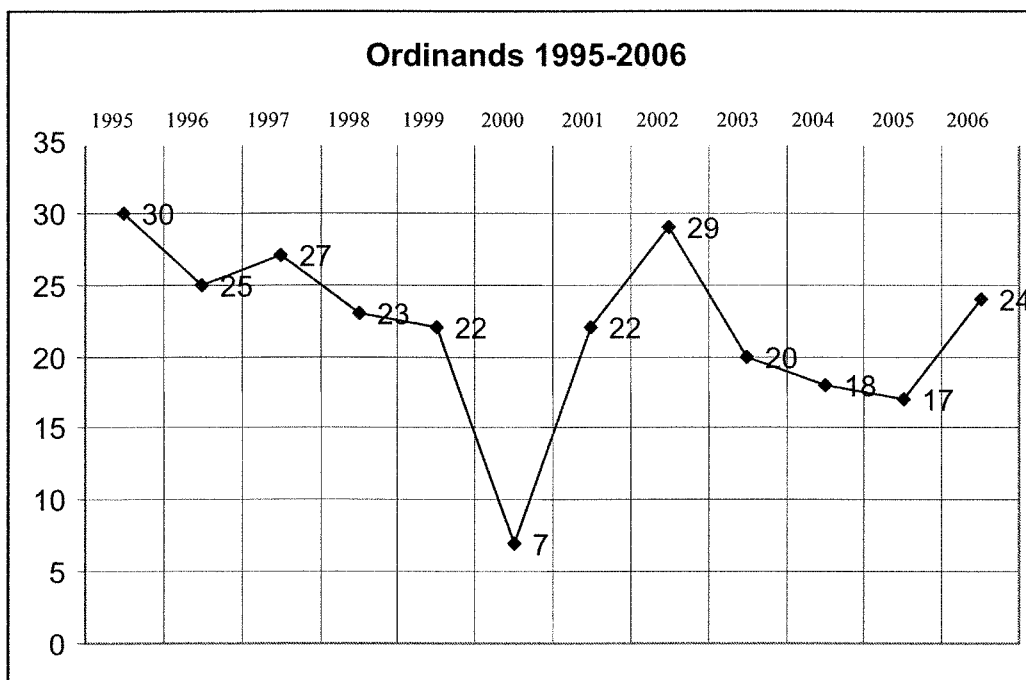


Figure 3. Ordinands

Some years had large ordination classes, while others were not as profitable to the growth of the Conference. In 2000, there was a low of seven, but that was mainly due to the changing of the rules of ordination as well as a new Board of Ordained Ministry who changed the entire system by which candidates were examined<sup>134</sup>.

Figure 4 compares the number of ordinands to the number of retirees. A look at the retirees over this twelve year period shows that there were slightly more ordinands, on average, than there were retirees, with exceptions in 2000 and 2005.

---

<sup>134</sup> Based on personal knowledge and experience by the author of this paper.



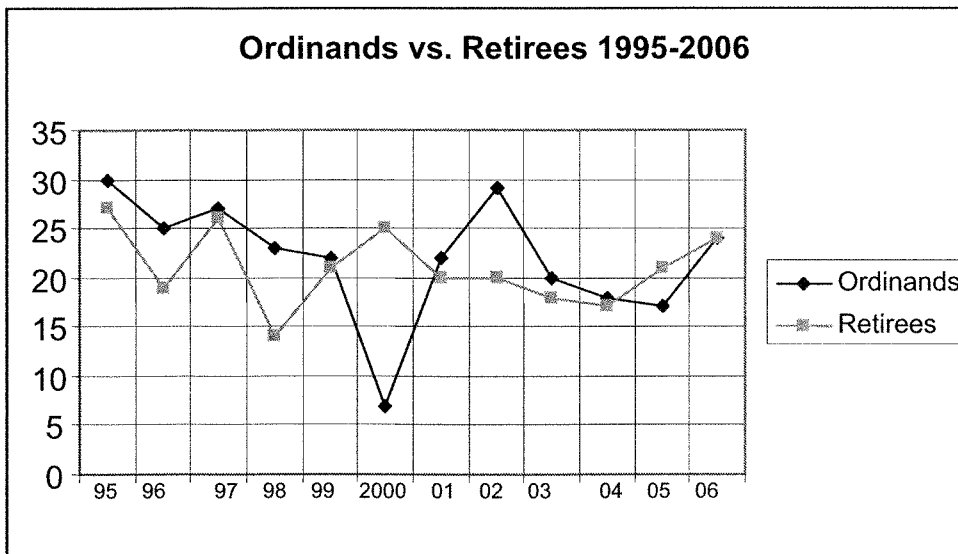


Figure 4. Ordinands vs. Retirees

On average there were twenty-two ordinands to twenty-one retirees. This can be explained by the fact that the North Georgia Annual Conference led the entire United Methodist Church in growth during this time span under consideration, and needed additional clergy to tend the growing flock.<sup>135</sup>

Ordination was not the only way by which Elders joined the Annual Conference, and figure 5 shows transfers from other Annual Conferences and the occasional acceptance of orders from another denomination. This raised the total number of new Elders; however, the end results were negligible, as the chart below shows:

<sup>135</sup> Scott Brewer, Director, Office of Analysis and Research, General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church, email message to the author, September 4, 2007, "North Georgia grew in membership by a greater percentage since 1990 than any other conference, 19.46%."

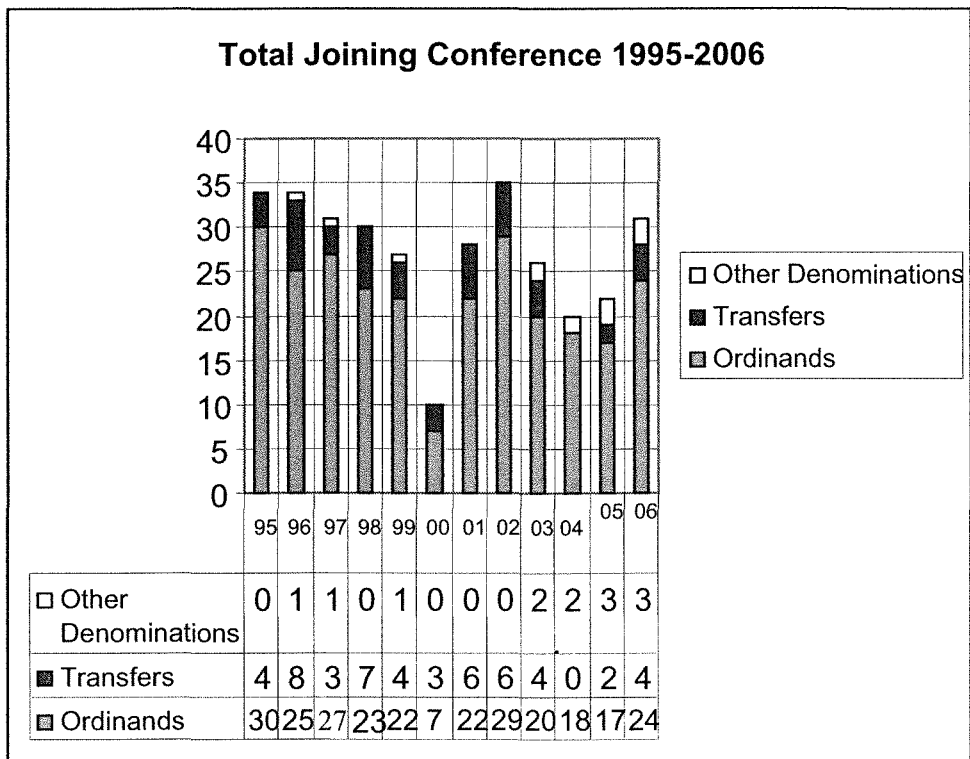


Figure 5. Total Joining Annual Conference

During this time the average was increased by 2.8 over the twelve year period under consideration to 24.8. This slight overall increase in Elders can, once again, be attributed to the growth of the Annual Conference.

Retirement is not the only method by which Elders left the Conference. Some chose to transfer to other Annual Conferences within the bounds of the United Methodist Church or other Methodist Churches, as figure 6 portrays.

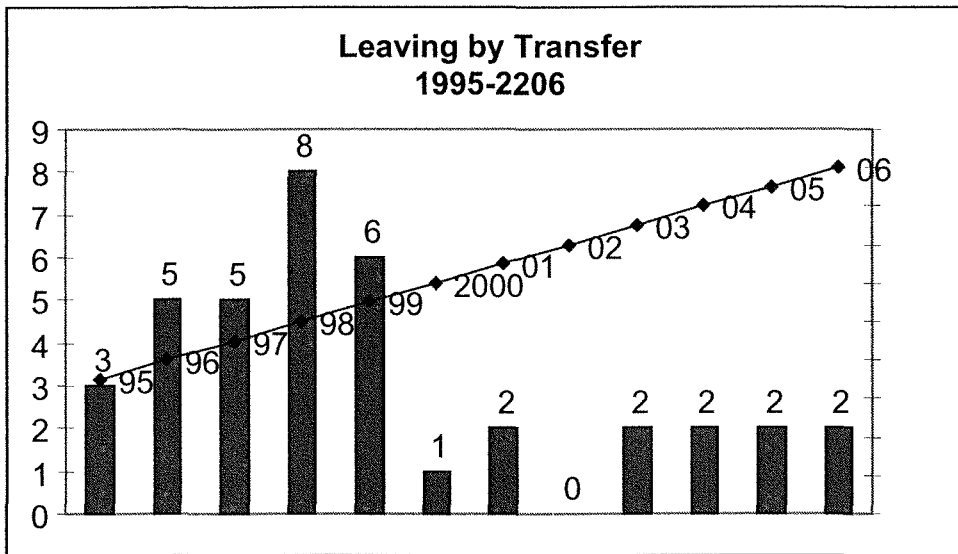


Figure 6. Leaving Conference by Transfer

These numbers did not have a tremendous influence upon the total number of Elders. The average for the twelve year period was 3.3 clergy who moved to some other Annual Conference. This is more than accounted for by the 4.25 who transferred in from other Annual Conferences. This net gain of less than one Elder per year did not impact the overall situation.

Another source of loss is those who withdrew or were suspended from the Annual Conference. This category includes those who withdrew to unite with other denominations, those who simply withdrew (often to prevent charges being brought against them due to some morals charge), others who withdrew while charges were being brought against them, and those who were suspended (mostly because of the investigation of serious charges).<sup>136</sup> Figure 7 demonstrates Conference Withdrawals.

<sup>136</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 361.

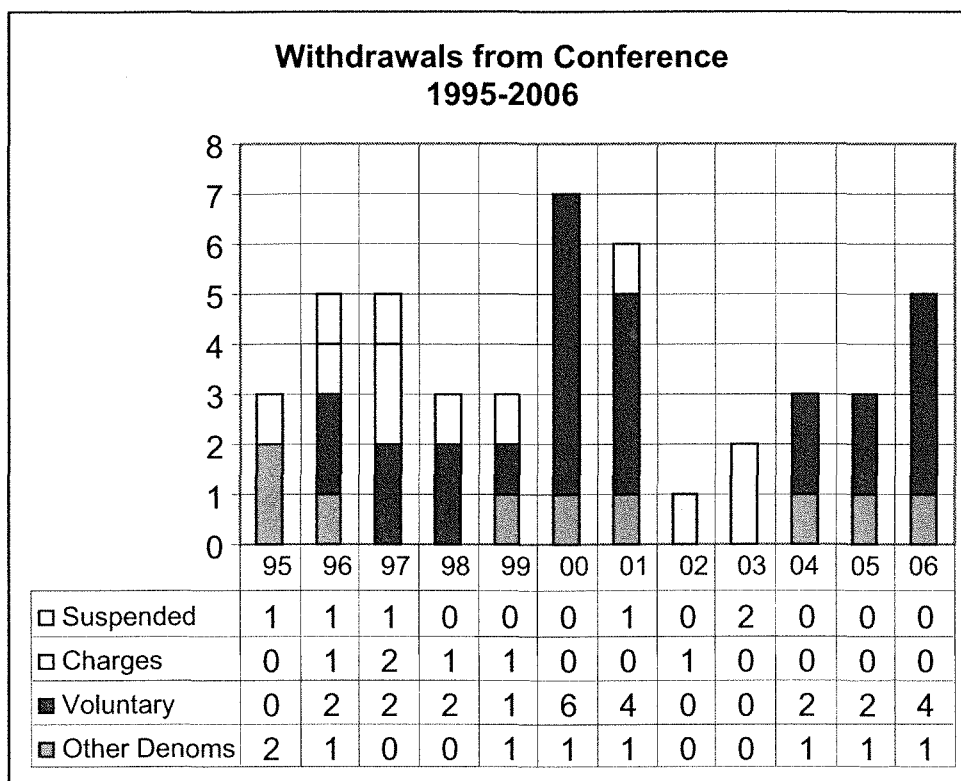


Figure 7. Withdrawals from Conference

The overall impact of withdrawals is a key issue in this paper, in that the average for the twelve year period is close to four Elders per year (3.83). This is a most important figure, as it helps us to understand some of the obvious ways in which Elders forget their ordination vows and thereby lose the sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit that was present with them in the beginning. In this author's experience, many of the clergy who withdrew to unite with some other denomination withdrew because of problems either within their own ministry or with the system of the United Methodist Church.<sup>137</sup> Approximately four Elders

<sup>137</sup> This statement comes from personal knowledge of the author concerning many of those who did withdraw to unite with other denominations.

per year left the Church due to personal or systemic problems. This demonstrates a developing problem because it makes up the difference between the incoming and the outgoing Elders (considering only retirements, withdrawals and transfers).

Retirements, transfers, and withdrawals are still not the only way that persons leave the Annual Conference. Another factor is death. Each year, on average, twelve Elders achieve the status of the *honored dead*. Figure 8 illustrates this statistic.

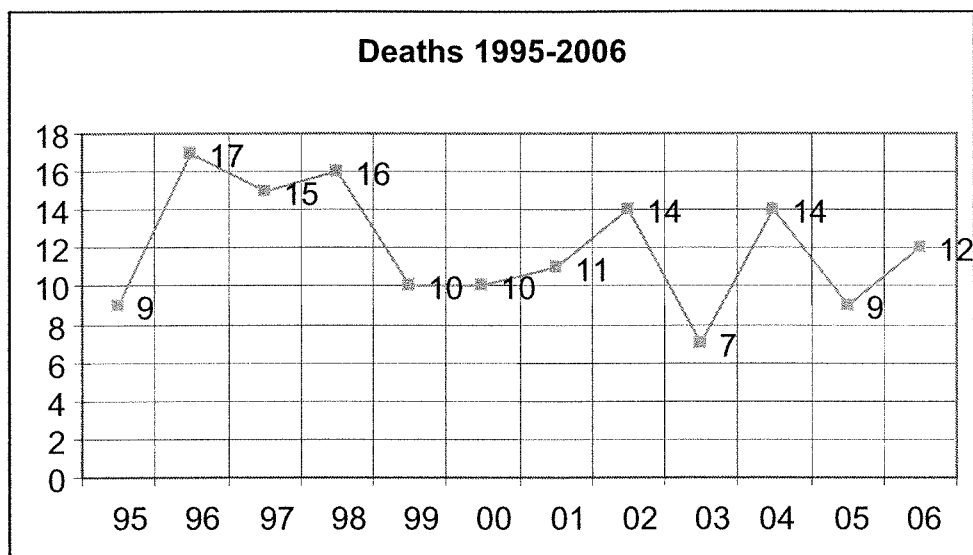


Figure 8. Deaths

The statistics show a rapidly developing problem in the total number of Elders in the Annual Conference. Over our twelve year period the total numbers of Elders declined. Adding the factor of deaths to the losses further impacts the problem. Figure 9 shows the total losses over the period under discussion.

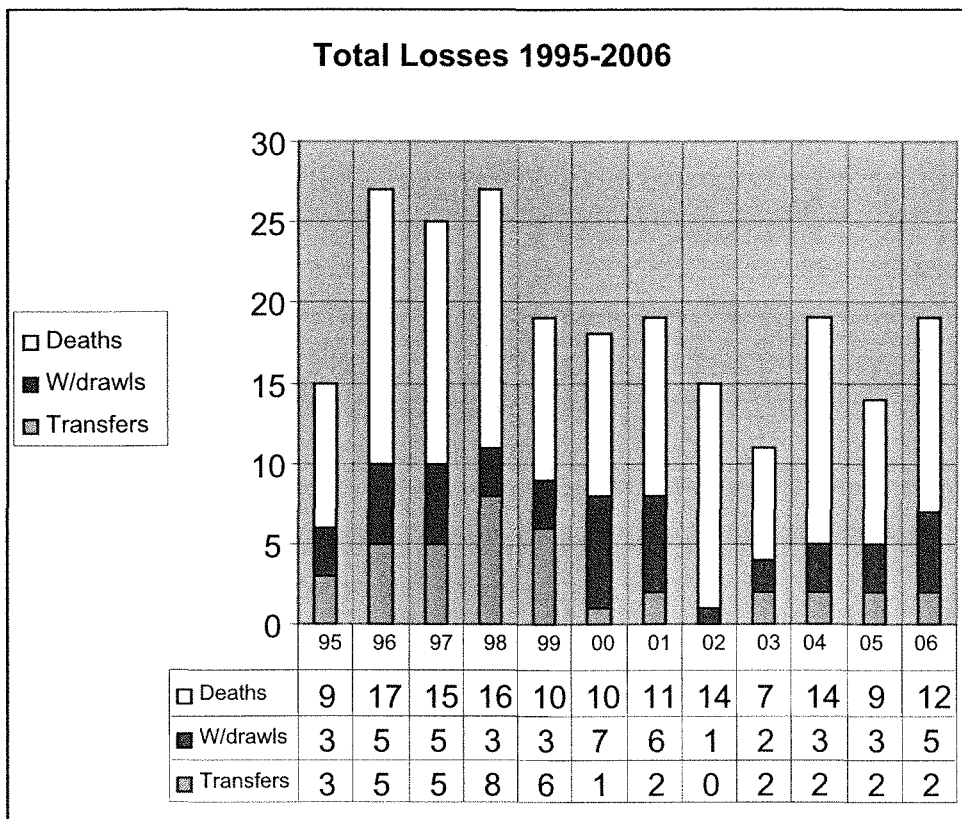


Figure 9. Total Losses

There are still other ways in which Elders left the Annual Conference membership. Some choose to go on Leave of Absence for various personal reasons.<sup>138</sup> See figure 10.

<sup>138</sup> *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004* says, “This relationship is granted to clergy who are probationary, associate, and full member, who because of sufficient reason are unable to or who choose temporarily to cease to perform their ministerial duties. Paragraph 354.1.

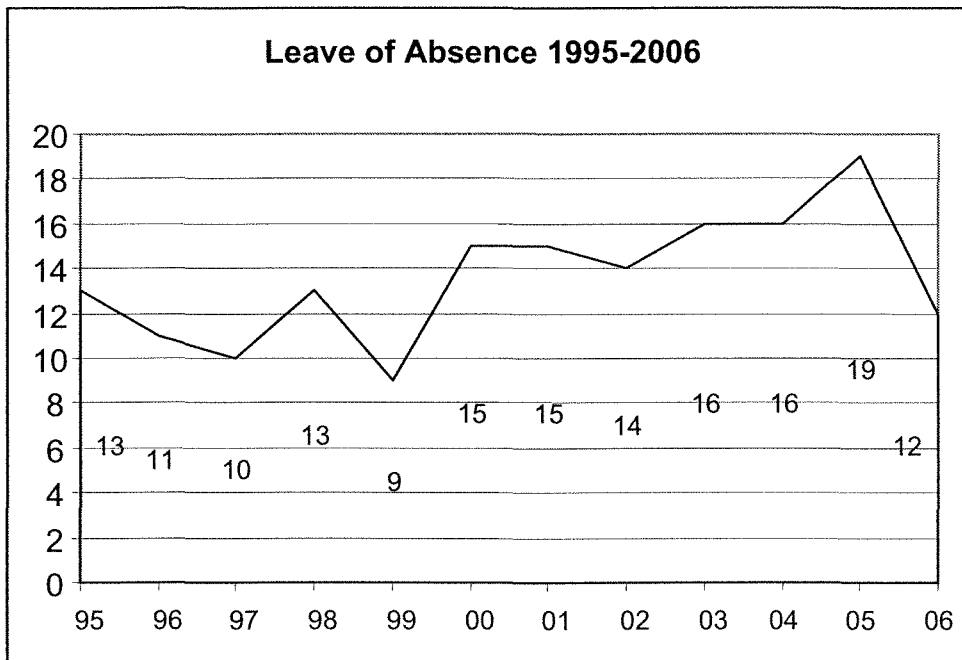


Figure 10. Leave of Absences

Other Elders take advantage of the policy of the Church to grant Family Leaves for reasons of children or parents.<sup>139</sup> An average of 13.5 chose to go the route of Incapacity Leave for medical, psychological or extreme grief reasons.<sup>140</sup> Combined these two factors make up a total of almost seventeen Elders lost per year. Figure 11 illustrates this loss.

<sup>139</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 355.1.

<sup>140</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 358.1.

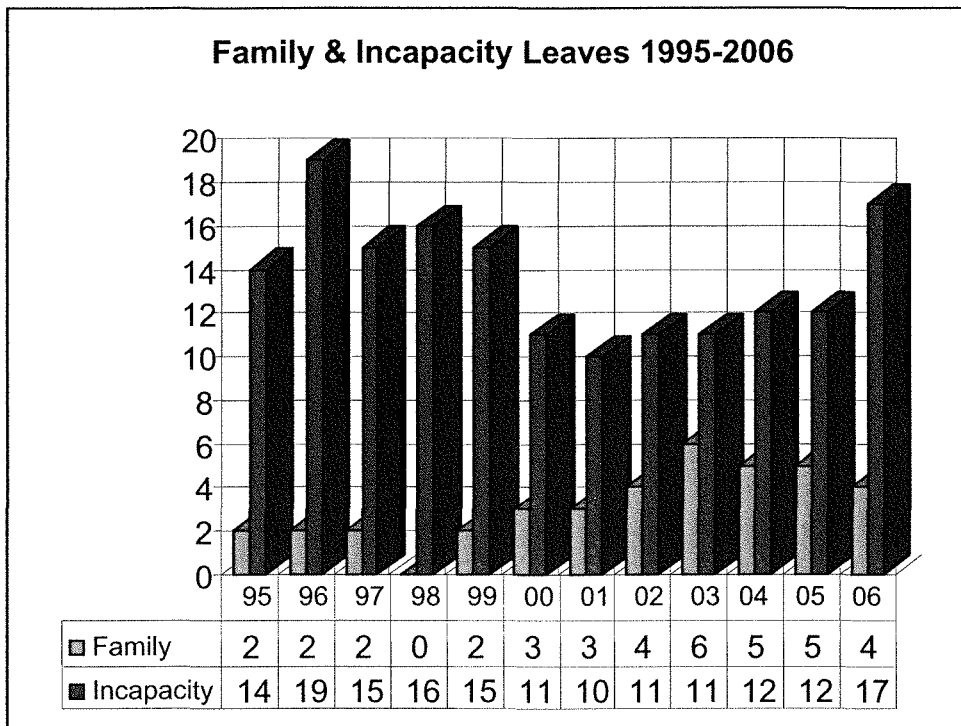


Figure 11. Family & Incapacity Leaves

Figure 12 illustrates the number of Elders who chose to remain members of the Annual Conference while being appointed to carry out their ministry within the bounds of another Annual Conference. In other words, they dropped out of the itineracy system within the bounds of the North Georgia Annual Conference. On average seven Elders made this choice.



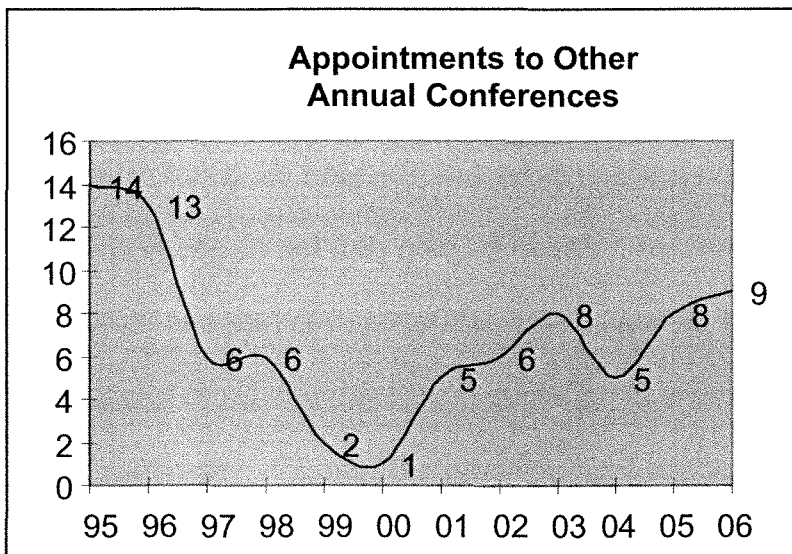


Figure 12. Appointments to Other Annual Conferences

One remaining category caused a tremendous loss in the number of Elders, and must be considered when addressing the topic of losing sight of the call and the desire to be involved in ministry in the first place. Over the twelve year period under consideration, an average of 41.75 Elders within the North Georgia Annual Conference chose to be placed on Honorable Location.<sup>141</sup> This category serves as a kind of “catch-all” for those who no longer wish to be a part of the itineracy, nor participate in the idea of full-time ministry.<sup>142</sup> The status of those on Honorable Location becomes rather murky. They “surrender their certification of conference membership,”<sup>143</sup> and they “have all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold charge conference

<sup>141</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 360.

<sup>142</sup> “This relation shall be granted only to one who intends to discontinue serviced in the itinerant ministry.” *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 360.1.

<sup>143</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, Paragraph 360.2.

membership.”<sup>144</sup> The “murkiness” comes in when *The Discipline* states, “As clergy members of the charge conference, they shall be permitted to exercise ministerial functions only with the written permission of the pastor in charge.”<sup>145</sup> These persons do not fully give up ministry, because they are still baptized Christians and part of the ministry of all believers; however, they choose not to be a part of the United Methodist system that ordained and nurtured them into full-time ministry. Figure 13 shows this relationship.

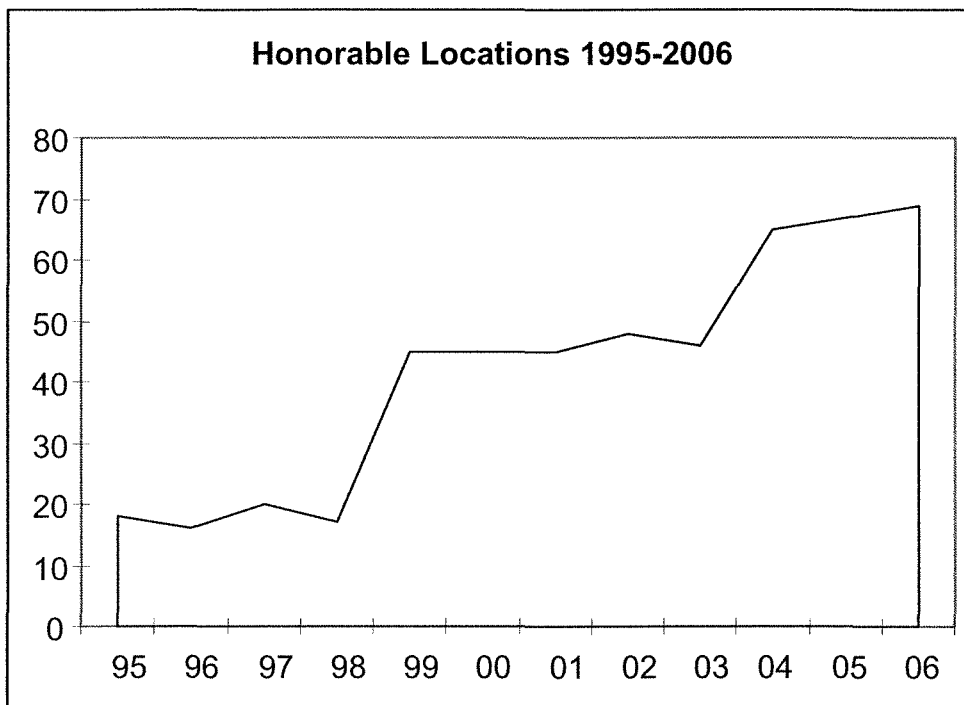


Figure 13. Honorable Locations

This disturbing trend shows spikes in 1999 and again in 2004, and supports this paper’s point that there truly is a problem in North Georgia when it

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

comes to Elders feeling a lack of “fire” concerning their call to ministry. These persons chose to leave the system, and to repudiate one of the questions that is asked at ordination, “Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?”<sup>146</sup>

The overall numbers of those coming into the Annual Conference as opposed to those leaving (or at least dropping out) of the Conference demonstrate a declining and disturbing trend, as evidenced by figure 14.<sup>147</sup>

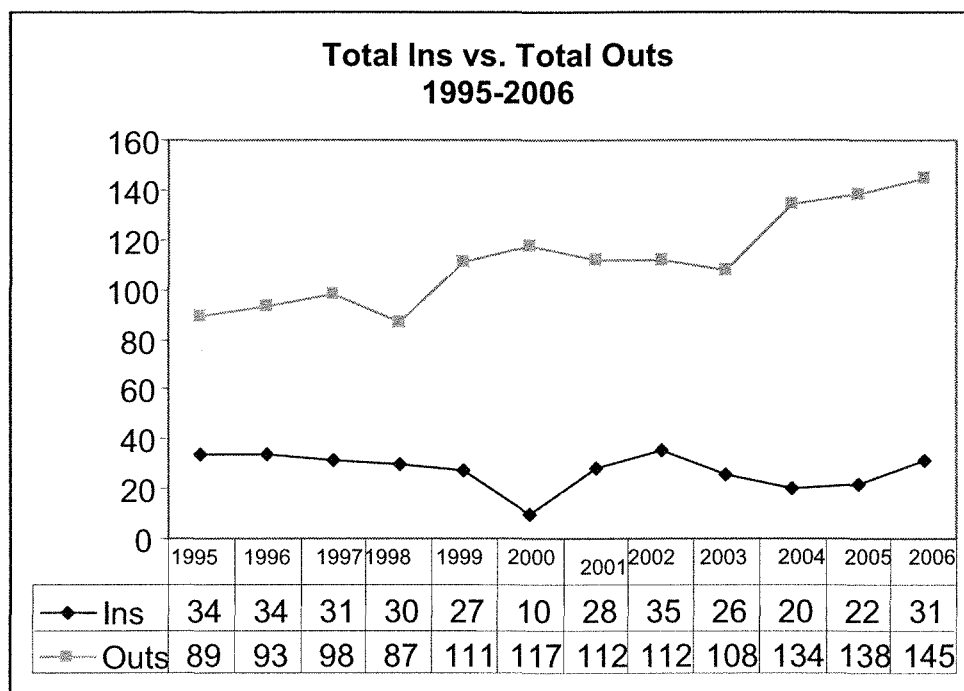


Figure 14. Total Ins vs. Total Outs

<sup>146</sup> *Book of Discipline, 2004*, p. 225.

<sup>147</sup> The “Ins” include those who were ordained, transferred in from other United Methodist Conferences and those who came from other denominations. The “Outs” include those who transferred out, retired, withdrew, were suspended, died, took family or incapacity leave, and those on leave of absence.

The figures clearly illustrate that the losses far exceed the gains in the number of Elders within the North Georgia Annual Conference. On average a net of eighty-seven Elders per year left the Annual Conference. Although there is no way to conclusively prove how many of these left for reasons of forgetfulness of their call or losing a sense of the presence of God, as has already been pointed out, many do leave because they no longer feel the call or the excitement of serving God. The combination of withdrawals, various leaves, and Honorable Locations, demonstrably illustrates the problem. These categories account for almost 60 Elders per year leaving the itineracy and the ranks of the Order of Elders. That is a problem particularly for a growing Annual Conference like North Georgia.

## CHAPTER 5

### SURVEY RESULTS AND INTERVIEWS

The purpose of this chapter is to show, through a survey and some personal interviews, the extent of the problem of maintaining connectedness in the life of the North Georgia Annual Conference. Without the specificity of the survey and the personal interviews, the statistics of Chapter 4 would prove to be merely numbers. The survey and the personal interviews, therefore, bring a touch of humanity to the “impersonalness” of the statistics.

The life of a United Methodist Elder can be extremely busy, and one season seems to follow another season. Advent gives way to Epiphany, followed quickly by Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Ordinary Time. Soon, it is time for Advent once again. Combined with the various reports, meetings (local church, district and conference wide), the methodical rhythm of hospital visits, counseling sessions, classes/Bible studies, funerals and nursing home/shut-in visitation, those called to full-time, ordained ministry have very little down time.

For an Elder the closest thing to a break comes at the very end of the calendar year and the beginning of the new one, just before the Year End Report is due into the Conference Office. The author of this paper chose this short, two-week period to send out a survey to the Elders of the North Georgia Annual Conference. The Board of Elders agreed to co-sponsor this survey, lending validity and authenticity to the survey instrument. After discussion with the Board, it was decided that those who received the survey would be more apt to

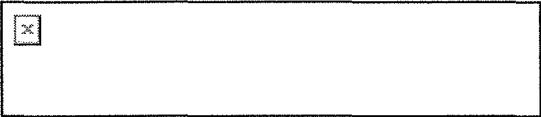
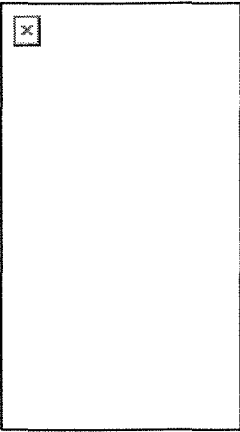
respond if they understood that this was more than just a survey for a Doctor of Ministry project. The only stipulation that The Board of Elders placed upon the survey was that they be allowed to examine it prior to being sent out, and that the results be shared with the Board. The author of this paper agreed to and carried out both conditions.

On December 28, 2006, the survey was sent out via email to the listing of all the Elders who had an email address on file with the Annual Conference. Results were received until February 10, 2007, after which three more responses arrived but were not included in the results of the survey. A total of approximately 425 requests were sent out,<sup>148</sup> and prior to the cut-off date, 241 responses were received. All of the data and percentages are, therefore, based upon that number of received responses. The survey was accomplished by including a link in the email to the recipients. The Elders only had to click on the link to be taken directly to the survey's web site. On the web site, the Elders responded by clicking various boxes and then "submit." This approach was taken in order to make it as simple and painless as possible for the respondents, and thereby, hopefully, receive more responses. The survey was housed by Anadynasystems.com at their Form Hosts (Remotely Hosted Secure Forms Processing) site. Notification via email was sent from Anadynastystems.com to the author of this paper each time a response was received. By logging into the site via a secure password, the author was able to view the results, which were then saved in Excel format. This was especially helpful in analyzing the results.

---

<sup>148</sup> Due to inaccurate email addresses and kickbacks the number of requests can not be absolutely verified.

Figure 15 below is a reproduction of the survey.



# Elder Survey for North Georgia Annual Conference

Done as part of DMIN Project by Charlie Green; Co-sponsored by Board of Elders

**How long since your ordination as Elder?**

- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ +20 years

For statistical purposes only

**My ordination is best described as:**

- ☐ I felt nothing
- ☐ I was mildly excited
- ☐ I was pretty pumped up
- ☐ I was very excited
- ☐ It felt like "tongues of fire"

**Today, my ministry is best described as:**

- ☐ I do my job
- ☐ I remember being excited
- ☐ Sometimes I get excited
- ☐ I can't wait to go to work
- ☐ I am "on fire"

**\*Most of my time is involved in:**

- ☐ Settling squabbles at church
- ☐ Church administration
- ☐ Paying apportionments
- ☐ Climbing ministerial ladder
- ☐ Doing God's will

Choose most important

**\*Most Elders in the Conference:**

- ☐ Have lost their enthusiasm
- ☐ Pick path of least resistance
- ☐ Do fairly well staying excited
- ☐ Are off and on about ministry
- ☐ Are led by the Holy Spirit

**\*Overall Elder's spiritual health is:**

- ☐ Non-existent
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent

**\*My personal spiritual health is:**

- ☐ Non-existent
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Excellent

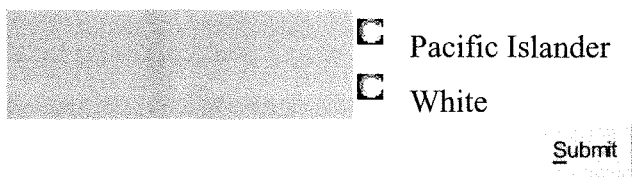
**\*I practice the Spiritual Disciplines:**

- ☐ Never
- ☐ What is Spiritual Discipline?
- ☐ Irregularly
- ☐ Most days
- ☐ Daily

One or more Discipline



<b>*A description of my prayer life</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Who has time to pray?	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whenever I feel a need for God	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Most every day	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	As a regular routine	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	I pray without ceasing	
<b>*I am involved in the spiritual practices</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sharing Group	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accountability Group	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer Partner	Choose most important
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual Direction	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	No time for such things	
<b>*Sex</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	For statistical purposes only
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	
<b>*Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired	For statistical purposes only
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Active	
<b>*Status</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Serving a local church	For statistical purposes only
	<input type="checkbox"/>	ABLC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Applicable	
<b>*Age</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 30	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-39	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	40-49	For statistical purposes only
	<input type="checkbox"/>	50-59	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	60-69	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 70	
<b>*Ethnicity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	African American/Black	For statistical purposes only
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Native American	



A survey form with a grey rectangular area on the left. To its right are two checkboxes, each followed by a label: "Pacific Islander" and "White". Below these is a "Submit" button.

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ White

Powered by [FormHosts.com](http://FormHosts.com)

Figure 15. Elder Survey for the North Georgia Annual Conference of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church

## Results of the Survey

The survey results illuminated the notion of a problem with Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference and their spiritual connectedness. Before discussing the problem, we need to understand the makeup of the respondents.

The vast majority of the respondents were male, with only slightly more than 20% of the respondents being female. The total numbers of males and females in the Annual Conference coincides with the number of respondents (see figures 16 and 17 below). According to the Director of Ministerial Services via a telephone conversation with the author of this paper, there are 1033 ordained Elders in the Conference. 152 are female and 881 are male.

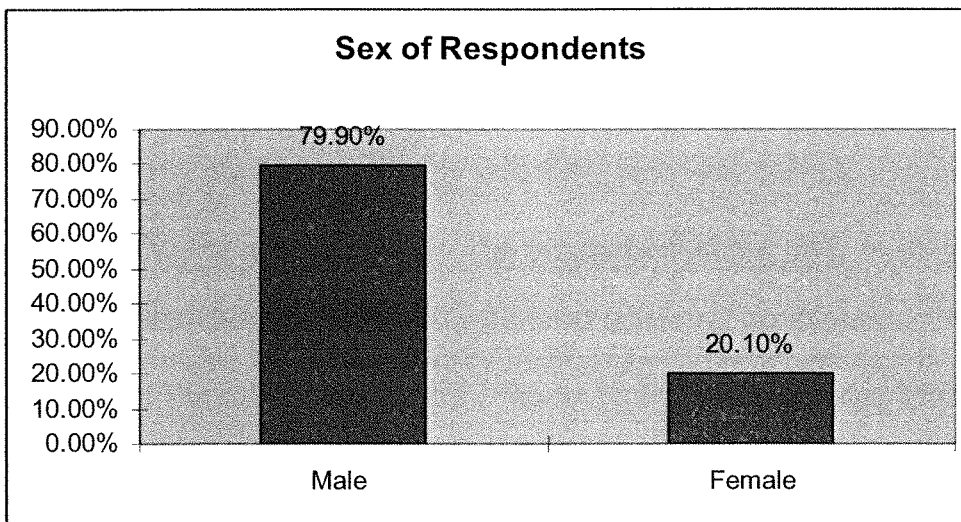


Figure 16. Sex of Respondents

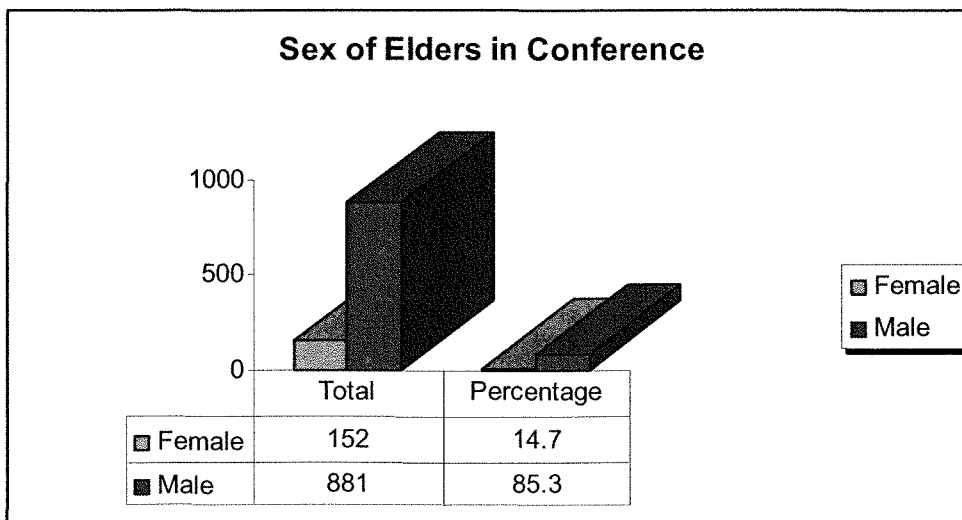


Figure 17. Sex of Elders in the Annual Conference

The survey respondents represented the various age groups that make up the Elders of the Annual Conference, as figure 18 shows. Almost 56% of the Elders who responded are between the ages of 40-59. Adding the respondents in the 60-69 group brings the percentage soars to 82.5. The extremes in age (over seventy and between thirty and thirty-nine) are correspondingly small when compared to the overall trends. The 6.6 percent in the thirty to thirty-nine range demonstrates that the Annual Conference is having trouble attracting young people into the ordained ministry. Figure 18 illustrates the age breakdown.

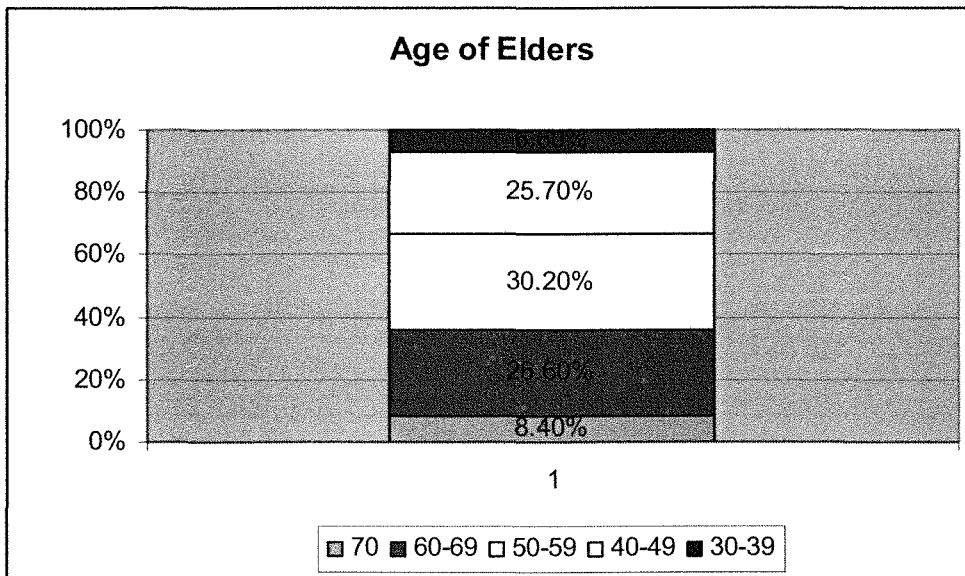


Figure 18. Age of Respondents

When asked, “How long since your ordination as an Elder?” over half of those who responded had more than twenty years of service. The “less than ten year group” accounted for 23 percent of the respondents. These numbers demonstrate the wealth of experience that is represented by the respondents, and should lend validity to the questions about spiritual health. Figure 19, Years of Service, shows these results.

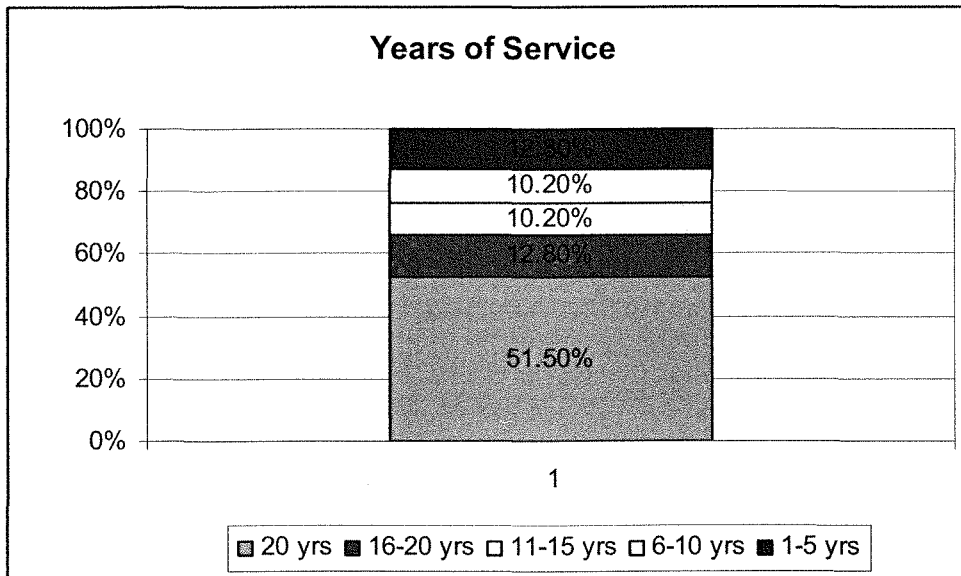


Figure 19. Years of Service

Those who responded are more than just veterans in serving the Church; they are actively involved in serving the local church. Over 75 percent of them are currently serving as pastors within a local church setting; as opposed to those in other settings—ABLC (appointment beyond the local church) and N/A (serving in some other form or fashion), as evidenced by figure 20.

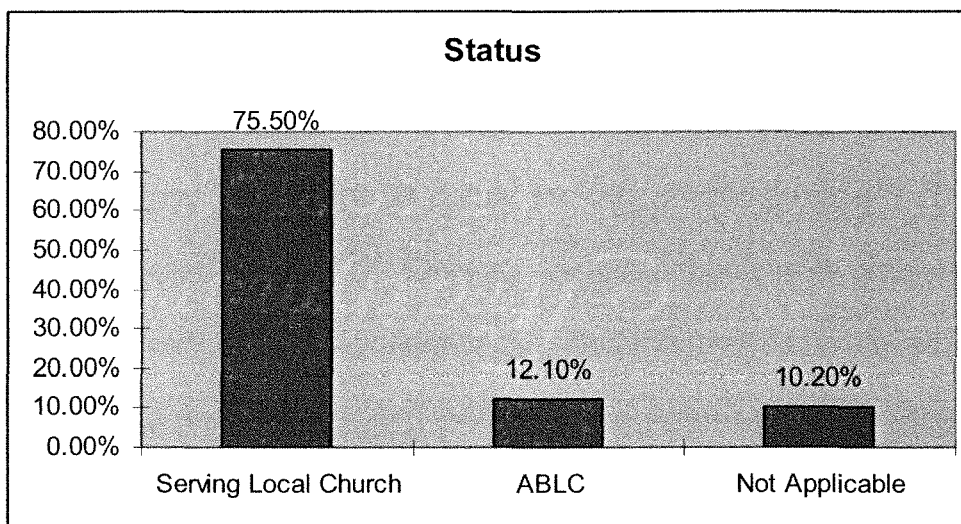


Figure 20. Status of Elders

At 82 percent, the majority of the respondents are active in ministry; as opposed to the 18 percent that serve in the retired status (see figure 21). These figures lend support to the validity of this paper’s understanding of spiritual health within the Conference, since so many of them are currently serving in active ministry. This is not to denigrate those who are retired, but merely to point out that the issue of “selective memory” is not as large a factor as it might be otherwise implied. See Figure 21 below.

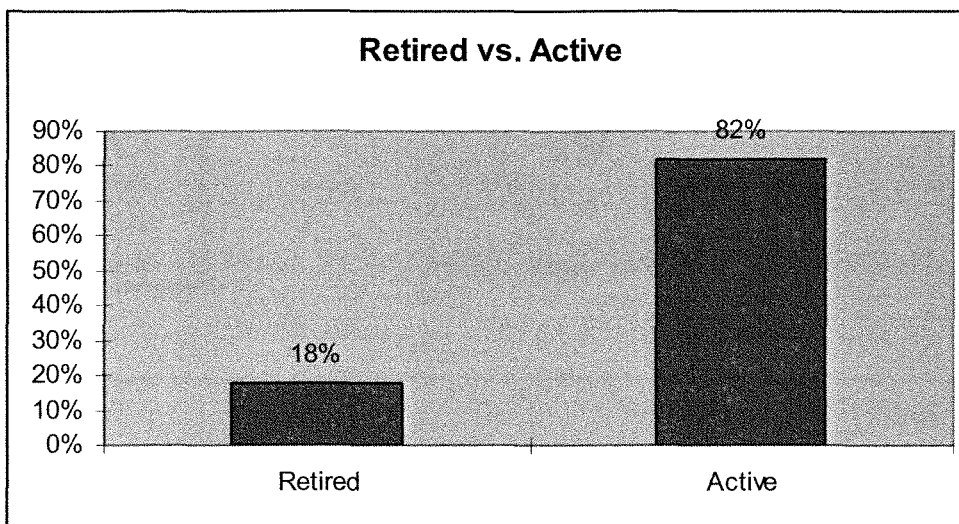


Figure 21. Retirees vs. Actives

The racial breakdown of respondents to totals is another story entirely. As seen in figures 22, 23, and 24 below, the overwhelming response leader was the category called “whites.”<sup>149</sup> Ethnicity, then, is a much more problematic area. Only 7 percent of the respondents classified themselves as something other than “white”. 5.5 percent classified themselves as African American/Black, while only

---

<sup>149</sup> The classifications listed are the same as the Year End Annual Report categories that are filled out by each pastor for the local charge.

1 Asian, 1 Hispanic and 2 Native Americans responded. At least a part of the problem is that the vast majority of non-whites, who serve in ministry in the Annual Conference, serve in some other capacity than Elder.<sup>150</sup> The author of this paper believes that the overall numbers are similar enough that the survey would be valid.

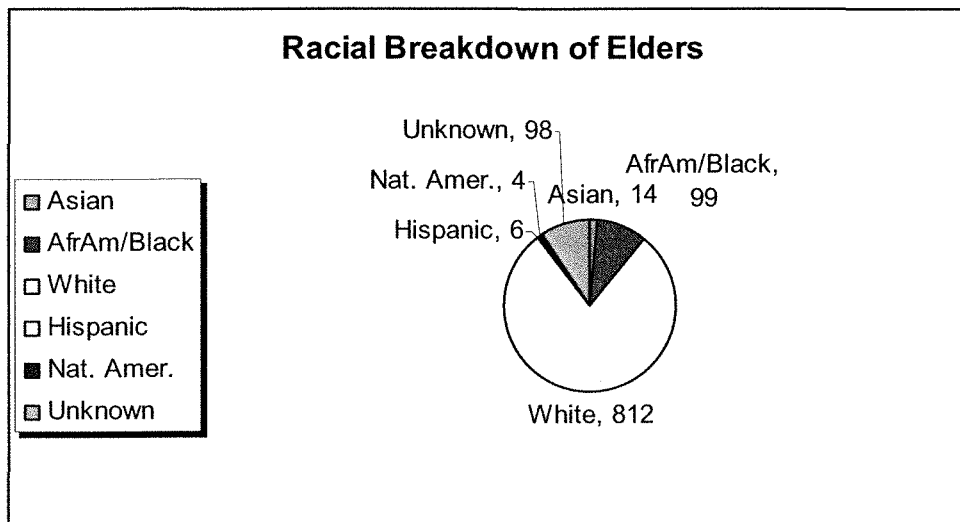
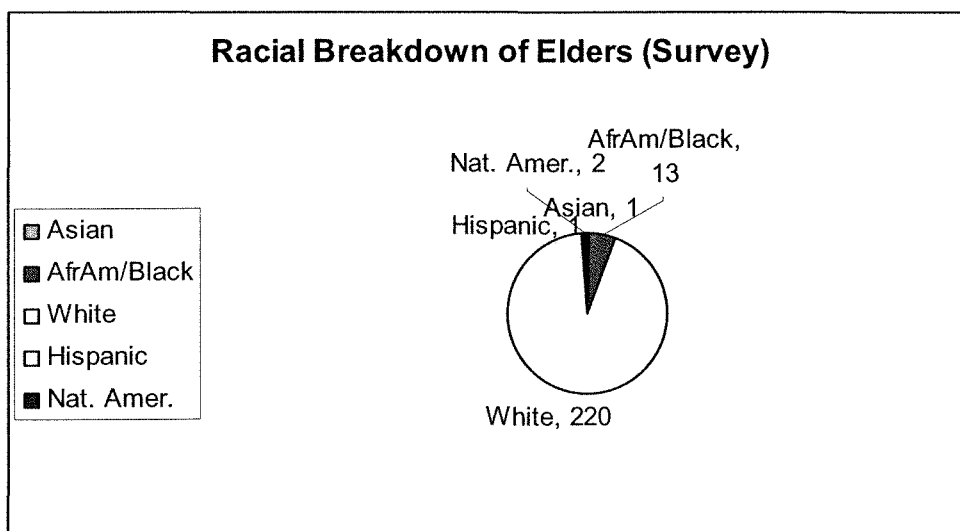


Figure 22. Racial Breakdown of Elders in the Annual Conference



<sup>150</sup> Figures received from the Annual Conference Office show that Local Pastors (both full and part-time) are as follows: Asian—25% local; African American/Black—32.0% local; Hispanic—50% local; White—16.9% local.



Figure 23. Racial Breakdown of Respondents

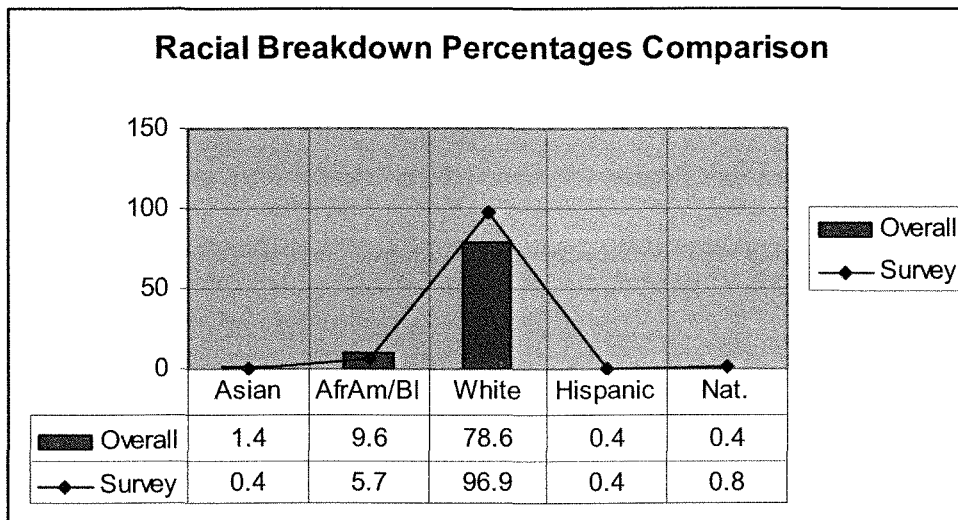


Figure 24. Racial Breakdown Percentages Comparison

According to the survey, at ordination most of the Elders in the Conference admitted to a real sense of excitement, while only one Elder claimed to have felt nothing at the time the Bishop set them apart for ordained ministry. Those who claimed being “very excited” added to those who felt a re-creation of the Pentecost Experience<sup>151</sup> accounted for seven out of ten of the respondents, as shown in figure 25. In the author of this paper’s personal experience, excitement and enthusiasm are present at the ordination service. It is the one evening service that the author attends “religiously” each year during Annual Conference, and the Ordination Service is the best attended of all of the evening services.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Acts 2:1ff.

<sup>152</sup> Attendance figures from 2007 Annual Conference Evening Services are as follows: Monday, Ordination Service—2262; Tuesday Evening Worship—1005; Wednesday Evening Business Session—1388; Thursday Evening Worship 576. These figures are from the Conference Office, and are based on physical counts.

There is, of course, no way to prove that the excitement of the evening comes from something other than merely the completion of a long and arduous journey; however, the author of this paper, after having attended twenty-five of these services, and having personally discussed the topic with more than one-hundred ordinands, can categorically state that the “genuine” call from God IS a huge factor in the excitement of the evening.

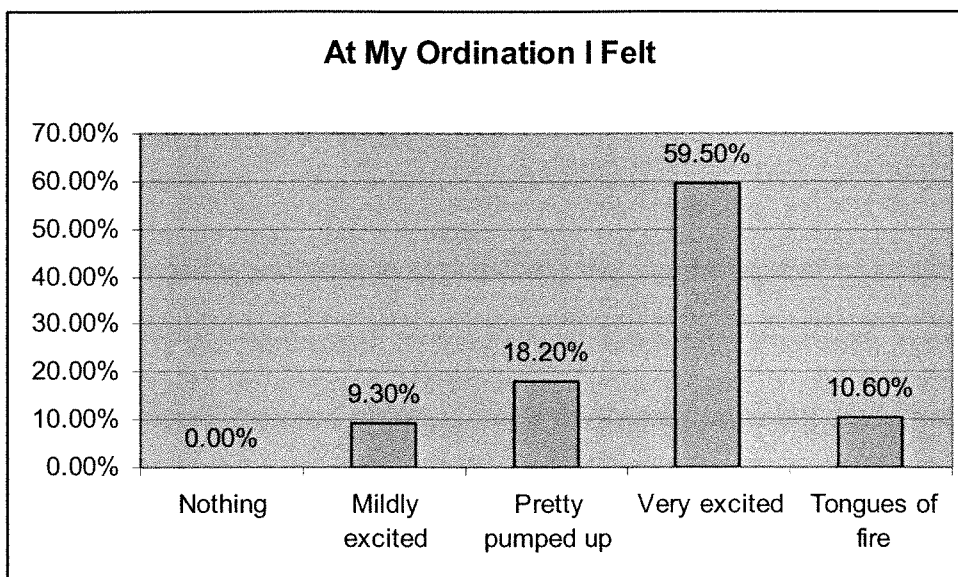


Figure 25. Responses to “At My Ordination I Felt”

Figure 26 illustrates responses to the spiritual health questions and provides insights into what has happened to Elders since ordination. Two out of three rate their personal spiritual health as “good”. 14.2 percent go so far as to invoke “excellent” when describing their spiritual health, while fewer than 20 percent rank themselves as “fair” or “poor” when it comes to their personal spiritual health.

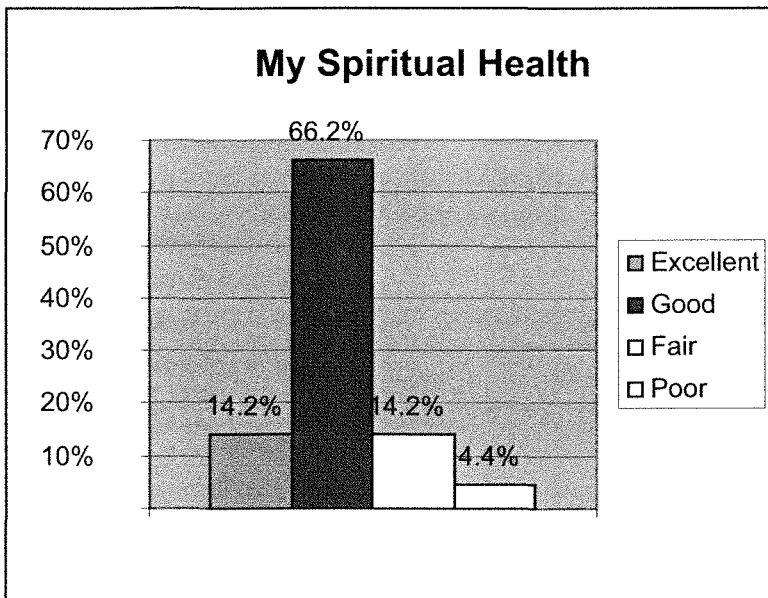


Figure 26. Responses to “My Spiritual Health”

Part of the problem in maintaining the excitement of ordination may be explained by the perception of the Elders concerning their own ministries. Approximately 5 percent of respondents admitted to being discouraged and unexcited, and those who claimed real excitement (“can’t wait to go to work” and “on fire”) comprise slightly over 50 percent of the respondents (figure 27). Taken at face value, these figures would seem to indicate that the spiritual health of Elders in the Conference is very good. The perception of the Elders concerning themselves, however, is not the whole of the story, as will be pointed out shortly.

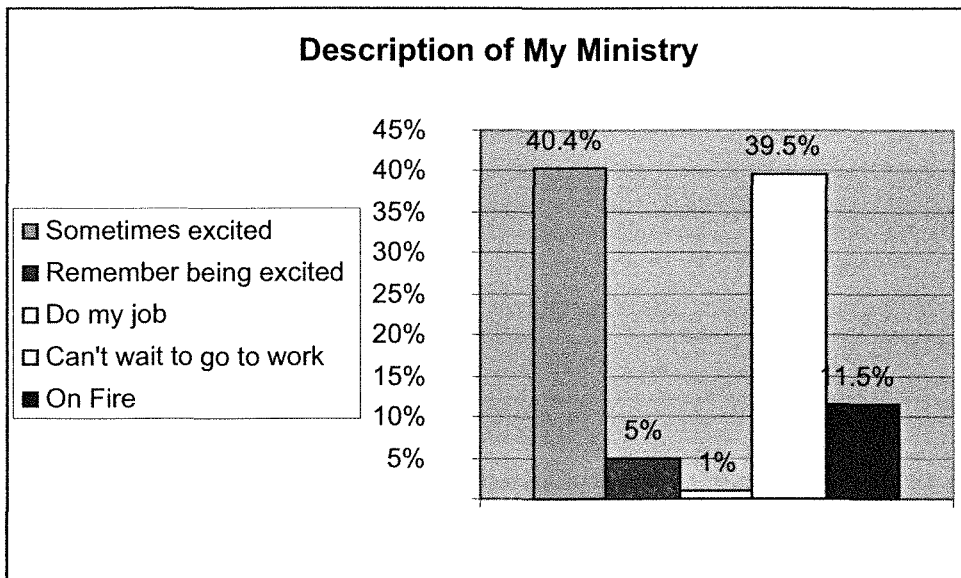


Figure 27. Responses to “Description of My Ministry”

When asked what occupies most of their time one-third of respondents admitted that the majority of their time was taken up by doing things other than “doing God’s will”. The results indicate that church administration (consuming most of the ministry time of so many respondents) could also be a major factor in the ministry time of all Elders. As was pointed out in Chapter 1 church administration can have a positive impact upon the life of the Elder, but not if it prevents the Elder from “doing God’s will.” See figure 28.

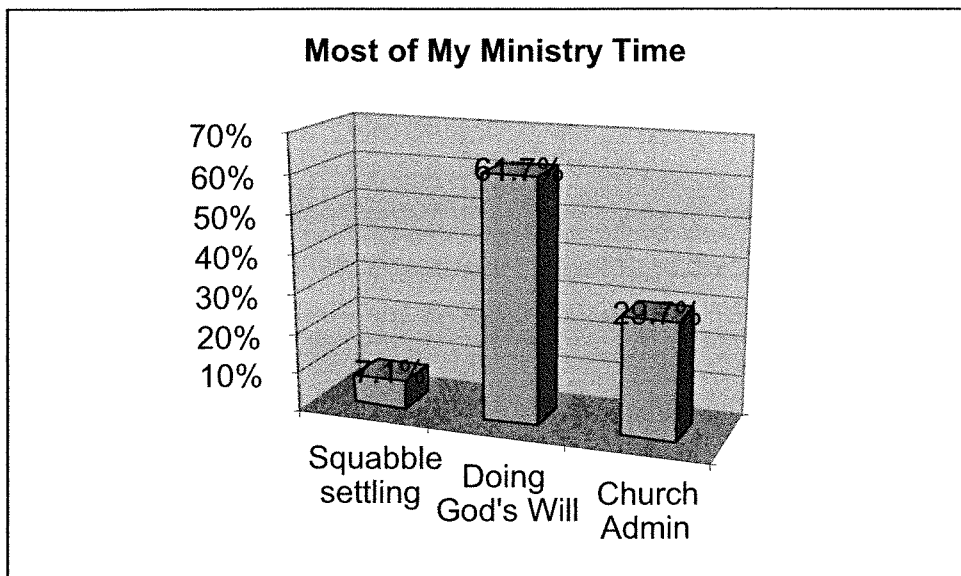


Figure 28. Response to “Most of My Ministry Time”

Another factor in the loss of enthusiasm can be found in the fact that only slightly more than one in five of the respondents practice the spiritual disciplines on a daily basis (figure 29). Only one Elder checked the “never” box, but one-fourth of the respondents admitted to participating in the spiritual disciplines on an irregular basis. This paper asserts that without staying in touch with the One who excited the ordinand in the first place, a sense of separation, isolation and a “Lone Ranger Mentality” can and does develop. As was pointed out in the Chapter 1, this is the foundation of burnout.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>153</sup> See especially pages 6, 8 and 9.

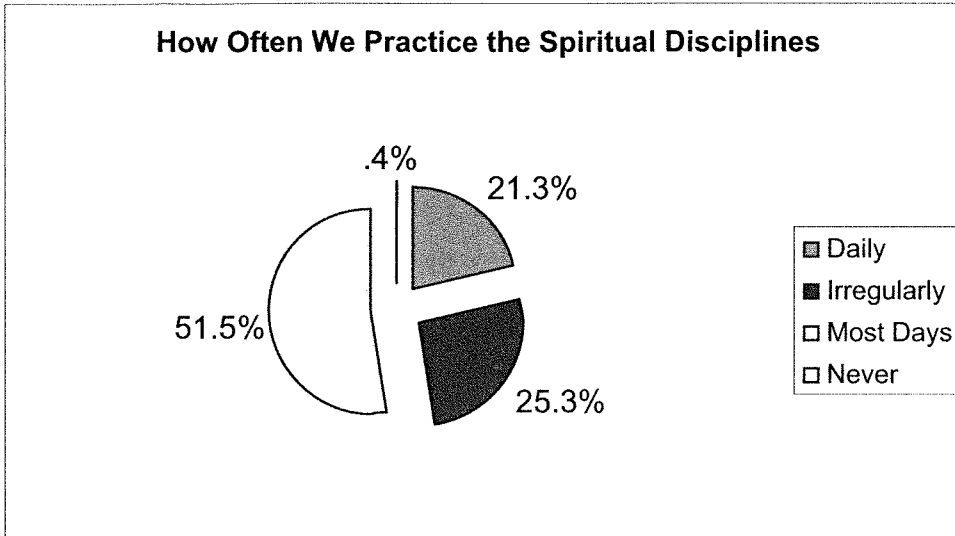


Figure 29. Responses to "How Often We Practice the Spiritual Disciplines"

Figure 30 demonstrates that 15.5 percent admitted that they had "no time for such things" as spiritual disciplines (figure 30). Of those who did claim one of the offered choices, these are practiced on "most days" at best. The author of this paper believes that this lack of discipline for the spiritual is a major factor in the loss of excitement. As described earlier, if one does not stay connected to the One who called, and practices a "Lone Ranger" type of ministry, problems may develop.

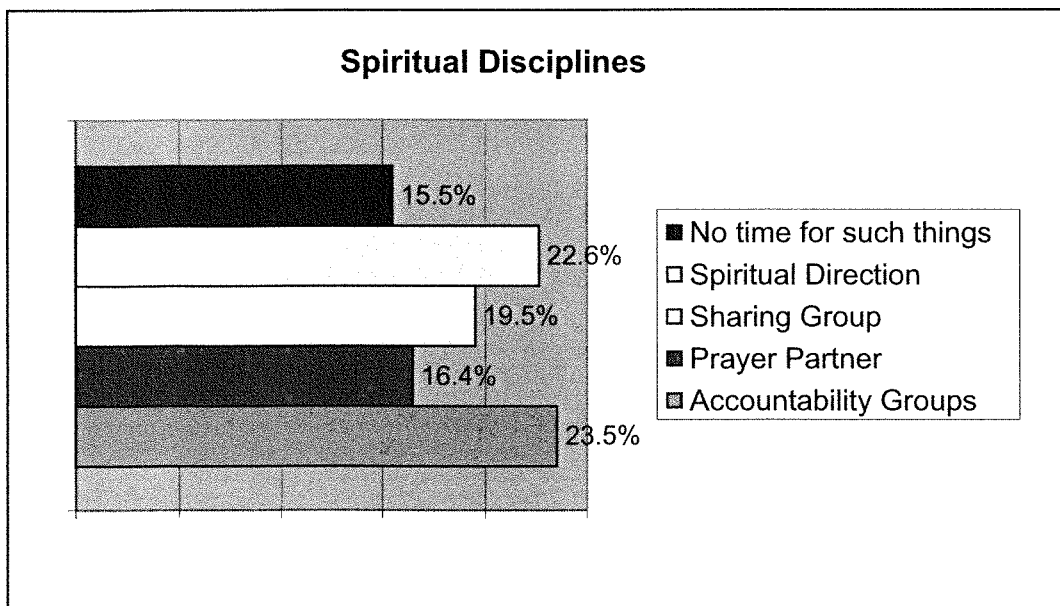


Figure 30. Spiritual Disciplines Practiced by Respondents

When asked to be specific about their prayer lives, the responding Elders were less than convincing about the regularity of this part of maintaining their excitement about being set apart to “Take thou authority as an elder in the Church to preach the Word of God, and to administer the holy Sacraments in the congregation. AMEN”<sup>154</sup> Approximately one-third called prayer part of their “regular routine”, and less than one-fourth classified their prayer lives as in keeping with the injunction of Paul to the Church at Thessalonica.<sup>155</sup> See Figure 31 for details. Proverbs 29:18 (TMWB) says it best when it says, “If people can’t see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.”

<sup>154</sup> Church, T M, *The Book of Worship for Church and Home*, 48.

<sup>155</sup> Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV)

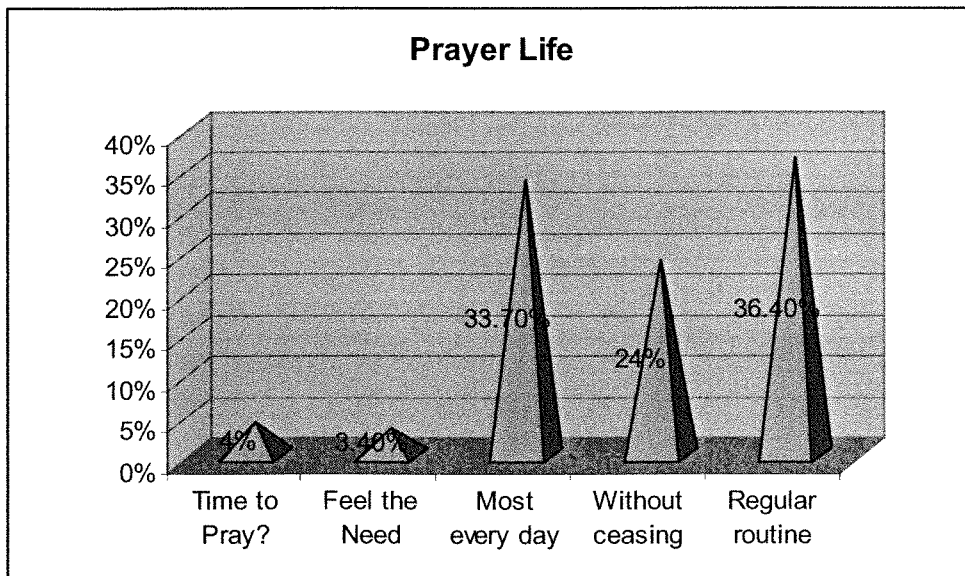


Figure 31. Prayer Life of Respondents

Although the responding Elders ranked their personal spiritual health as pretty good, they judged the rest of the Elders in the Conference more negatively (Figure 32). According to their rankings, nearly two-third of Elders are not in the “good” or “excellent” category (figure 32). Perhaps this also speaks to the “judgmental” attitude that Bill and Sue were talking about. A competition factor between Elders can account for some of this, particularly after persons have been in ministry for a while and they begin to see others “getting ahead.”

Comparing these figures with the personal spiritual health of the Elders who responded, one is struck by the fact that the respondents seem to say, “I’m okay, but I’m not so sure about my brother and sister Elders!” 70 percent of the respondents view their personal spiritual health as good to excellent; while only slightly more than one-third reported that the health of the rest of the Elders is in the same category.



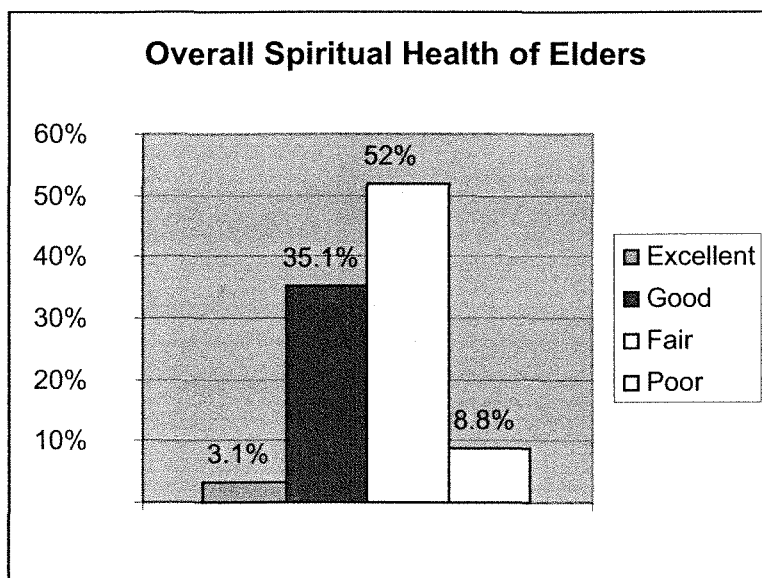


Figure 32. Overall Spiritual Health of Elders

When asked to be specific about the brothers and sisters who make up the Order of Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference, respondents were even less enthusiastic (figure 33). Nearly three in five gave less than flattering ratings, with almost 28 percent combined into the “lost enthusiasm” and “picking the path of least resistance” categories. One-third of the respondents ranked the other Elders in the “off and on” group that John the Revelator used to describe the Church at Laodicea and decried it as being worthy of expulsion from the Kingdom of God.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>156</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Revelation 3:16 (RSV).

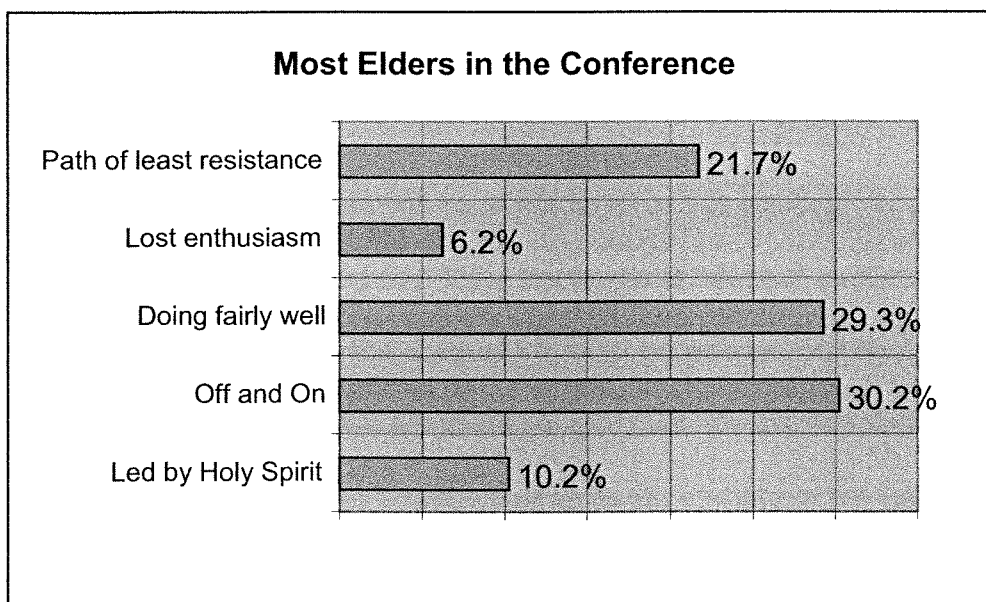


Figure 33. Response to “Most Elders in the Conference”

This survey does not get at the notion of isolation and the “Lone Ranger” mentality being a contributing factor towards the loss of spiritual connection, since the survey does not include those who have left the ministry for various reasons. In order to establish some basis for this contention, which is a huge part of this thesis, it will be necessary to rely upon personal interviews that the author of this paper has had with some former Elders who have surrendered their credentials, as well as some who have successfully maintained a sense of connection throughout a ministry. Much care must be observed in this process to maintain the anonymity of the subjects.

## Interviews with Those Who Have Left

Four former Elders will be considered in this section. They will be referred to by number in order to keep them anonymous. A brief explanation of their situation will help to set the context. It must be pointed out again that the purpose of this exercise is to establish credibility for the conclusions of this dissertation; not to cause speculation as to the identity of the persons, nor to reopen old wounds. Each of these persons has been known well by the author of this paper, and these interviews have been conducted over a long period of time, rather than in response to this dissertation.

Subject number one is a middle-aged male who was pastoring a growing congregation until he decided to leave his wife and two children, give up his pastorate, and “run away” with a member of the church staff. Subject number two was a similar male who had taken an established church through a dynamic growth spurt that was the “envy” of many of his peers. He was arrested for the solicitation of a “prostitute”, who turned out to be an undercover police officer. Number three was similar in age to the others, but he was very different in that one day he just decided that he had had enough, and he walked away from his ministry. There were no morals charges or marital problems. He just got tired, as he said, “of playing the game.” Number four was much younger than the others, and he was within five years of having completed seminary. After falling victim to temptation and fathering a child out of wedlock, this single man decided to pursue honorable location for a period of time to “get my life straightened out.”

Eventually, after having tried and failed to return to the “system,” he moved away and was removed from the ranks of the Elders by vote of the Annual Conference.

Each of these former Elders admitted to having felt a sense of excitement and accomplishment upon receiving their ordination. They all stated that there was “no question” that God had called them to full time ministry. Numbers one and two had progressed far enough into their careers that a very bright future seemed in store for them. All four of them admitted that they were extremely disappointed with the United Methodist Church. It was “holding them back,” and the system was preventing them from “achieving all that they were capable of achieving.”

When asked about the number of friends that they had in the Annual Conference, numbers three and four were quick to admit that they had very few. Although numbers one and two were very popular within the Conference, and stated that they were “friendless” since their departure; both of them confessed that they had no one with whom they could discuss the precipitating issues that led to their presenting problems. Each one stated that they did, in fact, “wish that there had been someone with whom to share.”

The question of spiritual disciplines was raised with each of the subjects, and the results were illuminating. Number one admitted that he had long since stopped any such efforts; although he maintained that all along he did pray and continues to do so even now. Number two confessed that he had pretty much stopped reading Scripture except for sermon preparation, had not prayed in quite a while except as part of his duties, and had not discussed the urges which led to

his demise with anyone at all. Number three stated that the whole notion of prayer had left him a long time ago, and that he was no longer even sure that God existed. Subject number four stated that he started out a “zealot” for maintaining his connection with God, but that as his isolation from the Church and the other Elders continued he also lost touch with the God who had seemed so real at the altar of the Church where he was ordained.

These four former Elders all spent time talking about their feelings of having been overlooked for promotions that “they deserved.” Each of them went out of their way to talk about someone who was a “fair haired boy,” and had been given the appointment that they had wanted (“and deserved”), and that they could have done so very much with that particular church, perhaps even remaining in ministry if they had been given “that” appointment.

Every one of these subjects confessed that they were “loners” when it came to the actual work of ministry. They each told about how they understood the concept of the “priesthood of all believers,” but they were unable to put it into practice.

Each one of these former Elders professed a sincere desire to have a chance to do it all over again. They admitted that the dreams, the vision, and the hope that God had given them at their ordination had been supplanted by other desires and plans. When pressed, they all agreed that a loss of accountability was a huge part of their demise.

## Interviews with Those Who Have Maintained Connection

This section will report the results of interviews with four current Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference. Once again, in an attempt at anonymity, the identity of the interviewees will be masked by referring to them as A, B, C and D. These four Elders have a total of approximately 95 years of service to the Conference. All of them are in their 50's, except subject B who is in his late 40's, and they all started their ministerial careers fairly early in their lives. All are married, with children, and only subject C has a second wife (he being a widower at a young age).

Subject A is close to 60 years of age, and has been a member of the Conference longer than any of the others. He began working in churches at a very young age as a musician, and even served as Music Director before “yielding to the overwhelming call of God” to go to seminary and become an Elder. He struggled longer than any of the others, and as such, was the oldest of the four to start and finish seminary. He has been very successful in his ministry, and today serves a very large “flagship” church in the Conference.

Subject B attended seminary not long after finishing college. He felt his call early in life, and struggled only briefly with the decision to enter seminary. He is the youngest of the four. His appointments have been a steady progression of larger and larger churches. He has a reputation of being one of those who is happy wherever he is placed.<sup>157</sup> He is currently serving a large, suburban, rapidly growing church in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

---

<sup>157</sup> Told to the author of this paper by a District Superintendent in a personal conversation.

Subject C struggled with his call mightily, albeit briefly. His ministry has not included serving the largest churches in the Conference. As pointed out before, he lost his wife early in his ministerial career. He remarried within a few years, but the travail of dealing with grief (for him and his two children), as well as the exertion of establishing a new home and marriage, caused him to lag behind many of his colleagues in “climbing the ministerial ladder.” Today he is serving a small church in a rural county of North Georgia.

Subject D was a “golden boy” from the very beginning of his career. He entered seminary directly after college, having made the decision to become an Elder while in high school. He has been remarkably successful in his career, with only one minor setback in his steady climb to serving larger and larger churches. Today he serves a very large church, and is seen by most as a potential candidate for District Superintendent.

When asked about their calling and their excitement at being ordained, all four of the subjects confessed to having filled out the survey as those who felt *tongues of fire* “from the fingertips of the Bishop on the night he placed hands upon their heads.” Without fail, they admitted to experiencing a sense of accomplishment about their ordination, at having achieved that to which God had placed before them as a goal. The most telling results came in that each one of them stated that they feel that same sense of excitement today at the thought of being “allowed” to serve God for the 20 plus years that each of them have been actively involved in ministry. Another interesting tidbit is that each of them stated

that they attend the Ordination Service at the Annual Conference meeting each year, as a matter of course and as a reminder of their ordination vows.

The “friendship question” was put to these four subjects, and to a man they professed to having their closest friends within the bounds of the Annual Conference. They all described the Annual Conference as “their church.” Three of the four shared that when they had lost a loved one, it was the calls, the cards and the prayers of their brothers and sisters in the Conference that sustained them through their ordeal. All four offered that they are currently, and have been throughout their careers, members of accountability groups. They all attributed their longevity to these groups of friends and colleagues that forced them to stay focused upon the reason for their ministries.

Each one of the subjects professed an understanding and a participation in the concept of “sharing the load of ministry” with the laity of the local church to which they have been assigned. They all stated that they learned this lesson early in their careers, and that it has helped them immensely throughout their journey “on to perfection.”

Each of the subjects professed to participation in the spiritual disciplines on a regular basis. A and C talked about the importance of a regular time of prayer and the many different methods and means by which they prayed. Subject B told of spiritual reading as his means of staying in touch. He described devotional reading as well as reading of the Scriptures as being responsible for his ability to overcome dissension and disappointment. Subject D was less



specific concerning spiritual disciplines, but he insisted that only by staying in touch with God was he able to go from day to day.

When asked about feelings of jealousy among the Elders in the Conference, each of the subjects confessed to feeling some twinges of jealousy over someone else's good appointment, but they were also quick to point out that they overcame these feelings by remembering that God had called them to be faithful and not successful. The differences between these four subjects and the four who left the ministry were stark and obvious.

In summary, these four subjects seemed to have maintained their sense of "connectedness" throughout their ministries. All four had problems, set backs and obstacles to overcome, and none of them could be described as having achieved perfection. It was illuminating, however, in that when asked to describe their ministries in theological terms, each of them quoted Hebrews 6:1, Therefore let us go on toward perfection (NRSV).

## Conclusions Drawn from the Survey and Interviews

Many Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference enter ministry with a real sense of excitement, enthusiasm and expectation for what the Lord has in store for them. Some, as has been pointed out, however, abandon their plans and hopes for a future filled with God and one that is destined to change the world. Roy M. Oswald describes the situation for clergy in general:

We clergy begin our ministries with high hopes and high energy. In our enthusiasm we may have unrealistic expectations and begin to over-identify with the job. This can lead to stagnation, a phase in which personal, financial, and career development needs begin to be felt. When we begin to question whether our efforts are worth anything, we become frustrated. Frustration is a crossroad that can lead us back to enthusiasm (through a constructive rechanneling of energy). We may go through the cycle from enthusiasm to frustration many times in our careers. But frustration can also degenerate into apathy, an abyss of chronic indifference that defies most intervention. Frustration may enable us to learn how to cope with our limitations, but when we sink into apathy, we have fallen prey to burnout.<sup>158</sup>

The author of this paper believes that some Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference lose much of their excitement and enthusiasm when they forsake the One who called them into ministry in the first place. As one pastor states, "Over time, parish ministry drained me spiritually, rather than uplifting me. I had not been taught the pathways out of the desert of spiritual emptiness, even though I was seen by my parishioners as the expert on spirituality."<sup>159</sup>

Specifically, many Elders have stopped having regular prayer time or

---

<sup>158</sup> Oswald, Roy M., *Clergy Self Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*, (New York, The Alban Institute, 1991), 69.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 93.

practicing any of the spiritual disciplines, and by so doing have joined the trend that seems to be sweeping through the clergy, according to Michael Jinkins' survey conducted through Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in 2000-2001. He states, "Pastors consistently saw Bible study and prayer as crucial resources for personal and professional wholeness and effectiveness....and 51 percent do not have 'disciplined or scheduled times for prayer.'" <sup>160</sup> Perhaps James L. Schierling said it best:

Even when the commitment is made to spend time with God, the interruptions of a telephone call, a visitor, or an immediate crisis can take him away. Even when a plan is worked out for uninterrupted time, the pastor may go for a week straight without missing, then the following week miss seven for seven. Then, there are the dry periods where, at best, the Bible puts him to sleep and at worst, it appears empty and irrelevant. <sup>161</sup>

Issues such as jealousy, too much emphasis on "other" things, a "Lone Ranger" mentality, and a lack of practice of the spiritual disciplines factor into the loss of enthusiasm felt at ordination. One factor that has shown itself boldly in this survey and the interviews is the lack of accountability. Without having anyone to tell the Elder what to do and when to do it, many become lazy and lose sight of the goal that was so clear at ordination. A problem can occur when this is combined with losing "connectedness" with God who is the beginning and the end of this process.

---

<sup>160</sup> Jinkins, Michael, "Great Expectations, Sobering Realities: Findings from a New Study on Clergy Burnout", *Congregations* (May/June, 2002), 221.

<sup>161</sup> Schierling, James L., 1987, *Stress Management for Pastors*, DMin diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 125.

The personal interviews, particularly with those who managed to maintain connectedness throughout their ministry, have helped to show in dramatic fashion the results of holding on tightly to the calling that one feels at the beginning of the process. It is an “acting out” of Paul’s admonition to the Church at Philippi: I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.<sup>162</sup> Overcoming the sense of isolation, practicing the spiritual disciplines on a consistent basis, and participating in accountability groups has worked for the interviewees, and needs to be included in any solution that is offered.

An admission and confession is in order at this point. The survey of the Elders was far from a perfect instrument when it came to proving a lack of spiritual connection. It did, however, give us glimpses into the problem, and it provided some insights that would otherwise not be possible. The addition of personal interviews has helped to look at issues that are hard to quantify in a survey. The author of this paper believes that the case has been made, and that the time has come to make some conclusions and recommendations for ways to correct the problem.

---

<sup>162</sup> Philippians 3:14 (NRSV)

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A real problem exists among Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. A few years after the excitement and the enthusiasm of the ordination service that sets them apart as clergy many Elders experience a sense of drudgery and despair that causes them to become mired in institutionalism and routines. The fire that seemed to fly from the hands of the Bishop while the ordinand was kneeling at the altar, can give way to a cold chill that comes from the struggles to achieve everything that is expected and demanded and have something profound, unique and inspiring to say come Sunday morning. The “strangely warmed heart” that Wesley spoke about concerning his Aldersgate Experience is replaced by an “ice-cubed kidney” that quickly spreads to the other organs of the body until the clergy person soon becomes robotic in his/her functions and activities. The sense of the inspired call of the newly ordained is replaced by a sense of duty and drudgery that seems to pervade everything and everywhere.

A lack of excitement and “connectedness” can cause many to fall victim to temptations that rob them of the joy of ministry. Some fall into moral dilemmas that only a few years ago would have been unthinkable. Some resort to an “acting out” of aggression and apathy that change them from persons who live

out Jesus' Great Commandment<sup>163</sup> to those who are selfish, snappy and struggling. Not all fall from the pedestal of ministerial effectiveness, but virtually all do suffer from a sense of isolation and doubt. A real problem exists.

This paper has documented and addressed this problem. After stating the problem and dealing with the concept of burnout in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 showed the Biblical basis for the struggle and the possibilities that exist for maintaining connection. Chapter 3 explored the historical and theological issues surrounding the problem, and included the fact that heirs to the Wesleyan Movement have struggled since the days of John Wesley, and that Wesley's means of grace has helped to maintain connectedness. Chapter 4 then looked at the problem in terms of what has happened in North Georgia over the past twelve years and illustrated the existence of a struggle. Chapter 5 examined a survey of the Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference along with some personal interviews of both those who dropped out of the system and those who have been successful in maintaining the spiritual connection which demonstrated that the problem is real and present, even if some survey respondents felt as if everyone else suffers while they are immune.

N. Graham Standish, in his book, *Becoming a Blessed Church*, summed up the problem that exists, not only in North Georgia, when he said:

What inhibits the formation of blessed *mainline* churches may be partly that pastors, educators, and lay leaders have been inadequately trained not only in the practicalities of church leadership, but also in the knowledge of how to tap into the power

---

<sup>163</sup> I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. John 13:34 (NRSV)

of God to guide and help them.<sup>164</sup>

This situation then leads to key questions: What can be done about the problem? Is there anything that can help to maintain that sense of call, “connectedness” and purpose that those who are young in the ordained ministry seem to possess? Is it inevitable that one loses the “fire” and becomes merely a part of the institution?

This concluding chapter examines three possible solutions to the problem. The author of this paper believes none of these suggestions, in and of themselves, will “solve” the problem of forgetfulness that permeates not only the clergy but all of the sinful, human beings that make up those whom Jesus came to save. There is no magic pill or talisman to miraculously correct the problem that has been present since the beginning. Moses, after leading the Israelites through the desert for forty years, was only allowed to see not enter the Promised Land.<sup>165</sup> Samuel wondered why God would abandon Saul and choose David.<sup>166</sup> Jeremiah wrote an entire book lamenting what God had called him to do. Paul and Barnabas could not agree over whether or not John Mark could be trusted after his “homesickness”.<sup>167</sup> Paul eventually accepted his “thorn in the

---

<sup>164</sup> Standish, N. Graham, *Becoming a Blessed Church*, (The Alban Institute, Herndon, VA, 2005), 13.

<sup>165</sup> The LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” Deuteronomy 34:4 (NRSV)

<sup>166</sup> “I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands.” Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night. 1 Samuel 15:11 (NRSV)

<sup>167</sup> Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. Acts 15:37 through Acts 15:38 (NRSV)

flesh”, but never understood it.<sup>168</sup> John Wesley, towards the end of his life, mused about that which had been created as a result of his efforts:

I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out.<sup>169</sup>

Nothing can replace God’s power to reclaim those whom God has called, commissioned and equipped to be the “voice of one crying in the wilderness.”<sup>170</sup> However, to merely state that and stop is the height of spiritual laziness. Human beings DO have a part in the struggle, and there ARE things that can and must be done in order to keep from becoming the “dead sect” about which John Wesley prophesied. Particularly as Wesleyans, we need to struggle to go “on to perfection.” Wesley, in his sermon, *The Means of Grace*, admitted to this when he said, “We allow likewise that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God.”<sup>171</sup> The following sections describe recommendations to overcome the struggle.

---

<sup>168</sup> Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 2 Corinthians 12:8 (NRSV)

<sup>169</sup> Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley: The Jackson Edition, Vol. 13-Sermons on Several Occasions, Supplementary Letters, Of Separation from the Church*, edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater, CD-ROM, 2005.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; and John 1:23.

<sup>171</sup> Wesley, *The Means of Grace*.



## Recommendation #1: Screening Candidates

As was pointed out in Chapter Four, the North Georgia Annual Conference, through the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry, overhauled the process by which candidates were approved for ordination to Elder in 2000 in response to changes in *The Book of Discipline*. The process by which one feels the call and takes it to the point where the Bishop lays hands upon the head, is a long, complicated, convoluted journey that requires the approval of the candidate's local pastor, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the local charge conference, the Committee on Ministry at the District level, the Board of Ordained Ministry at the Conference level, an affirmative vote by all the Elders gathered at Annual Conference in the Executive Session, countless answers to questions presented to the various boards and committees, a Masters of Divinity degree at an approved seminary, and a minimum of two years serving as a probationary member of the Conference.<sup>172</sup> Those who kneel before the Bishop, their District Superintendent, and other Elders who have been meaningful in their journey are persons who have completed an exhaustive process that takes a minimum of five years.

This recommendation commends the work of the Board of Ordained Ministry of the North Georgia Annual Conference, while calling upon them to go even further. Throughout this process, the spiritual condition of the candidate is

---

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Book of Discipline of the UMC, 2004*, ¶ 310-314; 324-327; 332-336.

talked about and discussed. The “connectedness” that the candidate feels with God **is** a part of the process, but the author of this paper believes that it needs to be emphasized and scrutinized more fully. The Board subjects candidates to a psychological evaluation, a criminal background check, a credit check, and an extensive examination of their theology and understanding of the polity of the United Methodist Church; however, they spend little time auditing their prayer life, their observance of the spiritual disciplines, or their deep seated commitment to live out that call through the life and work of the United Methodist Church. Until the Board can warrant that the candidates have a relationship with the Lord God that will see them through whatever obstacles or hurdles might come their way, there will be clergy who feel trapped, isolated and helpless, and who fall victim to the Linda Hileman scenario outlined below:

So often, we feel there is no one to whom we can turn. We have no pastor because the pastor cannot truly minister to her or his own family, any more than a physician can treat her or his family. Talking to the congregants, no matter how close to them we are, is out of the question; the district superintendent, no matter how understanding, is still in charge of our next move, and loathe to talk to our peers because they are as good at keeping up appearances as we, and we fear being judged inadequate or incompetent.<sup>173</sup>

Burnout can be avoided when an individual has a sense of transcendence and a spiritual depth present with them from the beginning of their ministry. An important study conducted by Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, and Rodgerson in 2004, and reported in the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, said it bluntly and categorically:

---

<sup>173</sup> Hileman, Linda S., “Keeping Up Appearances”, *Circuit Rider*, March/April 2007, 14.

It would seem that spirituality, and especially that quality which connects one with the Transcendent, does indeed tell us something about burnout among clergy that personality and work environment do not tell us. The less one feels oneself in intimate relationship with the Divine, the greater the likelihood of burnout. The implication of this is that when it comes to dealing with the work-related distress of burnout, the ability to lose oneself in prayer or meditation is different than the ability to lose oneself in other areas of life such as in a hobby or in service.<sup>174</sup>

Dr. Gwen Halaas, a medical doctor and the wife of a Lutheran Pastor, understands very well what it is like to lose that sense of call and the importance of holding on tight to that which started the entire process. She also has a unique grasp on one of the things that can be done about it. She notes:

Why then are church leaders suffering poorer health than in previous decades? Why is there more heart disease and depression? It could be that faith is taken for granted. The very reason individuals discerned a call to public ministry and to be educated and trained for that ministry has taken a backseat to the daily demands of being a leader of the congregation.<sup>175</sup>

This first recommendation calls for Elders to take seriously that faith is not to be taken for granted, because without an emphasis upon one's faith and spiritual "connectedness," a pastor may not be able to maintain the sense of call throughout a ministry of many years. Burnout can ensue, and "the responsibility for another's well-being [is] a primary source of strain leading to burnout. If that

---

<sup>174</sup> Golden, Jonathan, Ralph L. Piedmont, Joseph W. Ciarrocchi, and Thomas Rodgerson, "Spirituality and Burnout: An Incremental Validity Study", *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 2004, Vol. 32, No. 2, 115.

<sup>175</sup> Halaas, Gwen Wasstom, MD, *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2004), 60.

is indeed the case, how much greater is the strain when one ‘feels’ responsible for an entire church.”<sup>176</sup>

A 2005 study of why pastors leave the ministry, conducted by Duke University Divinity School under the auspices of the Pulpit & Pew Project, discovered that among United Methodist clergy, only 28% were satisfied with their spiritual life. This was the lowest rated category, falling far below such areas as housing, relations with others, ministry position, salary, benefits, and even support from denominational officials!<sup>177</sup> This reality indicates that a better job must be done in helping clergy (from the beginning) to hold onto a clear sense of the One who called them into ministry in the first place.

Offering a time of Spiritual Direction by trained and qualified persons could be most beneficial in the lives of those who are nearing the time of ordination. Including this time would seem to be at least as beneficial as requiring a psychological evaluation of the candidates. The addition of a time of Spiritual Direction would not significantly affect the length of time that the process requires, but it could add potent and power to the “long-lastingness” of the ordinands.

Spiritual Directors could also examine and assess the spiritual maturity of the candidates for ordination. It would seem that examining the spiritual maturity of prospective Elders would be at least as important as the examination of cancer patients. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals “requires

---

<sup>176</sup> Daniel, Stephen and Martha L. Rogers, “Burn-Out and the Pastorate: A Critical Review with Implications for Pastors”, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1981, Fall, Vol. 9, No. 3, 232.

<sup>177</sup> Hoge and Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry*, 42.

organizations to include a spiritual assessment of a patient to determine how the patient's spiritual outlook can affect his or her care."<sup>178</sup> Cancer.gov has a chart on their website showing the different options for care providers to assess the spiritual state of cancer patients, as shown below:

<b>Assessment of Religion and Spirituality in Cancer Patients Tool</b>	<b>Developer</b>	<b>Purpose/ Focus/ Subscale (No.)</b>	<b>Specific to Cancer Patients?</b>	<b>Level of Psychometric Development</b>	<b>Length/ Other Characteristics/ Comments</b>
Systems of Belief Inventory (SBI-15R) [7]	Holland et al.	Two factors: Beliefs/experience (10); religious social support (5)	Yes	High	4 items assume belief in God
DRI/DUREL [5]	Sherman et al.	Religious involvement (5)	Yes	Moderate	
FACIT-Sp [10,14]	Brady et al.; Peterman	Two factors: Meaning & peace (8), faith (4)	Yes	High. Limited cross-validation data.	Part of FACT-G quality-of-life battery [11]
Brief R-COPE [8]	Pargament et al.	Two factors: Positive coping; negative coping/distress	No	Very High	
Fetzer Multidimensional Scale [16]	Fetzer	Multiple subscales	No	High. Under development.	
FICA: Spiritual history [1]	Puchalski et al.	Brief spiritual history	No	Low	MD interview assessment
SPIRIT [15]	Maugans	In-depth interview with guided questions	No	Low	MD interview assessment

Figure 34 Cancer.gov Chart on Spiritual Assessments<sup>179</sup>

<sup>178</sup> <http://www.professionalchaplains.org/uploadedfiles/pdf/JCAHO-evaluating-your-spiritual-assessment-process.pdf>. Accessed 10/30/07

<sup>179</sup> <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/supportivecare/spirituality/HealthProfessional/page4>. Accessed 10/30/07

Would it not, therefore, make sense that the Church of Jesus Christ in commissioning those who will be dealing with issues that unlike cancer are eternal, would come up with a means by which the spiritual health of those who will be guiding the spiritual health of others be examined and evaluated?

Another subset of this recommendation could be that the Board of Ordained Ministry also assigns to probationers an Elder who has managed to maintain connectedness to serve as a mentor and guide during the probationary period. Both the probationer and mentor could then be called to sit in on a session led by some who have failed to maintain connectedness. This session could help to plant the seeds of caution concerning the pitfalls of the “lone Ranger” mentality, the importance of consistent practice of the spiritual disciplines, and the absolute necessity of finding accountability groups. This might have the same deterrent probability as the program whereby young people who are just beginning to be in trouble with the law are talked to by convicts and warned of the problems that lie ahead.

These mentors could also take their mentees and form accountability groups that would last for the duration of the probationary period. This would be an excellent opportunity for the young clergy to see accountability groups modeled.<sup>180</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> More on this in Recommendation #3.

## Recommendation #2: A Return to the Class System

As we have already seen, part of the genius of the Wesleyan Movement was the organization of the believers into groups or classes that met on a regular basis for accountability, spiritual growth and mutual support. Like most really great ideas, the class meeting and its effectiveness declined as time passed. “[T]he decline of the class meeting was due to a neglect of the works of obedience in the weekly catechesis and a growing self-pre-occupation with religious experience,”<sup>181</sup> and Wesley addressed this issue in his latter sermons and letters.<sup>182</sup>

By 1868, in Great Britain, the class meeting concept was still entrenched as a part of Methodism, but the argument was over whether or not attendance should be voluntary or mandatory.<sup>183</sup> Thomas Hughes argued for mandatory participation: “It is said, if the class-meeting ceases to be a condition of membership, the boundary of demarcation between the Church and the world will be destroyed.”<sup>184</sup> The author of this paper believes that this seems to be happening to a large segment of contemporary clergy, particularly Elders in North Georgia. A case in point would be those who no longer wear a clerical collar. In the 1970’s, Bishop William R. Cannon advocated wearing a clerical collar as “the

---

<sup>181</sup> Watson, David Lowes, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance*, 145.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Hughes, Thomas, *The Condition of Membership in the Christian Church: Viewed in Connection with the Class-Meeting System in the Methodist Body*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1868), 27.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

only way to tell the difference between a preacher and an insurance salesman.”<sup>185</sup> How **does** one pick out the preacher from a crowd?

Living out spirituality, over the long haul, is virtually impossible if clergy attempt to do it alone. One study reports:

Because our spirituality is rooted in community, it can never become a solo venture. While spirituality is very personal, it is not private. There is no ‘Lone Ranger’ spirituality. Individuals do pray, search, recognize the presence of Christ, and have transformative experiences in the Spirit, but all the aspects of spiritual development have their roots in the community of the baptized.<sup>186</sup>

The discipline, accountability and insistence upon staying in touch are the main factors of the class system that would dramatically assist clergy in maintaining that spiritual “fire in their bellies.” Knowing that someone will ask, “How are things between you and the Lord?”, on a regular basis is a great motivator to keeping the connection open and active.

This could also help in the living out of the “priesthood of all believers.” Sharing the burdens of ministry with the laity, as we have seen, is paramount to maintaining the spiritual connection that is necessary living out the calling throughout one’s life and ministry. If Elders could accomplish this, it would help in overcoming the “Lone Ranger” mentality that has proven detrimental to many.

This recommendation would be a most difficult task to accomplish, because Elders today have so many competing demands upon their time, that if the Annual Conference insisted that all of them participate in class meetings, the

---

<sup>185</sup> Overheard by the author of this paper from Bishop Cannon during a class in 1985.

<sup>186</sup> Johnson, Ben Campbell and Andrew Drieter, *Beyond the Ordinary: Spirituality for Church Leaders*, (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 12.



reaction would be swift and less than hoped for. It is conceivable that the Conference Office could recommend the starting of class meeting groups among the clergy, and assist in the establishment of the same. Mandatory meetings, however, would be counter productive, as many Elders would view it as “meddling” by the Conference, and complain about a lack of time. Even now, when the Bishop calls all the clergy to join for an annual day of spiritual growth, there are choruses of complaints raised throughout the ranks of the ordained.

Realistically, however, something that is not mandatory can get “lost” in the crush of all of the other duties of the local church pastor. There are so very many things that MUST be done, that a *suggestion* would, most likely, be ignored. The author of this paper believes that this recommendation is important, but, realistically, Elders would be torn between knowing what to do and how to do it, and actually living out that which needs to be done; much like most all know that they need to involve the laity more in the actual work of the ministry, but insist upon being involved in most everything that happens in the life of the local church.

One way to get at the implementation of this recommendation without “forcing” something upon the already over-worked Elders might be to emphasize the reintroduction of the class system within the life of the local churches. A time of study of the historicity and the effectiveness of the class system in Wesley’s day, along with a “suggestion” that this might improve the spiritual connection of the members of the church, could lead the clergy to the realization that this would be a great idea for them to do for themselves. If it became the idea of the Elder,

and not something forced upon them, it would have a much greater chance of being implemented. The paradoxical aspect of this recommendation is why it is so necessary that the third recommendation is offered.

### Recommendation #3: Accountability Groups

This recommendation is key to addressing this paper's problem, because it comes from the individuals involved and is not a mandate from the Conference. It requires nothing other than a desire to maintain "connectedness." Elders can accomplish finding some kind of accountability group that will hold them to the task of remembrance of why they entered full-time ministry in the first place. These groups can take various forms and functions, but must emphasize accountability. They would be, in fact, the Wesleyan Class System with a twenty-first century twist.

According to a 1979 survey of 5,000 Lutheran pastors, "Personal devotional life...is the highest ranked of all seventy-seven ministry characteristics,"<sup>187</sup> Staying connected with God was and continues to be the way to help pastors maintain a sense of enthusiasm and excitement about being in ministry.

Practicing the spiritual disciplines on a regular basis can help to achieve this, but the spiritual disciplines **must** be regular in order to accomplish the goal of maintaining connection. The Elders in the North Georgia Annual Conference reported 21.3 percent who claimed to practice spiritual disciplines on a daily basis, indicating that nearly eight in ten allow other things to come between them and their time with God. Accountability groups could help Elders to stay

---

<sup>187</sup> Brekke, Milo L., Merton P. Shomen and Dorothy C. Williams, *Ten Faces of Ministry: Perspectives on Pastoral and Congregational Effectiveness Based on a Survey of 5000 Lutherans*, (Minneapolis, Augsburg House, 1979), 28.

connected by asking the questions about remembering the One who called them into ministry in the first place, and that would encourage Elders to make time with God their number one priority. It would also help to know that someone is praying for the pastor on a regular basis. The interview section of Chapter 5 pointed this out in dramatic fashion.

In the author of this paper's experience, Elders spend a lot of time preparing to be an "expert" at helping others grow spiritually, but forget what the meaning of spirituality is for them. They know how to help others find God, but they have forgotten the importance of staying in touch with God once God is discovered. Maloney and Hunt write, "The uniqueness of clergy in our society is dependent upon the priority clergy and their churches have given to sacred—in contrast to expert—skills and the extent to which these skills are evident in personal living as distinct from official duties."<sup>188</sup> Clergy must not merely talk about spirituality; they must practice spirituality, on a regular basis.

Accountability to another human being (or group of human beings) can help Elders maintain "connectedness," and model spirituality for the people in the congregation. Congregants look to the clergy to see if they are truly "persons they can model themselves after, who wrestle with the issues of life in terms of faith. They also expect pastors to have a spiritual discipline, probably a definite

---

<sup>188</sup> Maloney, H. Newton and Richard A. Hunt, *The Psychology of Clergy*, (Harrisburg, PA, Morehouse Press, 1991), 7.

time and place each day for prayer and personal devotion.”<sup>189</sup> Again, we come back to this “each day” concept. It cannot be merely when time permits.

If the concept of Spiritual Directors from recommendation number 1 is implemented, it is even possible that some of the Elders might continue seeing a Spiritual Director, and this would be a wonderful subset of this recommendation for accountability groups. A trained Spiritual Director would ask the accountability questions even more fully and regularly than would a group of untrained colleagues. The goal of accountability would be achieved, and that is what is of the utmost importance.

Accountability groups or Spiritual Directors could give ministers the opportunity to be who God has created them to be, and not always to be those to whom the people look to for leadership in the area of spiritual matters. Sometimes clergy need to be able to just be themselves and speak openly without fear of reprisals or letting someone down. They need to feel a sense of affirmation from someone who understands the uniqueness of their position. “Affirmation is like money in our emotional bank account. When nothing is deposited and withdrawals continue, the account is eventually emptied.”<sup>190</sup> When that occurs, the clergy no longer benefits the congregation or themselves. Perhaps this would help with the “sharing of the ministry load” concept.

The group format, the organization, formality of the group, or defining principle does not matter as long as the members of the group feel free enough

---

<sup>189</sup> Marvin, Johnson, *Roles in Pastoring, Growth in Ministry*, edited by Thomas F. Kodel, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1980), 18.

<sup>190</sup> Rediger, G. Lloyd, July, 1980, “Clergy Burnout”, *Church Management—The Clergy Journal*, 56(8), 11.

to share openly, honestly and forthrightly. That **is** the crux of the issue! The group must firmly and realistically, with grace and love, demand accountability from the members of the group. These groups are possible in all settings, and consist of brothers and sisters in Christ who care for and nurture one another, and in return, are cared for and nurtured by the other members of the group. They can consist of other clergy (both from within and outside the denomination), or they can include persons from the community who are or are not affiliated with the local church to which the clergy person belongs.<sup>191</sup> Again, the key is accountability, not structure, makeup, nor content. The who and the what are not as important as the why and the how.

A word of extreme caution must be added here. Elders must remember that chargeable offenses (both within and outside of the Church) come with certain responsibilities and obligations concerning reporting to Church and civilian authorities. This word of caution works for both the confessor and the confessee. This is not to denigrate the notion of accountability groups, but it is to keep a realistic understanding of what is happening during such a time as when someone admits to something that could cause their orders to be surrendered or their freedom to be jeopardized.

Causing mentors and mentees to form accountability groups during the probationary period (see Recommendation #1) could also have the tangential effect of encouraging Elders to participate in such groups throughout their

---

<sup>191</sup> The author of this paper believes pastors must be very careful in including members of the church that one serves, as this can put the clergy person in the awkward position of offering advice to someone concerning a problem that the clergy has just confessed to being unable to handle.

ministry. Seeing those new to the Order of Elders involved in such groups would serve as a positive influence upon those long-serving clergy; particularly those who might be feeling a sense of loss, isolation, or temptation. If nothing else, the development of really good habits would become the “norm” rather than the “exception” after a period of time. This prototype of establishing accountability groups could cause long term repercussions in maintaining numbers within the clergy as well as maintaining connectedness.

## Conclusion

Only by remaining true to the calling to be ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ set apart to accomplish a specific task can clergy (especially the Elders of the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church), and by maintaining an enthusiastic ministry that outlasts the initial rush that is present at ordination can Elders hold on to that sense of calling and being set apart, keep sight of who they are and where they are going, stay in touch with the One who began the whole thing, and overcome the temptations of viewing ministry as a profession rather than as a calling from God. This is what Wesley meant by emphasizing the *means of grace*. This is the part of the human being in the grace equation.

Staying connected with God is the key to avoiding the picture that Donald Miller painted of his pastor in [Blue Like Jazz](#):

I pictured my pastor as a salesman or a magician, trying to trick the congregation into believing Jesus could make us new. And honestly, I felt as though he was trying to convince himself, as though he only half believed what he was saying. It's not that Christian spirituality seemed like a complete con, it's just that it had some of those elements.<sup>192</sup>

The author of this paper believes that if more of the Elders in North Georgia maintained their “connectedness” with God throughout their ministry, we might be able to listen in on Bill Boatright and Sue Schmee as they attend Annual Conference just prior to their retirement and hear something like this:

---

<sup>192</sup> Miller, Donald, *Blue Like Jazz*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 29030.



Bill—You know, Sue, I am just as excited about ministry today as I was way back when Bishop Fitzgerald laid his hands on our heads that night at Glenn Memorial. Do you remember?

Sue—Remember? How could I forget? Sometimes it seems like only yesterday.

B—Do you feel a sense of excitement, even now, Sue?

S—I do, Bill. God has been good to both of us. We have had great ministries that have spanned a lot of years, and we have done it with “strangely warmed hearts,” all the time.

B—True! So true! And I have you to thank for a lot of that, Sue.

S—All I did was help you to remember the “fire” that flew from the Bishop’s fingertips by making you stay accountable to the One who called us. Besides, you did the same for me by praying for me!

B—Yea. I’m really glad that we were able to stay in our group throughout these many years. Even those times when we were serving at opposite ends of the Conference, we stayed in touch.

S—I’m even looking forward to retirement, because I know that God is not finished with us yet. There’s still a spark left in the old girl.

B—Really? Well you’re about to get a chance to show it. Let’s go. It’s time for us to give our retirement speech (all three minutes of it) to the Conference.

## Personal Comments

Over the past twenty-five years, I have struggled to maintain a sense of “connectedness.” Trying to not lose sight of who called me in to ministry in the first place and why I am an ordained minister has been the goal. Every appointment that I have had I have joined or started accountability groups in order to make sure that the “connectedness” was maintained. There have been many Monday mornings when I have spent time talking with myself before tackling any other task on my “To Do” list; reminding myself of my reasons for being involved in ministry. Maintaining spiritual connection with the One who began the process has been an intuitive part of my ministry even before the idea

for and the thoughts of this paper began to crystallize. Helping young clergy through the mentoring process that is part of the United Methodist system has been a large part of my journey and one that I have thoroughly enjoyed. In other words, the ideas expressed in this paper have been fomenting for a long time, and the conclusions have come more from experience than from research. The research has helped to delineate and validate the conclusions, while the experiences of the past twenty-five years have borne them out. It is as if the Wesleyan Quadrilateral has once again been lived out. Scripture has formed the foundation; Tradition has talked about the necessity of “connectedness”; Reason has shown the validity of it; and Experience has proven it to be so.

Let the last words of this paper be the words of John Wesley. Let his words serve as sufficient summation for all that Methodist Elders, in North Georgia and elsewhere, strive to accomplish:

It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember! A Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline! Therefore you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you! Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly, in preaching and visiting from house to house; partly, in reading, meditation, and prayer.<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>193</sup> Wesley, John, *The Works of John Wesley: The Jackson Edition, Volume Eight, Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others (From the Year 1744 to the Year 1789)* “Answer to Question 26, 11 & 12, edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2005), CD-ROM.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, William J. "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral." In *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, ed. Theodore Runyon, 430. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books (UM Publishing House), 1985.
- Albin, Thomas R. "An Empirical Study of Early Methodist Spirituality." In *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological Consultation*, ed. Theodore Runyon, 275-290. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1985.
- Ayling, Stanley. *John Wesley*. 1st ed. Cleveland, New York: William Collins Publishers, Inc., 1979.
- Bell, Richard H. *The Irrevocable Call of God: An Inquiry into Paul's Theology of Israel*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
- Beverly. *An Address to the Methodist Societies in Beverly and the Vicinity: From the Members of Mr. Robinson's Class, Occasioned by the Late Attempts to Exclude Him from the Society for Having Published "Observations on the System of Wesleyan Methodism"*. Beverly, England: T. Proctor, 1824.
- Black, Robert Edwin "The Social Dimensions of John Wesley's Ministry as Related to His Personal Piety (England)." Dissertation. Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1984, 1985.
- Blackbird, Tegan J. "Normative Influences on Pastors' Friendships." Dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1985.
- Blackmon, Richard A. and Archibald D. Hart. "Personal Growth for Clergy." In *Clergy Assessment and Career Development*, ed. Richard A Hunt, John E. Hinkle, Jr., and H. Newton Malony, 224. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Brekke, Milo L, Merton P. Stommen, and Dorothy L. Williams. *Ten Faces of Ministry: Perspectives on Pastoral and Congregational Effectiveness Based on a Survey of 5000 Lutherans*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.
- Buttrick, George Arthur, ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. Vol. A-D. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Cannon, William Ragsdale. *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification*. New York, Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Theology of John Wesley*. New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1974.

Carter, Kenneth H. *A Way of Life in the World: Spiritual Practices for United Methodists*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Church, The Methodist. *The Book of Worship for Church and Home*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1945.

Clapper, Gregory S. *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality*. Nashville: The Upper Room Press, 1997.

Collins, Gary R. "Burn Out: The Hazard of Professional People-Helpers." *Christianity Today*, no. 21, April (1977): 12-14.

Cross, F. L., ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Crowther, Jonathan. *Strictures on Petitioning for Preachers among the Methodists*. York, England: B & J Richardson, 1809.

Curry, Bishop Norris S. "The Methodist Preacher: Prophet, Priest and Pastor (an Experience--a Call--a Preparation--an Appointment--a Retirement)." Los Angeles: MC Printing & Publishing Company, 1977.

Dunnam, Maxie D. *Alive in Christ: The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Christian Way: A Wesleyan View of Our Spiritual Journey*. Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press (an imprint of Zondervan Publishing House), 1984.

Eayrs, George, ed. *Letters of John Wesley*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915.

Emerick, Samuel. *Spiritual Renewal for Methodism: A Discussion of the Early Methodist Class Meeting and the Values Inherent in Personal Groups Today*. Nashville: Methodist evangelistic materials, 1958.

Emerson, Ralph. *Call and Qualification for the Christian Ministry: What Constitutes a Call to the Christian Ministry? And What Are the Proper*

*Qualifications for That Work?* American Tract Society; No 317. New York: American Tract Society, 183-?

Espin, Thomas Espinelle. *Our Want of Clergy: Its Causes and Suggestions for Its Cure: A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford, on the Second Sunday in Lent, March 1, 1863.* London: John Henry and James Parker, 1863.

Estes and Lauriat. *A Hundred Ministers, and How They Switched Off.* Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1874.

Fitchett, W. H. *Wesley and His Century: A Study in Spiritual Forces.* New York: Abingdon Press, 1917.

Foster, Richard J. *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith.* San Francisco: Harper, 1998.

Freudenberger, Herbert J. *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement.* New York: Doubleday & Co., 1980.

Gillett, Arthur L. *High Standards of Ministerial Character.* Hartford: Hartford Seminary Record for November, 1898, 1898.

Glasse, James D. *Profession: Minister.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968.

Golden, Jonathan, Piedmont, Ralph L, Ciarrocchi, Joseph W., and Rodgerson, Thomas. "Spirituality and Burnout: An Incremental Validity Study." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, no. No. 2 (2004): 115-125.

Gunton, Colin E. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* [Book; Internet Resource]. Cambridge University Press, 1997, (accessed November 10, 2006)  
<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/description/cam028/96046023.html>

Halaas, Gwen Wagstrom, MD. *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.

Hall, Todd W. "The Personal Functioning of Pastors: A Review of Empirical Research with Implications for the Care of Pastors." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25, no. 2 (1997): 240-253.

Hands, Donald R. and Wayne L. Fehr. *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others.* Washington, DC: The Albin Institute, 1993.

Harbaugh, Gary L. *God's Gifted People: Discovering Your Personality as a Gift (Expanded Edition)*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Caring for the Caregiver*. New York: The Alban Institute, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. & Evan Rogers. "Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary." *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 38, no. No. 2 (1984): 99-106.

Harmon, Nolan B. *Understanding the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.

Harper, Steve. *John Wesley's Message for Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1983.

Hart, Archibald. "Preventing Burnout." *Theology News and Notes*, no. 1984 (1984): 2-6.

Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003.

Henderson, D. Michael. *John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples*. Nappanee, Indiana: Francis Asbury Press of Evangel Publishing House, 1997.

Henzlik, William Charles. "The Isolation of the United Methodist Pastor and Some Resources for Collegiality, Renewal, and Mission." Dissertation, Meadville/Lombard Theological School, 1977.

Hileman, Linda S. "Keeping up Appearances." *Circuit Rider*, no. 2, March/April, 2007 (2007): 14-15.

Hoge, Dean R. & Jacqueline E. Wenger. *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* Pulpit & Pew, ed. Jackson W. Carroll. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

Holmes, Urban T, III. *The Future Shape of Ministry*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Spirituality for Ministry*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982.

Houts, Donald C. "Pastoral Care for Pastors: Toward a Church Strategy." *Pastoral Psychology* 25, no. No.3 (1977): 186-196.

- Hughes, Mary Ellen. "Maintaining the Well-Being of Clergy." Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1988.
- Hughes, Thomas. *The Condition of Membership in the Christian Church: Viewed in Connexion with the Class System in the Methodist Body*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1868.
- Hunt, Maloney. H. Newton and Richard A. *The Psychology of Clergy*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Press, 1991.
- Hunt, Richard A. & Joan A. Hunt. *Called to Minister*. Vol. 124 Into Our Third Century, ed. Alan K. Waltz. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982.
- Irvine, Andrew R. *Between Two Worlds: Understanding and Managing Clergy Stress*. London: Mowbray, 1997.
- Jafta, Lizo. "Some Aspects of Methodist Spirituality." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 18, No. 1 (1992): 61-76.
- Jenkins, Michael. "Great Expectation, Sobering Realities: Findings from a New Study on Clergy Burnout." *Congregations* (2002).
- Job, Rueben P. *A Wesleyan Spiritual Reader*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Johnson, Ben Campbell and Andrew Dietcer. *Beyond the Ordinary: Spirituality for Church Leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001.
- Johnson, Douglas W. & Alan K, Waltz. *Facts & Possibilities: An Agenda for the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.
- Johnson, Marvin. "Roles in Pastoring." In *Growth in Ministry*, ed. Thomas E. Kadel, 170. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- Kimbrough Jr., S T (editor). *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.
- Kinlaw, Dennis F. *Preaching in the Spirit* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1985.
- Koch, Klaus. *The Prophets: The Babylonian and Persian Periods (li)*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.
- Lander, John K. *Itinerant Temples: Tent Methodism, 1814-1832*. Waynesboro (Ga.): Carlisle (U.K.): Paternoster Press, 2003.

- Langford, Thomas A. *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- Likins, William H. *How Students Decide for the Ministry: A Survey of Methodist Theological Students and Students in Methodist Theological Schools*. Nashville: Department of Ministry, Division of Higher Education, Board of Education, The United Methodist Church, 1968.
- Lucht, Gary C. "Priorities for Ministry: A Strategy for Balance in the Life of the Pastor." Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988.
- Maas, Robin. "Methodist Spirituality." In *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*, ed. Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, 303-319. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- Maloney, H. Newton "Men and Women in the Clergy: Stresses, Strains, and Resources." *Pastoral Psychology* 36, no. 3 (1988): 164-188.
- Maloney, H. Newton and Hunt, Richard A. *The Psychology of Clergy*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Press, 1991.
- Maslach, Christina & Susan E. Jackson. "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout." *Journal of Occupational Behaviour* 2 (1981): 99-113.
- Matthaei, Sondra Higgins. *Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality*, ed. S. T. Kimbrough. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002.
- Mead, Sidney E. "The Rise of the Evangelical Conception of the Ministry in America (1607-1850)." In *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. Helmut Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Day Williams. New York: Harper & Bros., 1956.
- Melander, Rochelle and Harold Eppley. *The Spiritual Leaser's Guide to Self-Care*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002.
- Metzger, Bruce M. & Roland E. Murphy, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Millard, Joan A. "A Response to Jafta's Paper on Methodist Spirituality." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 18, no. 1 (1992): 77-86.
- Miller, Donald. *Blue Like Jazz*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. "Wesleyan Spirituality: Meeting Contemporary Movements." In *Wesleyan Theology Today: A Bicentennial Theological*



- Consultation* ed. Theodore Runyon, 291-298. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1985.
- Mutti, Fritz. *Breath of New Life: Eight Marks of Spiritual Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Newman, Albert Henry. "A Manual of Church History, Vol. II (Ad 1517-1903)." Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1903.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Creative Ministry*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971.
- Oates, Wayne E. *The Christian Pastor*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964.
- Olson, Harriett Jane, ed. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2004.
- Oswald, Roy M. *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*. New York New York: The Alban Institute, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *How to Build a Support System for Your Ministry*. New York: The Alban Institute, 1991.
- Outler, Albert C., ed. *John Wesley*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville, Tenn.: Tidings, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources-Tidings, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *John Wesley's Sermons: An Introduction*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Parker, William. *The Nature and Reasonableness of the Inward Call and Outward Mission to the Holy Ministry Consider'd: A Sermon Preach'd before the Right Reverend Father in God Thomas Lord Bishop of Oxford, at the Ordination before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's on Sunday, March 2, 1745-6*. London: Oxford: Printed at the Theatre for James Fletcher and sold by J. and J. Rivington, 1746.
- Peacock, Larry J. *Heart and Soul: A Guide for Spiritual Formation in the Local Church*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1992.
- Phillippi, John Paul. "Use of Peer Support Groups to Enhance Clergy Self-Esteem." Dissertation, Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1985.

- Rassieur, Charles L. *Stress Management for Ministers: Practical Help for Clergy Who Deny Themselves the Care They Give to Others*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982.
- Rediger, G. Lloyd. "Clergy Burnout." *Church Management--The Clergy Journal* 56, no. 8 (1980): 10-11.
- Rutter, Thad. *Where the Heart Longs to Go: A New Image for Pastoral Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998.
- Sager, Allan H. *Gospel-Centered Spirituality*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990.
- Sanford, John A. *Ministry Burnout*. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.
- Schierling, James L. "Stress Management for the Pastor." Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987.
- Schnase, Robert. C. *Testing & Reclaiming Your Call to Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Schroeder, John C. "1 Samuel." *The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 2*. George A Buttrick, ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1953.
- Schneider, A. Gregory. *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Somers, Delmar O. "Ministry Hazards within the Free Methodist Church." Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986.
- Stairs, Jean. *Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Standish, N. Graham. *Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence, and Power*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2005.
- Sweet, Leonard. *Summoned to Lead*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Talbert, Charles H. "Discipleship in Luke-Acts." In *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, 62-75. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

- Taylor, Daniel A. "Burnout among Southern Baptist and United Methodist Ministers and Professional Religious Workers in Dallas and Tarrant Counties, Texas." Dissertation, East Texas State University, 1982.
- Trotter, F. Thomas. "United Methodist Church." In *Ministry in America*, ed. David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke, 445-456. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980.
- Tuell, Jack M. *The Organization of the United Methodist Church: 2005-2008 Edition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Turberfield, A. F. *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2004.
- Tuttle, Robert G. *John Wesley: His Life and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- Tyerman, Luke. *The Life and Times of John Wesley, Ma: Founder of the Methodists, Vol. Iii*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876.
- Valenzuela, Alfonso. "The Minister's Personal and Family Life." Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989.
- Wakefield, Gordon S. *Methodist Spirituality*. Vol. 4 Exploring Methodism, ed. Cyril S. Roidd. Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1999.
- Watson, David Lowes. *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Methodist Spirituality." In *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Frank C. Senn, 217-273. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.
- Wesley, John. *The Duty of Constant Communion* 1733, (accessed August 1, 2007) <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/>
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Experience of Several Eminent Methodist Preachers with an Account of Their Call to and Success in the Ministry: In a Series of Letters Written by Themselves to the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* . New York: T. Mason and G. Lane for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1837.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* Vol. XI. London: T. Mason, 1840.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Cook Outler. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Works of John Wesley: The Bicentennial Edition." ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Wills, Dick. *Waking to God's Dream: Spiritual Leadership and Church Renewal*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999.