Moving Ahead to Spiritual Heath: Diagnostic Tools for Triage, Recovery, and Reconciliation of Dysfunctional Congregations.

by

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In addition and most importantly, my thanks to a God who meets us where we are, but loves us enough not to leave us there. It is through his truth that we are set free, even if it makes us uncomfortable. It is through his grace that we can accomplish anything. My prayer is that this work honors God and God’s kingdom.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

As Christ’s body, the church exists by virtue of its participation in God’s mission, the *missio Dei*. When dysfunction in the church distracts the body of Christ from this participation, the church is inhibited in its mission. This dysfunction stems from many different sources. Some responsibility lies with the clergy of our church who, for various reasons, fail to make choices that are emotionally or spiritually healthy. These faulty choices create environments of distrust and, in extreme cases, of contention and contempt. Some responsibility lies in the generational patterns of the congregation. Patterns of immature behavior, power struggle, or fear of the unknown are repeated over time and become institutionalized as the status quo. These ingrained patterns of behavior make it virtually impossible for new leadership to be effective in developing vision and empowering mission. The damage caused by clergy or congregational dysfunction uses up time, resources, and money and diminishes the morale and hope of congregations. Such dysfunction also directly affects evangelism by giving the un-churched a reason to stay away. It undermines our focus on the gospel message of reconciliation and leaves congregations in cycles of dysfunction and pain that can last for generations.

The issue of congregational dysfunction first became apparent to me as a sixteen-year-old son of an Episcopal priest. One Saturday afternoon the phone rang and I answered. Following my greeting, the voice of a sad, pitiful woman quivered and asked, “Is Fr. Sorvillo home?” I replied that he was not home and asked if I could take a message. Immediately the tenor of her voice changed. No more sadness, no sickly tone.
In the most matter-of-fact voice, the response quickly stated, “No message, I’ll just call back later. Thank you.” I distinctly remember looking at the phone and thinking how manipulative she had been and wondering what could be behind that kind of behavior.

Many church stories later, it is now 2003. I am a forty-year-old Episcopal priest in the final stages of a search process to become a rector for the first time. The church where I am interviewing is in turmoil following the departure of their rector of eighteen years. The rector left the church because he had had an affair with the church secretary. This affair led to divorces for both parties and bred distrust for clergy in the minds of many parishioners. Hearts were broken, people left the church, and the mission of God for this place was hindered for a season.

The church welcomes the broken. Ponder the potential impact of the church if it acted more like a hospital for the broken and less like the country club for the chosen. It was within this metaphor that I began to see our church as a M.A.S.H. Unit (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital). The model of a M.A.S.H. unit is to be as close to the front lines of a battle as safely as possible in order to minimize the time between trauma and treatment. The soldiers who arrive are triaged, treated, and, if possible, sent back to the fight as quickly as possible. As churches, we are in the battle lines of our parishioners. They fight every day for their families, for love, for worth, and for identity. We are called to welcome them in and empower them with gospel truth in order to equip them for their challenges. But what good does it do our parishioners if some of our churches are in more disarray than they are? How are we to be helpful in equipping them if our leadership is not strong and our systems are weak? Thus it behooves the church not to fall into co-dependent behaviors that allow dysfunction to go unchallenged in clergy and
lay people alike. Loss of trust in the leadership of the church can become loss of trust in God. Are there signs we can read to warn of oncoming trouble? What lenses do we use to see these signs? How do we create a system of triage to identify the disease before it metastasizes throughout the community? How do we use this information in order to create a pathway for healing and reconciliation? These are the questions this paper will attempt to answer.

My passion to find a process for identification and healing is motivated not only by my experiences growing up or because of the situation at my first parish; it is also motivated by my four years on our diocesan Congregational Development Commission, where I began to see similar instances of dysfunction in other parishes. At present (spring 2014), the Diocese of Central Florida has 25 of its 87 parishes on aided parish status, which means that 25 parishes and missions have some form of financial assistance from the diocese in order to operate. Many of these churches are in this need because of the dysfunctional issues named earlier. A looming question for both our diocese and the larger Episcopal Church has become “How can we advance a strategy of planting new missions in order to spread the gospel if we are financially burdened by our current churches?”

Over the course of my twenty years in the church in both lay and ordained positions, I have learned to use some tools that have been helpful in addressing the issues indicated. This thesis will seek to evaluate two types of relational dysfunction in churches through the lens of family systems and conflict theory. I will use Edwin Friedman's family systems theory to interpret congregational life, and I will apply conflict theory to situations in which conflict has arisen out of broken trust, especially as
developed by R. J. Lewicki, B. B. Bunker, and P. Worche. Two types of relational
dysfunction will be studied, one in which clerical leadership has caused the dysfunction
and the other in which lay leadership is the cause. This paper will use diagnostic tools
for triage, recovery, and reconciliation of congregations that are experiencing these
types of relational dysfunction as well as their implementation for congregational
development.
Chapter 2

Family Systems Theory Review

My undergraduate training in clinical psychology taught me to look at the issues people present through certain theoretical lenses in order to make a diagnosis. These schools of thought ranged anywhere from classic psychoanalysis to behavioral therapy to cognitive models. By choosing a model, one can apply a particular lens in order to determine a treatment strategy for the client. This is the approach that I am using in my study of relational dysfunction in congregations.

Over the past one hundred years, the disciplines of psychology and sociology have birthed many hybrid schools of thought that can be applied to the human condition. Two of these are family systems theory and conflict theory. Family systems theory came out of the family therapy movement, which sought to address the dynamics of family life following World War II. ¹ According to Edwin Friedman, “Family therapy is the child of two mid-20th century revolutions: one in the way we think about ourselves and one in the way we think about the world about us.”² Murray Bowen went on to develop family systems theory into a system as revealed in his book *Family Therapy and Clinical Practice* (1978).³ It represented the culmination of a process of investigation and application accomplished over his twenty years of practice. Here he presented a series of eight processes: Triangles, Differentiation of Self, Nuclear Family Emotional Process, Family Projection Process, Multi-Generational Transmission Processes, Sibling Position,

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Emotional Cutoff, and Emotional Processes in Society. Rabbi Edwin Friedman applies five of these eight processes for use within larger relational systems found in corporations, churches, and synagogues. Bowen identified five concepts: The identified patient, homeostasis, differentiation of self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles. Friedman thought that the application of these processes could help leaders, especially members of the clergy, guide their congregations to be healthier even when some individuals act in a dysfunctional manner. Friedman explained, “One of the most important ramifications of this approach for individuals who must organize and make sense out of a great deal of information (such as members of the clergy) is that it no longer becomes necessary to ‘know all about something’ in order to comprehend it. It was his theory that you could be able to locate an issue of congregational dysfunction in the structure of the system rather than in the nature of the symptomatic member.”

Why apply family systems theory to congregational relationships? Congregations are often called “families.” Murray Bowen thought of using the word family in relationship to church congregations. However, in *Extraordinary Leadership*, Roberta Gilbert shares a word of caution from Bowen, “Bowen thought that using the word ‘family’ for organizations or encouraging a ‘happy family’ attitude in them only encouraged those who are trying to get emotional needs met there inappropriately.” Gilbert does admit, however, that families and non-family groups are similar in many ways. They all have a tendency to experience anxiety, conflict, and distance because

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4 Ibid., 4.
5 Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 19.
6 Ibid., 19.
they are all emotional systems. “If the people of any group rub up against each other
enough, we begin to see conflict--attempts to relieve the conflict by distancing--as well as
all the other emotionally-based patterns humans show in important relationships.”8 On
the other hand, though they are similar to families, other organizations are much more
complex. Congregations especially are combinations of multiple families. In this respect,
they have “emotional units within emotional units.”9

This paper will use the Friedman processes as part of the evaluative lens in which
to consider the troubles of the congregations considered. A brief review of the five
processes follows.

The Identified Patient

In matters of relational dysfunction and conflict, one person often gets identified
as the instigator or trouble-maker. In family systems language, that person is known as
the identified patient. “The concept of the identified patient is that the family member
with the obvious symptom is to be seen not as the sick one but as the one in whom the
family’s stress or pathology has surfaced.”10 For example, in a spouse, the pathology
could surface as depression, chronic illness, or a myriad of other conditions. In a
congregational leader it can reveal itself as sexual misbehavior, drinking, or chronic
deception. Friedman wrote, “The purpose of using the phrase identified patient is to
avoid isolating the ‘problemed’ family member from the overall relationship system of
the family.”11 A more concrete example within a congregational context is considering

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9 Ibid., 21.
10Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, 19.
11Ibid., 20.
the identified patient as the person who recognizes the dysfunction in the system. Perhaps the rector of a church, for example, engages in a sexual relationship with someone other than his or her spouse. Upon pointing it out, either to the rector or a member of the leadership team, the whistle-blower becomes the identified patient and is blamed for causing problems or “stirring the pot” and consequently begins to manifest anxiety or depression. This secondary symptom then becomes the focus instead of the real issue. In this sense, the unresolved problem in the church “is isolated in one of its members and fixed there by diagnosis, it enables the rest of the ‘family’ to purify itself by locating the source of the ‘disease’ in the disease of the identified patient.”12 As this misplacement occurs, the real issue is not attended to and the systemic dysfunction in that congregation continues to metastasize.

It is important to note that sometimes the “identified patient” really is the person creating havoc within the community. It is unfortunate that the church can have within its ranks a true antagonist. Patience, discernment, and careful investigation are recommended when identifying individuals within the Friedman model.

Homeostasis (Balance)

Every system works to find its balance. The human body seeks balance through blood pressure, temperature and weight, to name a few systems. When something occurs within or to the body that throws it out of balance, internal systems attempt to bring that balance back into alignment. This is the essence of homeostasis.

12 Friedman, Generation to Generation, 20.
Family and congregational systems exhibit the same tendencies. The phrase “We’ve always done it that way” has become a subconscious, internalized mission statement in many congregations. Our individual families also follow this path. The mother can be known to act in a predictable way in the face of crisis, the father in another. Patterns of behavioral expectation can be passed down from one generation to another. We are creatures of habit, and our habits can contribute to the dysfunction of all these groups because the process of homeostasis can inhibit necessary changes. “Family systems” thinking locates a family’s problem in the nature of the system rather than in the nature of its parts. A key to that relocation is the concept of homeostasis: the tendency of any set of relationships to strive perpetually, in self-corrective ways, to preserve the organizing principles of its existence.”

When change such as the recognition of an issue by a congregational leader or the attempted correction of an issue within a congregation takes place, the natural reflexive response is for the system to resist in order to regain its original balance. Friedman pointed out, “The most important ramification of homeostasis for family theory is its emphasis on position rather than personality when explaining the emergence of symptoms.” For instance, if the change occurs in the father of a household or the rector of a church, the impact of the change will be greater than if located within a child of the family or newer parishioner of the church. This principle will be important to remember as we explore congregational case studies in this paper.

The homeostatic process does not always imply a negative response. As the body resists a germ in order to maintain health, so a healthy family-system or congregation can

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13 Friedman, Generation to Generation, 23.
14 Ibid., 24.
resist a behavior which can negatively affect its healthy processes. For example, take a church which knows how to handle relationship triangulation. A new parishioner joins the congregation who has a habit of pitting people against each other. However, this does not work because the congregation has a healthy way of attending to the attempts. Over time, the new parishioner either learns a healthier way of coexisting within the congregation or leaves due to being frustrated at her attempts. Healthy balance is maintained, in part, because of the healthy balance and expectations of the congregation.

Differentiation of Self

“If systems are self-corrective, why does or how can change occur at all?”15 An understanding of differentiation of self can help answer this question. In his paper on Bowen’s theory, Carl V. Rabstejnek wrote,

Differentiation and its antithesis, fusion, are Bowen’s terms to describe the extent to which people are able to separate their emotional and intellectual spheres. Highly fused people function automatically and respond emotionally to life situations. On the opposite end of the spectrum are highly differentiated people who have an autonomous intellectual system that can keep control over their emotional system. Differentiated people respond better to life’s stresses. Adequate thinking controls emotionality, but still allows human emotions. High differentiation allows both the intellectual and emotional systems to function appropriately, but fusion lets the emotional system take control of all actions.16

In How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations, Peter Steinke writes, “To be separate and to be close are basic needs. One is personal, the other relational. A major task of our life is to be able to shift from to the other with some

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15 Friedman, Generation to Generation, 27.
degree of balance between the two.”

It is the application of the differentiated self that can bring about change within a dysfunctional relationship. The greatest challenge of self-differentiation is the ability to live in the tension between being separate and close at the same time. Bowen would say this is the difference between the “solid self and the pseudo-self.”

The solid self knows what it desires and needs while the pseudo-self is reactive to the needs of those around it. Bowen stated, “The pseudo-self is a product of emotional pressure and every group in society exerts pressure on its members to conform”; hence the need for a strong solid self as one attempts to challenge the homeostatic pull of the system. Being self-differentiated within a system allows one to continue to be a part of the system while not allowing that system to affect one’s core desires and needs. A differentiation of self, along with being “nonanxious,” according to Friedman, is at the heart of surviving the anxiety inevitably produced as the balance of any given system is challenged. The more anxious a system is, the more differentiation is needed. Steinke would remind us, “This is not an easy accomplishment, for when we are anxious, we are more instinctive. We are pulled toward one of the extreme emotions of distance or fusion. We are therefore less self-choosing and self-directing.”

Not only is this a factor within each individual but this same affect is present in the larger group. “As anxiety increases, people push toward one of the extremes, distance or fusion, to alleviate their tension and movement toward an extreme position is primarily automatic.”

Rabstejnek draws upon a quotation from Bowen that would help put self-differentiation

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19 Ibid., 6.
20 Ibid., 6.
21 Ibid., 30.
into perspective: “I consider rugged individualism to be an exaggerated pretend posture of a person struggling against emotional fusion. The differentiated person is always aware of others and the relationship system around him.” Differentiated behavior is not inappropriate or extreme on any axis of behavior. Differentiated people can laugh, cry, have fun and enjoy relationships. They can also have a breakdown if sufficient pressure is presented, but they recover quickly.”22

The Extended Family Field

Within family systems theory, the term “extended family field” refers to our family of origin. This family of origin includes parents and siblings as well as other relatives like grandparents, uncles, and cousins. “Family theory sees the entire network of the extended family as important, and the influence of that network is considered to be significant in the here and now.”23 The concept of extended family field applies directly to congregational life, as congregations also have generational history. Much like families with their matriarchs and patriarchs, church systems have their lineage that fulfills the same role from generation to generation of a church’s history. The importance of the use of this concept is that “one can go home again.”24 “Gaining a better understanding of the emotional processes still at work with regard to our family (or church family) of origin, and modifying our response to them, can aid significantly in the resolution of emotional problems in our immediate family or of leadership problems in a

23 Friedman, Generation to Generation, 31.
24 Ibid., 32
church or synagogue.” Using the concept of the extended family, Friedman showed that patterns of behavior, thinking, and health have a way of reappearing over generations. By understanding one’s generational past, one can have insight into a family’s future and plan accordingly for healthier responses. Friedman wrote,

The most significant aspect of the extended family field is the role it can play in the process of self-differentiation. The position we occupy in our families of origin is the only thing we can never share or gift to another while we are still alive. It is the source of our uniqueness, and, hence, the basic parameter for our emotional potential as well as our difficulties.

It is through tracking the decisions and events in the history of the extended family field that we can track a source of difficulty or a systemic pathology within the group. As stated, the challenge then is not to distance oneself from the difficulty or pathology but to see it for what it is, differentiate oneself in the midst of it, and stay connected in order to move forward to reconciliation.

**Emotional Triangles**

An emotional triangle is formed by any three persons or issues. For instance, a husband, wife, and mother-in-law is a classic emotional triangle. The priest, church secretary, and church organist could be another. Friedman would say, “Emotional triangles offer a way of operationalizing the previous four concepts in both counseling and administrative functioning. The concept is also basic to understanding the depth and complexity of the interlocking emotional processes that link the three families of the clergy. It also provides strategies that promote survival within the ‘system of

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26 Ibid., 33.
systems.””\textsuperscript{27} Further, “the basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will ‘triangle in’ or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another.”\textsuperscript{28} According to Gilbert this pattern has deep psychic origins: “All this goes back to day one in our own families. For all of us, the experience of the triangles has been repetitive and cumulative. This personal experience can contribute to our understanding of them if we allow ourselves to step back, take a good look and then think about what we have seen.”\textsuperscript{29}

There are a number of possible triangles based on the group size that can be seen if one draws lines between each pair of people present in that group. Emotional triangles are tension regulators within any system, be it family, church, or corporation. Because the impact of the emotional triangle is so pervasive, Friedman would take Bowen’s basic overview and expand it into seven laws. He would say that the seven laws “are equally applicable to all families of the human species, of whatever religious persuasions, and in whatever variety of congregation of faith.”\textsuperscript{30}

The seven expanded laws are as follows:

- The relationship of any two members of an emotional triangle is kept in balance by the way a third party relates to each of them. When a given relationship is stuck, therefore, there is probably a third person or issue that is part of the homeostasis.

\textsuperscript{27} Friedman, \textit{Generation to Generation}. 35.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{29} Roberta M. Gilbert, \textit{The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory} (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 48.
\textsuperscript{30} Friedman, \textit{Generation to Generation}, 36.
• If one is the “third party” in an emotional triangle, it is generally not possible to bring change to the relationship of the other two parts by trying to change their relationship directly.

• Not only are attempts to change the relationship of the other two sides of an emotional triangle generally ineffective, but homeostatic forces often also convert these efforts to their opposite intent.

• To the extent a third party to an emotional triangle tries unsuccessfully to change the relationship of the other two, the third party more likely will wind up with the stress of the other two.

• The various triangles in an emotional system interlock so that efforts to bring change to any one of them are often resisted by homeostatic forces in the others or within the system itself.

• One side of an emotional triangle tends to have more conflict than the others. In less healthy families, the conflict will tend to swing round the compass, so to speak, showing up in different persons or different relationships at different times.

• We can only change a relationship to which we belong. Therefore, the way to bring change to the relationship of two others is to try to maintain a well-defined relationship with each, and to avoid the responsibility for their relationship with one another.31

Having a working knowledge of these systems and their subsystems makes it possible to stay differentiated as a leader and thus to lead. Understanding these systems

31 Friedman, Generation to Generation, 36-39.
contributes to a leader’s ability to lead in the midst of change and to recognize the leader’s place in the larger system. Criticism comes as a natural byproduct of leadership. To understand this principle is to understand that a certain amount of criticism will come to a leader for two reasons: first, apart from personality, simply because that person is in the leadership position; second, because the leader is a unique individual with certain personality traits that do not always conform to the expectations of others. Understanding system theory can help the leader differentiate between the two and thus create an action plan to respond to a situation. If the issue at hand is based in personality style and presentation, perhaps a change in style is warranted. Perhaps leaders need to learn something about themselves and make adjustments. If the criticism is solely pointed to the leader because he or she is the one making decisions, then perhaps the problem actually lies with the one who is doing the criticizing.
In a recent conversation about church leadership, a fellow member of the clergy commented that he believed one of the foundational functions of clerical leadership is to be a purveyor of trust. In a recent Gallup poll, faith and trust in our institutions have dropped over the past ten years.

Although the graph to the left shows that faith in churches has actually increased by a factor of three over the nine-year time frame, a 2012 Gallup poll states that confidence in organized religion is at a new low point of 44%, down from 52% in 2009 and a high of 68% in 1972. This decline in institutional trust invites all leaders, regardless of institution, to take the issue of trust seriously. There is a direct connection between trust and conflict. Most people see trust as the glue that holds relationships together.

In his report, “Trust, Trust Development, and Trust Repair,” Roy J. Lewicki wrote, “If individuals or groups trust each other, they can work through conflict relatively easily. If they do not trust each other, conflict often becomes destructive, and resolution more difficult.”

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The study of conflict began as a field of study in the 1950’s and 1960’s. In *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Oliver Ramsbotham reports, “This was the height of the Cold War, when the development of nuclear weapons and the conflict between the superpowers seemed to threaten human survival. A group of pioneers from different disciplines saw the value of studying conflict as a general phenomenon.” This group argued that conflict resolution had a role to play in a wide spectrum of situations including active war zones, peaceful international disagreements, and corporate interpersonal interactions. They also argued that conflict resolution could play a part in areas of social justice and social transformation. “Conflict resolution teaches that short-term denial strategies on their own will fail unless accompanied by and embedded within middle-term persuasion strategies, long-term prevention strategies, and international coordination and legitimization strategies.”

Before we begin to unpack more specific conflict resolution strategies, it is helpful to understand the nature of trust and the different “kinds” of trust that exist. Generally, trust is defined as, “an individual’s belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions and decisions of another.” Inherent in this definition is a relational expectation. I often use a saying (an emotional equation, really) to help people understand the levels of interpersonal crisis. The saying is, “Unmet expectation equals crisis.” This crisis can be minimal; for instance, going to McDonald’s for some French fries, and they are out. However disappointed one may be, the event does not really

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36 Lewicki, “Trust,” 94.
impact one’s life. On the other hand, anyone who puts his trust and love in another, only to have that trust and love rejected and abandoned, would feel a much larger and more lasting impact on life. When trust is broken, expectations are rearranged and crisis occurs.

Lewicki posits that there are two basic forms of trust: Calculus-Based Trust (CBT) and Identification-Based Trust (IBT). Calculus-Based Trust, also referred to as “deterrence-based trust,” is a form of trust based on fear of the consequences of not doing what has been promised or expected. “Trust is sustained to the degree that the deterrent (punishment) is clear, possible, and likely to occur if trust is violated. Thus, the threat of punishment is likely to be a more significant motivator than the promise of reward.”

CBT is understood to be an early stage of trust in any relationship and, over time, can lead to the second type of trust, Identification-Based trust. IBT is based on one’s identification with others’ desires and intentions. “This type of trust exists because the parties can effectively understand and appreciate one another’s wants. This mutual understanding is developed to the point that each person can effectively act for the other.”

This type of trust actually allows a party to act as an agent or substitute for the other based on the confidence of those shared interests. “IBT develops as one both knows and predicts the other’s needs, choices and preferences, and as one also shares some of the same needs, choices and preferences as one’s own. Increased identification enables us to think like the other, feel like the other and respond like the other.”

37 Ibid., 95-96.
38 Ibid., 95.
39 Ibid., 96.
40 Ibid., 96.
Lewicki points out two other ideas about trust and relationship. “The first is that trust and distrust are not simply opposite ends of the same dimension, but conceptually different and separate. Second, relationships develop over time, and the nature of trust changes as they develop.” He found that relationships that held a balance between trust and distrust were likely to be healthier than relationships grounded only in trust. Because of this finding he refined his two definitions of trust with the distrust variable. Therefore we not only have Calculus-Based Trust, but we also have Calculus-Based Distrust (CBD) and by extension, we now have Identification-Based Distrust (IBD). The ability to differentiate these types will become valuable as we begin the evaluation of the different case studies later in this paper. Very much like being able to identify the family systems activity at work, identifying the nature and foundation of the trust (or distrust) that is at work is paramount to the triage and eventual healing of that relationship.

This information about distrust gives us a revised view of the nature of trust in relationships:

- Relationships are multifaceted, and each facet represents an interaction that provides us with information about each other. The greater the variety of settings and contexts in which the parties interact, the more complex and multifaceted the relationship becomes.
- Within the same relationship, elements of trust and distrust may peacefully coexist, because they are related to different experiences within the other and knowledge of the other in varied contexts.
- Relationships balanced with trust and distrust are likely to be healthier than relationships grounded only in trust. Particularly in organizational/managerial relationships.
- Facets of trust and distrust can be both calculus based or identification based in its foundation.\(^42\)

\(^41\) Ibid., 97.  
\(^42\) Ibid., 99-100.
Because there can be elements of trust and distrust in a relationship, there are many types of relationships, varying in multiple combinations of calculus-based trust, calculus-based distrust, identification-based trust, and identification-based distrust. The following table gives us quick access to sixteen relationship types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CBT</th>
<th>CBD</th>
<th>IBT</th>
<th>IBD</th>
<th>Brief Description of the Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Arm’s-length relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High CBT; good working relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High CBD; working relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>characterized by cautiousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>“Instant good chemistry” with the other based on strong perceived value compatibility but limited experience (few bands and low bandwidth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>“Instant bad chemistry” with the other based on strong perceived value incompatibility but limited experience (few bands and low bandwidth)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ibid., 101-102.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>CBT</th>
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<th>IBT</th>
<th>IBD</th>
<th>Brief Description of the Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dominant love-hate relationship, with additional elements of CBD and few elements of CBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dominant love-hate relationship, with additional elements of CBT and few elements of CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Dominant high-distrust relationship, although there are some elements of CBT possible; &quot;very distrusting, but bounded trusting transactions are possible”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Dominant high-trust relationship, although there are some elements of CBD; “very trusting but takes precautions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Rich, complex, highly ambivalent relationship; lots of trust and distrust along all dimensions of the relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: CBT = calculus-based trust; CBD = calculus-based distrust; IBT = identification-based trust; IBD = identification-based distrust.

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44 Ibid., 102.
Ramsbotham provides a method to discern the type of relationship model within a trust paradigm by asking whether the point of concern is more for the other or for the self. “One typical habit in conflict is to give very high priority to defending one’s own interests. If Cain’s interests clash with Abel’s, Cain is inclined to ignore Abel’s interests or actively damage them. Leaders of nations are expected to defend the national interest and to defeat the interests of others if they come into conflict.”

The following illustration gives us another tool in discerning the type and level of conflict within a given relationship. How can parties reframe their positions if they are diametrically opposed, as they often are? One of the ideas on conflict resolution is to distinguish between the positions held by the parties and their underlying interests and needs. This simple chart can be useful in discerning a person’s or group’s starting point.

Source: from Katz and Lawyer, 1985

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45 Ramsbotham, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 17.
Ramsbotham explains, “Interests are often easier to reconcile than positions, since there are usually several positions that might satisfy them. Matters may be more difficult if the conflict is over values (which are often non-negotiable) or relationships, which may need to be changed to resolve the conflict. Some analysts take this to the limit by identifying basic human needs (for example, identity, security, survival) as lying at the roots of other motives. Intractable conflicts are often seen to result from the denial of such needs, and conflict can only be resolved when such needs are satisfied.”

If the conflict can be translated into the language of needs, an outcome that satisfies both sides’ needs can be found.

But what happens when trust is violated? Trust violations occur when our expectations of another person are not met. It is important to remember that this trust violation can occur in both directions. One can expect trusting behavior from another and encounter distrust, or one can expect distrusting behavior and encounter trust. “If this disconfirming information is significant enough, or if it begins to occur regularly in ongoing encounters, we are likely to adjust our perceptions of trust dramatically and alter the type of relationship we have with the other.”

But the impact of the trust violation will be different depending on the foundation of the trust relationship. “It is likely that we have less emotional investment in relationships that are low in identification-based trust. Thus in those relationships violations of calculus-based are probably viewed as annoyances, although the associated cost may be emotionally troubling in the short term.”

When calculus-based trust is broken, research has shown that repair and

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46 Ibid., 21.
48 Ibid., 107.
restoration are often more easily accomplished. The research on trust repair strategies has yielded the following insights:

- After a trust violation, apologies are more effective than no apologies.
- Apologies in which the violator takes responsibility for the violation are more effective than apologies in which the violator tries to place the blame elsewhere.
- Apologies in which the violator is actually guilty, as revealed by subsequent evidence, are more effective than when the violator is eventually found not guilty.
- Apologies that are conveyed with sincerity are more effective.
- Apologies are more effective when they are conveyed quickly after the violation has occurred.\(^49\)

On the other hand, as one might assume, “If relationships are established that are high in identification-based trust, there is also a higher level of emotional investment. In these relationships, trust violations contain both affective and a practical component. Once a shared identity has been established, any disconfirming trust violation can be viewed as a direct challenge to a person’s most central and cherished values.”\(^50\) This type of trust violation by its very nature and association has the tendency to elicit strong reactive emotional responses. Feelings of anger, violation, rejection, and even foolishness are more likely than in relational trust on a calculus-based foundation. Lewicki’s also reports that when identification-based trust is violated, there is a stronger likelihood that communication will shut down and a higher likelihood that the relationship will end rather than continue.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.,107-08.
\(^{50}\) Ibid.,108.
Lewicki envisions a three-stage process for restoring trust, and specifically for identification-based trust. The first stage is for the parties involved to exchange information about the perceived violation. A key component to this process is the identification and explanation of the act of perceived violation. Here a consistency with Ramsbotham’s data becomes clear as needs, positions, and values are shared in order for the violated person to understand the “why” of the violation. Misunderstanding and miscommunication are often cleared up in this stage, especially if care for others extends beyond care for self. This state is also known as de-escalation. Trust is a vital step in the de-escalation process—for any conciliatory act to be effective, it must involve a healthy dose of trust. Unfortunately, trust, like de-escalation, is enveloped in paradox. In order to trust another person one much risk personal loss, yet we do often demand proof of trustworthiness before we will take that risk. The paradox lies in the fact that one must first take the risk in order to develop trust.  

In the second stage, the victim must be willing to extend forgiveness rather than to engage in forms of reaction to trust betrayal. “Research reveals that the victim’s commitment to the relationship plays an important role. Commitment occurs as the result of high satisfaction with the relationship, increasing investments in the relationship by the victim, and the declining availability or suitability of alternative relationships to meet important needs. When the victim is highly committed to the relationship, he or she is a more willing to forgive than to experience negative feeling, make negative attributions to the violator, or engage in behaviors such as revenge or retaliation.”

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I find it interesting that the clinical research, which in all my reading has been devoid of any theological framework, still finds forgiveness to be at the core of the trust restoration process.

The final process involves both parties’ reaffirming their commitment to a high identification-based relationship, including the identification of shared goals, interests, and actions to reinforce the action of commitment. In this stage, strategies would also be shared in order to avoid future misunderstandings, miscommunication, and disconfirmations. “However, when parties either fail to reconcile the trust violation within their shared identity or are unable to do so, high IBT relationships may be transformed to low IBT or even IBD. If the violation is largely inconsistent with the core beliefs and values of one of the partners and if it cannot be adequately explained within the context of the current relationship, then the parties must elect to either renegotiate their shared identity or terminate the high-IBT relationship.”

James Notter says that “The term ‘conflict transformation’ is only beginning to gain acceptance in the conflict resolution field. The more common term, ‘conflict resolution,’ implies addressing the ultimate source of conflict. This, however, often requires a transformation of the relationship between parties,” hence the name. Notter goes on to say that “when the issues concern change in elemental components of relationships, the result is transformation, not settlement, not management or de-escalation, not even resolution. This is why the issue of trust is so vital to the field of

53 Ibid., 109.
conflict resolution.”55 When groups are not simply disputing material interests but are dealing with deeply damaged social relationships, rebuilding trust is a key step towards resolution and transformation.

Notter’s final comments underscore the necessity for conversation and identification of trust with broken relationships. When we identify what types of trust have been broken, we can more clearly set a path for re-engagement of a conversation within a given relationship. The identification of which kind of trust has been broken also aids participants in knowing where to direct the energies of that conversation and where that energy might not only be wasted but might also add to the damage present within that relationship.

Our God is a God of transformation. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2 NRSV). God’s will is for healing and reconciliation. By bringing to bear the tools discussed thus far, relationships within churches will find more direct paths to healing. But there is one topic which seems to hinder that process, a topic rarely discussed and, in my experience, almost never used within the context of relational reconciliation within the church. This is the issue of shame.

55 Ibid., 8.
Chapter 4
The Issue of Shame

When I arrived as rector of the Church of the Ascension in 2003, I was made aware that there had been a thriving and effective healing ministry. Every Wednesday evening a healing service was held, which was well known throughout our community. I was told of miraculous healings that had taken place over the years. These stories had become part of the fabric of the parish. But amid these blessings the healing service had also been where the misbehavior of the past rector and his mistress had been most clearly exhibited. Once I began to build trust with the congregation, people began to come forward and share the “other stories.” These were the stories of people who had, to all extents and purposes, shown signs of being “slain in the Spirit” or other spiritual manifestations but in actuality were “faking it” because they believed that the priest expected these behaviors. They did not want to let him down. There were other stories of people who were aware of inappropriate comments and touching between the priest and the woman in question that took place during prayer time and “laying on of hands” within the healing services. They knew that something was not right but did not feel empowered to speak truth in the situation. Those who came to talk to me shared that they would have felt embarrassment or shame if they had mentioned it. Because there had been some profound moments of healing over the course of this ministry, people were concerned that any identification of these issues would dishonor the reputation of the ministry. It is within this context that I began to read about shame and its effects.
Shame has been an issue for humanity since Adam and Eve hid from God in the garden. Shame, guilt, and embarrassment are terms that are often used synonymously, but they have different implications.

According to June Price Tangney and her fellow researchers, “The differences among shame, guilt and embarrassment are poorly understood. The terms shame and guilt are often used interchangeably, where embarrassment has suggested a ‘mild form’ of shame.”

Many academic and pastoral resources deal with the issues of shame. A foundational study on the topic of shame was written in 1958 by Helen Merrell Lynd: On Shame and the Search for Identity. In it, Lynd suggests that there are six characteristics of shame organized around three major themes. These themes are the phenomenological experience of shame, the effects of shame on the self, and the effects of shame on one’s worldview.

Her work helped to differentiate more clearly between shame and guilt. Lynd says that shame is different from guilt in that guilt cannot be externalized. “We per-form guilty actions, but we are our shame.” We are more apt to rationalize our way out of guilt, but we find it difficult to argue away the experience of shame since explanations and rationalizations only make self-involvement that much more apparent and painful. She also says that the “self-involving nature of shame is also evident in the fact that, unlike guilt, it tends to involve one’s body as well as one’s mind. Whereas guilt is

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58 Ibid., 795.
described as felt in the conscience (i.e. the mind), shame is deeply visceral and gut-wrenching; it is usually felt in the pit of the stomach.”

Lynd also points out that shame is a threat to our basic disposition to trust, because “a shame experience violates our expectations of what is happening, or about to happen.” This revelation helps us to see the connection among shame, trust, and the challenge of unmet expectation that can occur during a relational crisis in the church. She would add,

Suddenly, we find ourselves in such a situation, and we realize, too late, that we had trusted ourselves to a situation that was not there. If we had known what we were about to encounter, we would have taken appropriate steps to avoid it; in many situations that produce shame, we realize, after the fact, how easily we could have avoided them.

By extension, Lynd says that shame experiences have self-constricting effects on people. They cause people to become less spontaneous and free-spirited and cause behavior that is more cautious and calculating. This self-limiting response can be devastating to a crisis response when action and intervention are called for.

Donald Capps uses the foundations of Lynd’s work as a point of departure to develop a theology of shame in *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age*. Capps argues that during the last half of the twentieth century a new type of individual self has emerged that is much more narcissistic than previous generations and that any traditional language of guilt is no longer relevant. He contends that contemporary theology has failed to recognize the threat that this new type of individual poses to traditional theological language. The goal of his book is to take the latest psychological language...

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59 Ibid., 802.
60 Capps, *The Depleted Self*, location 843.
61 Ibid.
and make it accessible to the theological community.\textsuperscript{62} Capps states that along with this increase of the narcissistic self there has been a decline in language to deal with sin: “Because sin has been so intimately associated with guilt in Christian consciousness, and because traditional Christian theology has been concerned to provide support for this association of sin and guilt, sin has become an irrelevant, or, at least, a devalued concept.”\textsuperscript{63}

He adds that guilt has tended to function as a “convenient cover story,” enabling Christian theology to ignore the experience of shame and the threat that it poses in the struggle for the self to survive.\textsuperscript{64} It is from this point of view that Capps warns us not to allow theology to dismiss the issue of shame and treat it as a non-theological issue.

We now know that theology’s failure to concern itself with shame in the past was, in part, the consequence of its own social location. The Western bias of theology led it to view guilt as a deeper experience, precisely because guilt was thought to more characteristic of Western than of Asian societies, and of societies judged to be more “advanced” and less “backward” and “primitive.”\textsuperscript{65}

In short, Capps asserts that his theology of shame does not focus on shame as a mechanism of social control or as a preservation of hierarchical social structure. His focus is on the self and the intimate link between shame, understanding the shame experience as “highly illuminative” of what he calls the “problematics of self.”

We need to use caution when attempting to connect psychological and theological language. Based on a person’s past religious experience, words like

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{63} Capps, \textit{The Depleted Self}, location 437.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 915.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 924.
forgiveness, sin, shame, and reconciliation, can trigger responses that hinder healing. In Wholeness After Betrayal: Restoring Trust in the Wake of Misconduct, Robin Hammeal-Urban argues that using the word reconciliation in the aftermath of misconduct “triggers incorrect assumptions – that they are being asked to forgive, forget, and become friends again with those who hurt them.” Even though she agrees that an instance of misconduct could be a teachable moment, she believes that it is counterproductive to try to teach theology when people are in the midst of suffering.

Taking Hammeal-Urban’s caution to heart, it has nonetheless been my experience that it is during these very moments that a theology of reconciliation is needed. I agree that the there is an incorrect understanding of “forgive and forget” and I make it a point to attend to that issue consistently in my ministry. To ask someone to forgive and forget is to invite them to be open to more victimization, and that is not acceptable. But to invite people to give their pain over to God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is to invite people to the knowledge that they do not have to do so alone and to tell them that the reconciling love of God is present for them in the midst of the pain they are feeling.

Two authors stand out to me because their insights shed light upon my over fifteen years of ministry: Dan B. Allender and Brené Brown.

In The Wounded Heart, Dan Allender unpacks the dynamics of sexual abuse, the damage of abuse, and the prerequisites for growth and healing. In his chapter on shame,

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he emphasizes a defense mechanism that accompanies it: the “shame and contempt cycle.” Allender writes,

For most people, shame is another word for embarrassment. Everyone knows that embarrassment is unpleasant, but hardly life threatening. Years of careful grooming and mastery have enabled us to avoid embarrassment, or if we are caught, to melt into our surroundings as adroitly as a chameleon. No wonder little is known about the experience of embarrassment, let alone its more hideous counterpart: shame. Shame is a silent killer, much the way that high blood pressure is a quiet, symptom-free destroyer. Fortunately, shame has a set of symptoms that can be discerned, once the eyes are open to its presence and operation. But like heart disease, it is easy to ignore the problem or to mislabel it as heartburn or a minor chest pain. Shame has the power to take our breath away and replace it with the stale air of condemnation and disgust.  

As I read Allender’s work, it became apparent that the behavior perpetrated by the past rector within the context of the healing ministry was a form of sexual abuse. The shame of those who witnessed the priest’s misbehavior and the deception of those who pretended to have spiritual experiences are typical of the behavior of those who have been sexually or emotionally abused. Shame has an added challenge because, unlike other feelings that relinquish some of their power by putting words to the inner sensation, shame has the propensity to increase in intensity from the moment it is first acknowledged. The mere discussion of shame thus awakens the undealt-with shame in others. For that reason shame is a “shameful topic, one that most people would prefer to ignore.”

Capps supports this notion by illustrating how shame confronts us with a profound sense of isolation from others. He adds that shame experiences are difficult to talk about for two reasons: One reason is that to tell another person about your experience produces

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68 Ibid., Wounded, 61-62.
69 Ibid., 61.
more shame. “A shame experience becomes more, not less, shameful to the extent that it is more widely known.”\textsuperscript{70} The second reason shame experiences are difficult to communicate is that, in telling the story, one re-experiences the shame and the pain that goes with it: “It is virtually impossible to relate a shame experience as though it were over and done with. Much as we relive a traumatic event like an act of violence or auto accident, so we relive the shame experiences and the pain associated with it.”\textsuperscript{71}

It is no wonder that this is such a challenging topic in relationships. This challenge of discussing shame within a church community is compounded by the added expectations placed upon church leadership. When Episcopal clergy are ordained, they make, as part of their ordination vows, the promise to “pattern your life, and that of your family, in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people.”\textsuperscript{72} It has been my experience when interviewing clergy who have made leadership mistakes that they realize that their mistake not only let down those they love but also constitutes a violation of their ordination vows, which makes their misbehavior even more difficult for them to reveal. This is, in part, why shame truly lives up to its name as a silent killer.

What are the effects of shame? Jean-Paul Sartre has called shame a “hemorrhage of the soul.”\textsuperscript{73} The experience of shame makes us deeply aware that we have deficiencies that are socially unacceptable. It is a basic human need to want to be welcomed and enjoyed by people who are close to us in our life. Shame can cause us to believe that

\textsuperscript{70} Capps, \textit{The Depleted Self}, location 880.  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., location 888.  
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{The Book of Common Prayer}. (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), 532.  
\textsuperscript{73} Allender, \textit{Wounded}, 61.
those around us might consider us undesirable, so that, we would not be welcomed and enjoyed by them. Allender says that there are at least four important elements to shame: exposure, revelation, dread of consequences, and empowering trust.74

It is said that shame is an experience of the eyes. “If we commit a normal but socially vulgar act in private, like nose picking, I would not feel shame; but if caught in the act by someone I know, I would likely feel shame.”75 Most of us have experienced some level of shame or embarrassment in our lives. Usually one must only recall a memory from early school days to know this statement to be true. These emotional experiences have different levels of impact on us based on our interpretations and reactions. I am reminded of a story I was told by a woman during pastoral counseling. As a young girl, she was called to the front of the class to do a math problem on the board. When she was unable to complete the problem, the teacher chastised her in front of everyone, implying that she did not have “the smarts” to do the problem. Shamed in front of everyone, she recalls how this episode affected the rest of her life. The implanted message of the teacher became a governing belief in her life. From that point, she made sure never to be in the spotlight of anything, believing that to do so would be only a set-up for failure. Shame is felt as it is exposed in front of others.

It is important to differentiate between shame and low self-esteem. As Brené Brown writes,

Shame and self-esteem are very different issues. We feel shame. We think self-esteem. Our self-esteem is based on how we see ourselves, our strengths, and limitations over time. It is how and what we think of ourselves. Shame is an emotion. It is how we feel when we have certain experiences. When we are in shame, we don’t

74 Ibid., 63.
75 Ibid., 64.
see the big picture; we don’t accurately think about our strengths and limitations. We just feel alone, exposed and deeply flawed.  

In regard to revelation, recognizing the difference between what Allender calls “legitimate and illegitimate shame” reveals the nature of its impact on us. Shame is not an easy topic. It involves a universal experience most people would like to ignore, but it is also a complex concept. Shame can be a result of the exposure of sin, therefore legitimate and desirable. Yet even the exposure of sin may provoke an experience of shame that is too intense and self-absorbing to be from God. On the other hand, much of the shame we experience is not due to the exposure of our sin but rather to the revelation of some deficiency (or perceived deficiency) in our dignity. The difference between illegitimate and legitimate shame is found in the object of the exposure. Legitimate shame exposes guilt, while illegitimate shame shines a light on some element of dignity.

Here Allender applies a theological lens to the issue of shame and suggests that shame can be useful for our restoration. He writes that, because of the Fall, we fear standing naked before God and others. We come up with a plethora of ways to avoid God’s presence and being seen truly by others. “Shame is a dreaded, deep-seated, long-held terror come true: what we have feared has actually come about. We’ve been found out.”

Because of the Fall, our sense of depravity and dignity has been turned upside down. Why is it that we do not feel shame when inflicting verbal, emotional, or physical abuse onto others? This kind of act violates the relationship we have with them and with God.

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77 Allender, *Wounded*, 63.

78 Ibid., 62.
We feel shame when our longings surface and we feel we have failed in some manner. A godly response in the face of abuse of any kind is to grieve—for the perpetrator’s sin and for the damage done to our soul but the natural response is to cower in shame, condemning our own soul for being so foolish as to hope, want, or risk. A godly response to failure is embedded in the Prayer for Young Persons in The Book of Common Prayer, which says, “Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start.”

When legitimate shame is revealed, it exposes our sin. If we do not turn to self-justification or denial, then the Spirit of God, who lives in the baptized, will nudge that sin into the light of God, not for condemnation but for redemption and healing. As Allender says, “It is God’s kindness to orchestrate the events of our life so that our heart will be tested and then humbled, so that our heart will hunger for the kind of bread that comes only from the mouth of God” (See Deuteronomy 8:2-7, 15-18). In Allender’s judgment, “Shame is an excellent path to exposing how we really feel about ourselves, what we demand of ourselves and others, and where we believe life can be found. It unearth[s] the strategies we use to deal with a world that is not under our control.”

It is the dread of consequences that fuels shame. When we are found out we expect to be rejected. Rejection is always a byproduct of being seen as deficient, even when the exposure involves a failure of minor proportions. The dread of being found out is sufficient to fuel radical denial, workaholism, perfectionism, revictimization, and a host of other ills. But the dread is greater than simply that of losing relationship. It is the

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79 Ibid., 65.
80 The Book of Common Prayer, 829.
81 Allender, Wounded, 67.
terror that, if our dark soul is discovered, we will never be enjoyed, desired, or well regarded by anyone. The fear involved in shame is of permanent abandonment or exile. Those who see our reprehensible core will be so disgusted and sickened that we will be lepers and outcasts forever.\textsuperscript{82}

Allender calls one of the insidious defense mechanisms we deploy in the face of shame the “shame-contempt cycle.” As we anticipate the exposure and consequences of our shame, we recoil from the anticipated pain that it will produce. In doing so, we engage contempt as an insulator to the pain. What is contempt in this context?

Contempt is best understood in its operation. Consider how you handle the loss of your car keys or cope with forgetting an important date. What are the words that you utter when you realize you’ve done something stupid or silly? A friend of the writer describes those events as “self-bashing opportunities”: “How could you have been so stupid, you fool!”; “Why don’t you keep better control of your schedule, you idiot!” Few would consider the internal dialogue as a problem or as a sign of arrogant sin. At worst, it would be seen as a result of a poor self-image. Is there a possibility of something more pernicious in this self-bashing?\textsuperscript{83}

Contempt comes in two forms in this defense mechanism: self-centered contempt and other-centered contempt. Contempt is condemnation. Self-centered contempt is condemnation of the self. It is the internal voice that minimizes the self, talks down to the self, and keeps the self from hope and joy. Self-centered contempt can also be experienced in action. It can come in the form of addiction, sexual hyperactivity, or self-abuse, to name a few. Other-centered contempt is understood as intense disregard for the other. It can manifest itself as blaming, name-calling, and belittlement. In extreme forms, other-centered contempt shows up in sexual, psychological, physical, or verbal abuse.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 73-74.
Capps refers to *Shame: The Power of Caring* by Gershen Kaufman, who reveals how contempt acts as a defensive strategy that enables people to talk about the painfulness of future experiences of shame. Kaufman includes “rage against others, contempt for others, striving for power, striving for perfection, transfer of blame and internal withdrawal” in these defense strategies.84

What function does contempt play in the cycle? In short, both self- and other-centered contempt act as mechanisms to create space between intimacy and shame. If I put others off, if I keep them at a distance, they will not have a chance to “know” me. If they do not really know me, they will have little chance to see where I have been deficient or depraved. In the case of self-centered contempt, if I do not believe that I deserve hope, or trust, or love, then when that experience does not come, I am the one in control. I control the crash landing of my life and no one else will have control over me. In both cases, my shame will stay hidden and safe in a dark place in my soul because contempt can blind the eyes of the observer or turn the eyes of the one shamed away from the one who has observed what is shameful. In either case, the effect is the same. The intense experience of shame has been diminished. Both forms of contempt may be used alternately, attacking self and then attacking the other. Though, in most cases, an individual will be more comfortable and predisposed to utilize one style more than the other.85

Ironically and sadly, contempt and other defense mechanisms, actually creates distance from the things we most long for and were created to receive: intimacy, trust,

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85 Allender, *Wounded*, 78.
and love. “In the midst of shame, longing for what the heart craves intensifies the anguish of the soul.” The cycle goes round and round. I desire to be known and to be loved, but if people knew my shame they surely would not want me. So I will keep that hunger at a distance, which only makes me hungrier for it. This compounded hunger will then cause me to seek satisfaction in counterfeit ways, which then compounds my shame. It is the devil’s great lie at work in our hearts.

We see the dynamic of shame complicated as we realize that it comes from a failure to trust. Trust is a giving of our soul to another with the hope that we will not be harmfully used. Such trust invests another with the power to determine whether or not we are acceptable and desirable. When trust, defined as an empowering of another to determine our desirability and worth, is absent, shame is usually not experienced.

The ways we deal with our dread of exposure are as varied as the number of human beings. But a common denominator surfaces in every strategy: deflection of our sin through the use of contempt or blame-shifting. In Genesis 3, Adam felt shame and used fig leaves to cover his nakedness. When he was discovered, he did not repent; instead, he blamed God and Eve for his fatal decision to eat the fruit. He condemned God for the creation. He poured his shame-based rage on God and through contempt nullified the need for humble repentance. As Adam’s children, we can discount our need for humbling by the same deflection. The abused person, facing deeper shame than most people, is even more apt to resort to radical deflection to hide a wound and then, unknowingly, to create more distance from healing.

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86 Ibid., 79.
87 Ibid., 68.
88 Ibid., 70.
Another complicating factor in contempt is that it distorts the real problem. Contempt distorts the fact that the central human problem is sin. Other-centered contempt is the easiest to comprehend because it ignores one’s own depravity and centers the blame on another person’s failure.\textsuperscript{89} In Adam’s shame, he shifts the blame onto God and then onto Eve. If they had done their jobs better he would have never gotten into trouble. Allender writes,

> Contempt can be called the great masquerade. Self-contempt in particular is Satan’s counterfeit for conviction over sin. When I feel bad about myself, angry that I said something insensitive to my wife, it can look like sorrow over sin. In actuality, it is usually a denigration of some element of my dignity, rather than a sorrow over my depravity.\textsuperscript{90}

Contempt is complex and can be challenging to see. It will at times mask itself as conviction; at other times it looks like righteous indignation. It can appear as a poor self-image or as a bad attitude toward others. However it manifests itself, one thing can be assumed: contempt hinders the work of God. It directs our sight away from our deepest longings and deflects the focus from our sin and need for God to an attack against our own or another’s dignity. It is no wonder that this symptom is so apparent within church systems. That is why I have found it vital as a point of triage when working with dysfunctional parishes. When dysfunctional choices are made, either by clergy or parishioners, we can so quickly become like Adam and try to shift the blame for the results of those choices elsewhere. However, when people are invited into the conversation of shame and are willing to walk humbly with one another in the hope of healing and renewal, the mechanisms of contempt can be disengaged. This

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 82.  
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 83.
disengagement of contempt has a liberating effect on the conversation and allows trust to be rebuilt with greater speed and intention. When shame is defused and the seeds of trust are planted, the journey to reconciliation has a great chance to begin.
Chapter 5

The Pathway to Restoration

_In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance._  

We have now covered the clinical tools that in my experience have proven helpful in the evaluation of dysfunctional clergy and congregations. These are important in that they give us data that reveal the root of the dysfunction, though they do not necessarily move us in a direction toward restoration. I have often said that being a priest is like getting a backstage pass into the lives of those in my cure. I get to rejoice in the blessings that come with births, weddings, and other celebrations. I also get the weighty privilege of being with people in their pain. One of the most profound experiences is to be with someone during a time of sacramental confession.

In *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*, John de Gruchy explains that the word “reconciliation” entered the Christian conversation “through the Vulgate's use of the Latin _reconciliatio_ to translate Paul's _kattallage_, a word used to describe God's saving work in Jesus Christ.”

Over the course of centuries, the word has come to hold many different meanings: “amongst these was restoring someone to favour, reconciling penitents to the Church, purification of sacred objects such as church buildings after their desecration, overcoming the estrangement of married partners, or simply the act of

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reaching agreement.” The words translated “reconciliation” or “reconcile” occur only fifteen times in the New Testament and for the most part occur in Paul’s letters. As de Gruchy says, “All of them are compounds of the meaning ‘to exchange’, and this in turn is derived from the meaning ‘the other’. The words thus carry with them the sense of exchanging places with ‘the other’, and therefore being in solidarity with rather than against ‘the other.’” Within the Christian context, reconciliation has to do with the way God relates to us. As God extends God’s self to us, we are called then to extend ourselves to “the other.”

But who begins the process? Matthew 18:15-16 says, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” (NKJV) But being “sinned against” does not make it easier to be the initiator of this conversation. In fact, as discussed in the past chapter, the effect of shame and sin can keep people withdrawn and secluded, not only for victims who have to deal with the shame of what was done to them but also for perpetrators whose defense mechanisms work to keep their actions in the dark. The temptation to keep mistakes and dysfunctional behavior in the shadows can be overwhelming and make it all the more difficult for the truth to be told.

In Wholeness after Betrayal, Robin Hammeal-Urban underscores the need for speaking the truth in her chapter on disclosure: “For our relationships to be authentic and trustworthy, we need to know the truth about ourselves and others. This is particularly

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93 Ibid., location 275.
94 Ibid., location 588.
95 Ibid.
true for members of congregations who have been betrayed by a trusted leader, lay or
ordained.”\(^{96}\) Relational events like misconduct erode trust among all the members of the
congregation, not just the offender and primary victim. She continues, “As Christians, we
are called to tell about misconduct in our congregations on the *intrapersonal*,
*interpersonal*, *institutional*, and *cultural levels*. Communicating accurate information, or
telling truth about what has been secret, can be transformative and healing to many when
all four levels are addressed.”\(^{97}\) Let us briefly unpack each of these levels.

Victims of dysfunctional or destructive behavior may struggle on an *intrapersonal*
level to recognize that they have been harmed. “Denial serves to protect all of us from
seeing deep brokenness, until we are ready to see it.”\(^{98}\) How many cases of misconduct
have we heard in the news that do not come to consciousness until years after the event?
Hammeal-Urban calls this recognition “seeing” and says that this is often the first step
toward healing from the shame of victimization. She also makes the case that this same
effect occurs with anyone who may have witnessed or been bystanders at the events:
“Over time, often by gaining additional information, bystanders begin to acknowledge to
themselves that their trust has been betrayed.”\(^{99}\)

In the case of *interpersonal level* disclosure, we are led to tell others about our
victimization. While some may achieve some measure of healing through prayer and
their relationship with God, many do not. “Disclosing to another person that we were
harmed, and being heard and supported by another, is a significant step toward healing

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\(^{96}\) Hammeal-Urban., *Wholeness*, 22.
\(^{97}\) Ibid., 23.
\(^{98}\) Ibid., 25.
\(^{99}\) Ibid.
and wholeness. For some, a necessary step for healing is to tell church officials about the misconduct.”\textsuperscript{100}

To the point of \textit{institutional} disclosure, Hammeal-Urban states, “The church, as an institution, needs to define, name, respond, and disclose misconduct in congregations and beyond.”\textsuperscript{101} The Episcopal Church’s disciplinary canons do have a prescribed response process for clergy misconduct, but these same canons are not as clear and direct in regard to lay-leader misconduct, which can cause just as much harm to a congregation. I remember being told by my parents that if I did something wrong, there would be consequences. But if I did something wrong and tried to hide it or lie about it, I was assured that the consequences would be much more severe. I believe the same effect is true for the institutional church. In my opinion, the church’s witness would be much more effective in the world if we could do a better job in our own house.

Finally, on a \textit{cultural} level, the church is called to stand firm for the gospel over against any dominant culture in the world. If the church is to be successful in teaching another way to live, truth-telling and disclosure of dysfunctional behavior within its walls is essential. Hammeal–Urban describes the case of a married priest who was having a sexualized relationship with a female parishioner to whom he provided pastoral care during her divorce. During the bishop’s meeting with wardens and the vestry, it was revealed that each lay leader present had engaged in at least one extramarital affair. “The disciplinary actions that focused on the rector’s behavior became an opportunity for the

\textsuperscript{100} Hammeal-Urban, \textit{Wholeness}, 26.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
congregation to explore Christian marriage and created an opportunity for people to amend their lives.”102

Hammeal-Urban closes with a note about the impediments and resistance to disclosing misconduct. She explains, “To overcome this resistance, the impediments need to be recognized, named, explored, and mitigated. This allows leaders to make informed decisions about how to best move forward.”103 Some of these impediments are denial, fear, rationalization, ignoring the true cause, and as discussed earlier, shame and guilt.104

A helpful resource to ensure that these levels of disclosure are implemented and communicated is described by E. Larraine Frampton When a Congregation Is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct.105 She explains the positive significance of bringing in a trained response team to help navigate congregational crisis, especially for the practice of appropriate and timely communication. Frampton says that not only do response teams work with offenders, victims, and their families, but they also ensure that the congregation is participating in the recovery process. Response teams handle congregational disclosure, management the case, and offer intentional time to give congregations the needed amount of attention to move toward recovery.

Appropriate communication is vital to any recovering congregation. Yet, Nancy Hopkins offers apt cautions about using electronic communication: “Careful thought is given to ensuring that newer means of communication, such as internet, phone answering devices, and videos are appropriately used . . . answering machines and voice mail do

102 Hammeal-Urban, Wholeness, 27.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
free up time . . but if overused, they can also make people feel alienated.”

It is common for people to use email as their major form of communication, not only for its expediency but also for its ability to reach a large group of people easily. Yet, “when anything controversial is sent by email, the potential for misunderstanding is great. Careless words written in the heat of the moment, without the interpretation of voice inflection or facial expression, have the potential to wound far more than they would if expressed in face-to-face encounter.”

Another concern is the inability to guarantee confidentiality once information is released electronically. Hopkins writes, “Hapless pastors have send blistering notes to a few people they thought were allies in the congregation, only to have the notes quickly copied to everyone on the parish list, with disastrous results.”

Last but not least, the timing and flow of disclosure to different groups in a congregation is important to the trajectory of reconciliation. The suggested roll-out of information follows once the bishop has been informed: the wardens, the entire vestry, the staff, and then the entire congregation. Within this process, it is also advisable for the vestry to consider whether there are any individuals who may be uniquely affected by the news and best cared for by learning about it in smaller groups and in person. In every step of this process, it is important that the disclosure statement be truthful, consistent, and direct.

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107 Ibid., 133.
108 Ibid., 134.
Now that we have discussed some of the practical steps in the reconciliation of a congregational crisis, let us look at some sacramental steps. I believe that confession is a vital step down the pathway toward reconciliation and renewal not only for individuals but also for entire congregations. It is for this reason that I include it as part of the healing process for church communities who find themselves in crisis. In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer talks about the impact of unacknowledged sin on the community of faith. He says that sin concealed separates one from the fellowship of believers.\(^{110}\)

Bonhoeffer reminds us that through confession a breakthrough to community takes place. The sin of pride, self-righteousness, or arrogance, “demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community.”\(^{111}\) As will be revealed in case studies that follow in this paper, such isolation takes place more often than we care to think about in church leadership.

The temptation to withdrawal reveals a challenge that comes with congregational healing. This challenge often keeps people from completing that process. In *Go in Peace: The Art of Hearing Confessions*, Julia Gatta and Martin L. Smith point out, “In most mainline churches people drop out, at least for a while, when life gets messy. An impending divorce, an adulterous affair, chronic depression, a job layoff, a child in trouble”– and, I might add, dysfunctional church leadership “all of these commonplace occurrences drive people from the church just when they most need the grace of the sacraments and the support of the community.”\(^{112}\) To be clear, some of the cited examples


\(^{111}\) Ibid., location 1333.

such as job layoff or children in trouble may induce shame, and people involved in these situations do not necessarily need to be reconciled with their community. The point is that the pain that accompanies congregational crisis can be too much for people to bear, and the temptation to move on to another faith community or, worse, to stop attending a church altogether in order to relieve that pain can be overwhelming. Their departure however, denies them the experience of joy and renewal that is at the heart of reconciliation. I believe that a crucial role for any response team tasked with overseeing the reconciliation process is continually to invite people to hope. This reminder of hope is underscored in Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 5: “And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God had poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he had given us” (NKJV).

We are invited, through the power of the Spirit, to overcome alienation in hopes for restoration and peace to occur. According to de Gruchy, “the most remarkable aspect of Paul’s teaching on reconciliation is that in virtually every instance in which he uses the word or its cognates, God is the subject or agent of reconciliation.”

It is our God who sets the model for reconciliation and, as Gatta and Smith remind us, “Reconciliation stands at the center of the gospel proclamation.” It is further understood that God takes the initiative in reconciliation. Paul reminds us that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against

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113 de Gruchy, Reconciliation, Location 603.
114 Gatta and Smith, Go in Peace, location 411.
them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV).115

The goal of confession and absolution within the context of congregational crisis is for the healing of each individual who was personally affected by the misconduct and for the whole community, which is affected at different levels, to be reconciled as a community. “When Paul exercises pastoral discipline in the churches under his authority, his overarching aim is to restore the offending parties.”116 This aim is emphasized through the words of Ash Wednesday invitation where we are reminded that, in the early church,

This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set for in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.117

Gatta and Smith attest, “In the course of Anglican history, use of private confession has waxed and waned along with other aspects of sacramental life. But it has never entirely disappeared . . .” and for that we are thankful because no amount of therapy, no matter how helpful and healing, can free us of the burden of sins through the grace of Christ crucified.118 The power of confession and absolution should never be underestimated, and the church at large would be served better with a consistent reminder that this sacrament is available always, not simply during times of crisis. “Confession brings destructive secrets into the open. There exists a profound human need to express our vulnerability and articulate our guilt, yet we shy

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115 Ibid., location 411.
116 Ibid., location 237.
117 Book of Common Prayer, 264.
118 Gatta and Smith, Go in Peace, location 368.
away from it.” It is my contention that if the teaching of confession and absolution were integrated consistently into the regular life of the church, more people, including clergy, would take better advantage of its benefits and perhaps larger issues of misconduct could be minimized. Even as this paper has a good deal of therapeutic application, we are reminded that,

The rite of reconciliation, while therapeutic, is not psychotherapy on the cheap. It is a sacrament, an encounter with Christ through the ministry of the church, and its purpose is the forgiveness of sin. By the grace of God, forgiveness is itself healing, and the whole process of contrition, confession, amendment, and absolution is restorative.120

There are multiple liturgical resources for use toward restoration of individuals and congregations. For those in need of personal confession, there is of course the service for the Reconciliation of a Penitent in the Book of Common Prayer. Our own Book of Occasional Services has a Service of Public Healing that can be used for the entire congregation, and the Church of England’s Book of Alternative Services offers the service of Reconciliation and Restoration.

The medical analogy used at the beginning of this paper is nothing new. It appeared in the writings of the Venerable Bede and in later writings of Abelard and Aquinas.121 As Thomas Aquinas said in the passage used to open this chapter, sometimes they body of a man can become sick, both physically and spiritually. The members of the body of the faithful, known as the church, can become sick as well. The spiritual symptoms of communal ill health are evident when a community becomes polarized and breaks apart. The symptoms can be seen when abusive behavior is tolerated in its midst.

119 Ibid. location 492.
120 Gatta and Smith, Go in Peace, location 509.
121 Ibid., location 337.
If these symptoms continue over time without intervention, the body of the faithful can die. We see this breakdown happen more often than anyone would want.

Yet there is a death that leads to new life in Christ: the death to sin. In speaking of the grace of baptism, St. Paul presents it as participation in the paschal mystery of Christ’s saving death and resurrection. One aspect of this union with Christ is the death to sin: “So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). Death is never easy, including death to sin. Yet the baptism liturgy of the Episcopal Church invites members both to resist sin and to engage in regular repentance. In the Baptismal Covenant candidates for baptism are therefore asked: “Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?” Our ongoing struggle with sin should not, then, come as a surprise, nor our need to acknowledge and repent of sin for our own spiritual health and that of the community of faith.
Chapter 6

Case Studies

Since those who submitted the stories behind the first two case studies requested confidentiality, I have changed the names of those churches and the individuals connected to them. The third case study comes from my own experience with my first parish as rector. After each case study I will apply the tools discussed in this paper, which either were, or could have been, applied for recovery and reconciliation to occur.

Case Study #1 - “Thumb Tacks and Red Carpet” (Lay Leadership Dysfunction)

“St. Mark’s Episcopal Church” was founded fifty years ago as a mission of “St. John’s” Episcopal Church, which is one of the downtown churches of a small city outside Atlanta. St. John’s was established in 1844 and for a century was the only Episcopal presence in the city. The priest-in-charge of St. Mark’s (we will call him “Fr. Tom”) had not researched the history of this mission completely, but he was told anecdotally that St. Mark’s was founded when General Electric came to the city in 1952 and brought to the plant a large number of Episcopalians from up north. After his arrival at St. Mark’s, Fr. Tom heard old stories about how the mission was established. He was told that the “professional and finished” people of St. John’s Church, besides not wanting passers-through in their congregation, felt that the workers at the GE plant would not have their spiritual needs met downtown. They suggested that these workers have a church of their own on the west side of town to better serve their population. Fr. Tom was never able to confirm these recollections, but there are still GE retirees in St. Mark’s congregation, even though the plant closed in 1997.

For the last thirty-five years St. Mark’s has struggled to remain viable. The current bishop agreed to keep St. Mark’s as a mission of the diocese if the people of St. Mark’s
agreed to sell their property and move. The original church was built on a busy avenue, which meant the property was worth much more than the building. The proposal from the diocese was to sell the property and use the funds to purchase a lot in a nearby residential neighborhood. Skilled workers built the new building from the congregation with materials brought from the old building before it was razed. These materials included some unsightly red shag carpet, which was removed from an unused Sunday school room over the objection of the daughter of charter members, (whom we will call “Miss A”). Fr. Tom also convinced them to convert the room into a women’s restroom, which, according to Fr. Tom, added “insult to injury.” Miss A is now sixty-five years old, lives in her mother’s house, and cares for her disabled brother (keeping a promise made to her mother when she was on her death bed). Her mother, Mrs. C, was chair of the altar guild until her death. Miss A, to this day, is still consulted over any altar guild issues, especially when Fr. Tom suggests they do anything different, such as using a piece of lightweight Plexiglas to hold the frontal in place rather than thumb tacks.

Fr. Tom’s immediate predecessor was a part-time rector who had a background in social work before going to seminary. He had a history of multiple marriages and was diagnosed, Fr. Tom had been told, with a psychiatric disorder. Fr. Tom did not know if that was true but knew that his predecessor had spent an entire year on disability before finally retiring, freeing the congregation to call another priest. Even before his disability leave, this priest moved to Sewanee, a two-hour commute. He also took with him the church register and membership records, so that Fr. Tom had no documentation of attendance, baptisms, marriages, or funerals before 2011.

Mrs. F was a force in the parish before her death in 2010. She was a strong-willed gardener who worked constantly on the parish grounds. Additionally, Mrs. F would
financially underwrite any major project she endorsed. When she died she left the bulk of her
estate to St. Mark’s and the diocese (60% and 20% respectively).

When Fr. Tom arrived, the vestry consisted of Miss A (who was senior Warden), a GE
retiree now 87, the widow of another GE retiree, her son-in-law (whose wife has significant
mental health issues), another widow who could not see or hear well enough to participate in
discussions, a convicted felon (attempted murder), and a former GE employee (“Matt,” who
reportedly was forced to retire early because he could not get along with anyone, a scenario
Fr. Tom found completely plausible). According to Fr. Tom, all were in constant conflict, or
so he was led to believe by their interactions. But even so, when the senior warden rotated off
the vestry, Matt insisted on honoring her with a gift and tribute.

Fr. Tom closed his report by saying, “There are systemic and intergenerational issues
galore, and the shame is that they have not been well served by either parochial priests or the
diocese. Thumb tacks in the altar and the red carpet incident are just two examples.”

Fr. Tom was a classmate of mine in seminary and so was willing to offer this case
study. Because I was not active in his diocese, and the fact that Fr. Tom asked me to keep
this case confidential, my access to first-person information was minimal. If I had been able
to work with St. Mark’s, my investigation would have begun by hearing the story of St.
Mark’s from as early an account as possible. What was the relationship between St. Mark’s
and its mother church, St. John’s? What group motivated the mission strategy of St. Mark’s?
Did anyone leave St. John’s to help establish this new mission?

These questions are very important to understanding the identity of a church and, by
extension, its original mission and vision. Answers to these questions give information
regarding the systemic issue of extended family field within the family system model, as was
discussed in chapter two. I found the comments made by Fr. Tom about the “mother church”
and their possible reasons for starting the mission disturbing. Even though he had no hard evidence to back up the reasons for the creation of the mission, other than subjective comments made by parishioners, Fr. Tom stated, “Usually where there is smoke, there is some fire in these types of stories.”

In researching St. John’s history, one finds a strong emphasis on the tradition and legacy of its beginning. As stated, St. John’s was established in 1844 as the first Episcopal church in this historic southern town. The historical page on their website emphasizes the long tenures of their rectors as well as their historic role in the Civil War. With over a page and a half of historical documentation, only one sentence is dedicated to the establishment of St. Mark’s as a mission and with the single comment, “beginning about 1960.” If there is any truth to the socioeconomic motivation for the beginning of this mission, revealing a “white-collar” /“blue-collar” disparity, might the history of St. Mark’s and its people be marked with a level of shame for not being “good enough” to be members of St. John’s? If this was the reason for the mission, where is the missio Dei as its guiding factor? What was the diocesan role in its creation?

Most large cities that contain multiple parishes of the same denomination have some dynamic of class disparity and are aware of this implied, if not overt, identification of certain parishes. There are the “wealthy” churches and the “poor” churches. We are reminded there is a dynamic in extended family fields that plays a role in the process of self-differentiation.122 I would hypothesize that the continued presence of so many G.E. family members on the vestry is a result of their deep identification with the company that played such an important part in the parish’s inception. Another support for this hypothesis would be found in the continuing emotional triangles and relational enmeshment of those in

leadership at St. Mark’s as reported by Fr. Tom. Is the lack of leadership rotation a function of the challenges that come with any small congregation, or is it a function of control by a small group of people? Fr. Tom would suggest the latter.

I would also want to attend to the issue of trust within the congregation, with both the diocesan leadership and its past clerical leaders. What was the lasting effect of having to sell the original mission and property? How did that sale affect their relationship with the bishop and diocesan leadership? Who supported this decision and who did not? Was there a loss of membership because of the change? Was this a prayerful and Spirit-led decision or one made out of desperation for survival’s sake? It is my experience that, unless the truth of these issues is confronted and processed, any hope for growth and renewal is minimal at best. At the time of writing this paper, the church was in the midst of transition. Fr. Tom had retired and the diocese was in the midst of assigning a new leader.

In review of their ten-year parochial report (see illustration #1) other questions can be raised. What caused the increase of membership and stewardship for the years of 2002 to 2006? What happened during the years of the past priest’s inconsistency and implied mental illness? I sought out the retired Fr. Tom for further clarification and he offered this response:

I left St. Marks the end of August 2013, so cannot attest to anything after that. As to the parochial report, I would not trust the data during the period from 2004 to 2010. That is roughly the period when the troubled priest was there. When he left he took with him all the parish’s records so there is no way to verify attendance, membership or even baptisms and confirmations. When I was there I tried to recreate records of baptisms, confirmations, receptions, funerals and weddings but that process is never going to produce a complete record and accurate data. As to membership, I know that he had people serving on the vestry who were not Episcopalians. And the congregation who was there were still his projects. There are still an extraordinary number of parishioners who are in recovery, dealing with mental illness, and even a felon or two. A retired social worker who was one of my favorite parishioners there referred to the congregation as an island of misfit toys.
Case Study #2: “The Village Vicar” (Clerical Leadership Dysfunction)

“St. Paul’s” Episcopal Church is an historic church in Florida that began meeting and growing along with the community in the 1870s. They initially met in people's homes and then in a small log schoolhouse on the property of one of the town’s founders, “Mr. J. S. Adams.” Their first recorded activity was Mr. Adam’s daughter's baptism on Easter 1877. Mr. Adams donated six acres on what is now Church Avenue (including where the police station now stands), and the congregation built on its east end, around 1880. They chose the board-and-batten Carpenter Gothic style, which was fashionable at the time. The furnishings were all gifts, and the earliest are dated 1879. Many were made locally and others came from the original Holy Cross parish building in Sanford, Florida that was destroyed in a hurricane in 1880. St. Paul’s then consisted of nine families and twenty communicants but had no official minister. The congregation took care of itself and was visited occasionally by traveling clergymen. Their new building was dedicated at Easter 1882, and in 1883 clergy visits became regular, though it was only in 1955 that the first full-time pastor was appointed.

St. Paul’s has thrived for over 130 years. Its building is the oldest continuously used Christian meeting house in the County. “Fr. D” became rector in 2000, following a rector who had served the church for twelve years and left it with the largest membership and income to date. Fr. D had been trained in Australia and New Zealand and had served his first two positions as associate in that context. He came to the United States after his marriage and served in Virginia for three years as an assistant before coming to St. Paul’s as rector. His first apparent challenge came in 2004 when damage was caused to the church buildings by hurricanes Charlie, Francis, and Jean. Unrelated to the hurricanes,
parishioners began to share their concern for the direction of the church with the diocese. This concern focused on two areas: First, their level of stewardship had dropped since Fr. D’s arrival and had remained stagnant for the past three years. Second, the demographics of St. Paul’s had changed, resulting in loss of membership (see parochial report illustration #2), and there did not seem to be any strategy for dealing with this change.

As noted in the history, St. Paul’s had once been in the center of the town of Longwood. But over time the urban sprawl had changed the center of gravity of the town, whereupon people began to move and membership dropped.

Toward the end of 2005, in response to these concerns, the diocese sent in the canon to the ordinary for some strategic planning. New stewardship and evangelism strategies were put in place, but over the next four years, baptized membership and average Sunday attendance continued to drop. Financial stewardship remained constant, but fewer people were giving more in order to keep the church afloat. These issues became critical in 2010 when the diocesan Congregational Development Commission (CDC) was called in to make a deeper assessment. The team, of which I was a member, initiated a number of surveys, including the congregational development readiness survey, which is in the appendix of this project, a mutual ministry review, and tools taught to us by the Rev. Kevin Martin, who at the time led Vital Church Ministries and had trained our diocesan team. The data indicated a number of factors at work:

- That there was no communicated mission statement or list of present goals (self-differentiation).
- That there was no delegation of duties beyond the vestry, so that decision-making was centralized in a few people who were serving longer than appropriate vestry terms.
Those who were on the vestry did not understand their roles or the balance of power as defined by the national and diocesan canons. The rector had been put into the place of “identified patient,” thus becoming the lightning rod for all anxiety.

These issues were compounded by the rector’s cultural understanding of what it meant to be a parish priest. The model set for him early in his ministry was one of a village vicar for whom hospital visitation, Bible-study, and sermon preparation were to be his core activities and responsibilities. Understanding budgets, strategy, demographics, and evangelism were beyond his comfort level or skill set. When confronted by this reality, he admitted that he chose to recoil instead of investing time and energy to learn the skills needed to lead St. Paul’s in this new situation. As he admitted this problem, he admitted also to a level of shame that was difficult to own. He also admitted to frustration with his congregation for pushing him to grow in areas he did not believe were his responsibility. This resistance motivated a level of other-centered contempt that was expressed in his often sarcastic and snide comments about his cure. The effect of these behaviors over time created a loss of trust in his leadership that would need to be regained for the congregation to recover. This lack of trust was expressed in the survey results.

Over the course of several months, the CDC worked with both Fr. D and the vestry. They were educated in the canons with regard to vestry responsibility and direction. Each vestry member took responsibility to find someone from the congregation who had a gift to help in the different areas needed. The CDC brought in people from outside the church to aid in budget guidance, website design, and audio visual development (as there had been a desire from the congregation to add a contemporary service with words on a screen).
With regard to the rector, another priest and I worked with Fr. D personally to help him gain an understanding of family systems and thus empower him to gain a vision for the church, using the leadership strategies we suggested. He seemed receptive and even excited about the content. What we did not know, or could not know, was what he was not telling us. During the time of our intervention, Fr. D took a stronger hold on the finances and their oversight, but did so by making unilateral financial decisions with no budget to guide him and no vestry input. This information came to light during one of my follow-up meetings with their vestry.

As I entered the room, I found double the amount of people normally present in past meetings. At one table sat the vestry that I had come to know, sitting with their rector. At another table was a group of parishioners matching the size of the elected vestry. At the head of that table was a gentleman the CDC had heard about but had never met. I will call him Norm. Norm had come to be known as an antagonist. He had left and rejoined the church twice over leadership decisions. If the presence of the new group was not odd enough, the lack of attention to this group by the vestry and the rector was even more concerning. I sat back as an observer through the first half of the meeting. I was not introduced to anyone, nor did they introduce themselves to me. When it came time to discuss the church finances, Norm took it upon himself to get up from his table, cross over to stand next to the rector and share the “budget” that he had created for the coming year. As he was reviewing his budget on handouts that he had given everyone, I leaned over to Fr. D and asked quietly who this man was. Was he a member of some finance committee that I had not known about? Was he some lost vestry member that I had not
met? Fr. D said that he was not. So then I asked whether the rector had asked him to do this alternative budget. Sheepishly he replied that he had not.

What I was witnessing, “live and in color,” was the theory of homeostasis in action. We recall that homeostasis is the tendency of any set of relationships to strive perpetually, in self-corrective ways, to preserve the organizing principles of its existence. Because Fr. D had evidently led from behind for the past six years, his passive style had allowed others to fill the leadership void in passive-aggressive ways. This had become one of their organizing principles under Fr. D’s leadership. Because of Fr. D’s behavior, Norm had been able to lead from the sidelines and under the radar for these past couple of years, leaving and rejoining the church as things either went his way or did not. With Fr. D’s new self-assertive and directive leadership style, an imbalance had been created in the status quo, and Norm did not care for it. In fact, Norm chose a frontal assault on the historically quiet and passive rector. What was sad to see was Fr. D’s reluctance to do or say anything in the midst of this assault. After ten to fifteen minutes, Norm, seemingly pleased with his presentation sat back down at his table. All Fr. D said was, “thank you.” At this point, I could not help but to ask, “Excuse me, but who are you and what is this about?” I also asked everyone else at the other table to introduce themselves and state their reason for attending the meeting. It became clear that the other table was what I could only describe as a “ghost” vestry. They all supported Norm and had been very frustrated with Fr. D’s lack of results, even after knowing that the CDC had been actively engaged for months. I asked Fr. D if I could take a moment to explain the challenges of changing a system in ways that were supported by the polity of the Episcopal Church and the authority of the duly elected vestry and rector and that were designated to bring health
to a congregation. I also added that, in all my years of leading and being part of vestry meetings, I had never seen this behavior and found Norm’s action profoundly troubling and undermining of Fr. D’s leadership.

What took place over the next hour became a living example of the dynamic of homeostasis within a system and what can happen when old ways are challenged. I highlight this particular story because in retrospect this was a turning point for Fr. D. I believe that the depth of shame he felt in the midst of that event, even after I took time to meet privately with him to unpack the whole situation, was more than he could bear. Fr. D was a man who had passion for the gospel and the care of his congregation. What he did not have was the will to fight for his position.

In Leadership without Easy Answers, Heifetz outlines this exact leadership dilemma. “Leadership is dangerous, with or without authority, because the stresses of adaptive work can be severe. . . people who lead frequently bear scars from their efforts to bring about adaptive change.”123 The scar for Fr. D was from having his passivity completely exposed by Norm’s presentation. It also exposed the fact that Fr. D had little knowledge of budget creation, as he had been making decisions about church finances without the vestry’s input. The “dreaded, long-held terror had come true”--what Fr. D had feared had actually come about.124 Over the course of the following weeks, Fr. D became more reluctant to meet with me. I attempted to set meetings in order to attend to his spirit and see what pastoral care could be extended to him. I was soon called by the senior warden to attend a meeting at which Fr. D announced that he would resign. I then contacted the

123 Heifetz, Leadership, 235.
124 Allender, Wounded, 63.
canon to the ordinary and the bishop, as it was appropriate for them to be present and
active during this aspect of the church’s journey. Both the vestry and the rector seemed
resigned to the decision. In fact, in follow-up discussions with both the vestry and Fr. D,
there seemed to be a sense of relief. A severance package was created and they parted
ways. St. Paul’s presently has an interim priest as they work to determine whether they
can be a viable mission. The interim priest has already begun to make new and strong
leadership decisions. Fr. D is currently not serving a parish. Norm has once again left
the church.

Case Study #3 – “Behind the Palmettos” (Dysfunction of Both Groups)

As I have mentioned throughout this project, my experience as the rector of the
Church of the Ascension has contributed to my passion for this subject.

The Church of the Ascension began in 1980 as a mission parish. It was started by
a group of people who attended the older Church of the Messiah in the next town. The
population was on the rise in what is known as Windermere. These people felt called to
establish an Episcopal presence in the Windermere area, and the diocese supported it with
the purchase of land. The church first met in a number of public venues until the mission
grew and funds were raised to build a permanent church building. Ground-breaking took
place in 1983, and the church was ready for dedication in 1985. Over the course of the
following years, the area around the church grew greatly. This area also grew in prestige
as communities like Bay Hill Country Club (home of Arnold Palmer and his golf
tournament), Isle Worth (a community known for many professional athletes and high-
level business people), and Windermere were growing around it. All the while,
Ascension remained behind three acres of head-high palmetto bushes. Even though it is located on what is called “church row,” it was not well known in the community. At the same time, the people of Ascension claimed they had a desire to grow. The “outward and visible signs” did not seem to match “the inward and spiritual” demeanor of the church.

Over the five years prior to my arrival, approximately from 1996 to 2001, Ascension had attained a reputation for being a charismatic church. Their praise band had traveled around the diocese leading retreats and sharing their gifts. The charismatic flavor of the church was centered in its 10:30 am service. It was not uncommon for their praise band to play for 45 minutes, time that included speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances, before the opening acclamation. The search committee reported that they were frustrated when newcomers visited and would leave in the middle of the service. The parish was not growing but they did not understand why. There had also been a thriving and active healing ministry.

The previous rector was a man with strong charisma. He was well known for his preaching and teaching, but had frustrated parishioners with his lack of “pastoral care” and “grace.” Upon my arrival I was told by more than one parishioner that he would commonly say that if people did not like what Ascension was doing, “there were many other churches they could attend within a two-mile radius.” Besides irritation at this arrogant attitude, there was also frustration with his leadership style. A reported nickname for the rector was the “flavor of the month” priest. Any programming or teaching series was based on his latest reaction to a book or seminar. A parish survey taken for the search process reported a deep lack of trust in his leadership because no one
ever knew what he would do next or why. His sexual impropriety only compounded these issues toward the end of his tenure with Ascension.

What I found upon arrival, as a rookie rector, was a group of people who were passionate for the gospel of Christ, loved one another, and desired deeply to grow in discipleship, but who were confused and hurt by the spiritual abuse and manipulation that had taken place. They could see manifestations of the Spirit in their midst, but they wondered why there was no accompanying congregational growth?

My knowledge of Friedman’s family systems theory came out of my time in Clinical Pastoral Education at the Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. Friedman’s book *Generation to Generation* was required reading for our small-group conversations. The book also touched me personally because it gave me language by which to frame issues that had been taking place in my own family of origin. Consequently, I took extra time to learn the tools that Friedman offered. I believe that God led me to study Friedman’s approach in order to apply it to the situation at Ascension.

Ascension had a history of having both an 8:30 (traditional service) and a 10:30 (contemporary/charismatic) service. It did not take long to discern that there was great disparity between the two groups and that many who attended the 10:30 service felt spiritually superior because of the manifestations that took place within it. Those who attended the 8:30 service would say that they felt like the “step-children” of the church. The palpable level of spiritual pride within the 10:30 group became evident during one of my first vestry meetings, when one member of that group stated aloud how the 10:30 service was “so much more spiritual than the 8:30 service.” Yet it did not take long to observe that those who exhibited the spiritual manifestations at the 10:30 service were
often the same people every Sunday, and that these took place almost on cue at a certain part of the service.

On one given Sunday, one of the matriarchs of the church shared a prophetic word in the midst of the prayers of the people. Something did not feel right about it to me. After listening to what she had to say, it became clear that what she was doing was expressing concerns over an issue that had bothered her personally. Evidently people had learned to use this time to share “prophetically” what was on their hearts because it was the only safe place to do so within the community. It was the same kind of behavior that people exhibited who had been through sexual or emotional abuse. Because the past rector had not been open to criticism or direction or input, people began to learn that they could only share their concerns under the guise of “the Spirit” to be safe. Following the service, I risked approaching the matriarch and asked if I could talk to her about her “prophecy.” As we spoke, I challenged the premise that her message was “of God” and said that it sounded more personal, given what I knew about her current concerns. I said that it was acceptable to bring issues to me personally if she had concerns and that I would be more than happy to work with her toward solving any issues. With tears in her eyes, she agreed that what she had said was probably more “her stuff” and agreed to come and meet with me at length. Over the following months, as people came to know and trust me, the “prophetic words” became less and less a part of the liturgy. I also made the decision to decrease the opening praise music to no more than ten minutes, which minimized the temptation to “fill in” where some had typically spoken. It also began to normalize our liturgy so that those who came to visit would find the Episcopal liturgy they expected and not a Pentecostal one. I began to spend time teaching classic
Anglican spirituality and liturgy, underscoring the depth of spirit often found in contemplative aspects of our liturgy and practiced during our 8:30 service. Over the first year, the number of people who visited and stayed increased dramatically.

The systems side effect was realized within the charismatic stronghold group. In making the changes, the homeostasis of worship was being affected, and I was being condemned for “taking the Holy Spirit” out of their worship. “Self-differentiation” became our watchword over the first two years as we claimed who “we” were, what “we” were about, and where “we” were headed as a church as determined by the newly created long-range planning committee, underscoring that this discernment did not come solely from the rector, but from the community itself.

Trust began to be rebuilt, not based on fear or loss, or Calculus-Based distrust, but on shared kingdom vision and mission which built Identification-Based Trust. The establishing of this trust allowed the church to begin to dream about the future. Ascension made the decision to cut down the three acres of palmetto bushes that blocked the view of the church from the road. Both congregations found their place in the shared life of the church, and any discrimination based on practices was squelched. For the first two years, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Peter Scazzero was standard reading for all vestry and lay leaders. By educating all the leadership in systems language and processes, the rector was no longer cast as the “identified patient” and others took responsibility for regulating emotional triangulation and necessary correction for it. Ronald Heifetz says, “To sustain adaptive change, the community has eventually to discover and develop its own capacity for doing work, including the capacity to authorize other citizens.”

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Evidence of this growing maturity started to show as parishioners began to meet with me about their past distressing experiences. Once word got out that I was receptive to their pain and willing to listen, the list of visitors to my office grew exponentially. The impact that this crisis had on people varied based on how close they were to the previous rector, his family, and the church secretary. For some, merely being able to tell their story and share their feelings in a safe place facilitated healing. For others who had been closer to the events, the pain of betrayal, shame for behavior of commission and omission, and anger, needed extra care. The destructive secrets of the previous rector, and those who had been actively or passively a part of this broken system, were brought gradually into the open. In many of these situations, an invitation to confession was extended. Some took advantage of this, others did not. This process of listening and healing took over two years; only after that could the church begin to move forward with any strategic plans. Upon reflection, most who were deeply hurt and took advantage of counseling and confession were able to stay in the community and be reconciled with others. Many of those who did not take advantage of counseling or confession, sadly, eventually left the community.

There were the casualties along the way. The first was the senior warden, who had seen the church through the transition of the past rector and the search process (and, by the way, who was the best friend of the past rector and his wife). He came in three months after my arrival to meet with me. He had taken great heat during the transition period from those who felt that he had not handled the transition well. He had become the identified patient for all the dysfunction exhibited by the past vestry who had chosen not to confront the past rector’s behaviors. He carried personal guilt for not seeing or
reacting to the disintegrating behavior of his priest and friend. The shame and hurt that he carried was palpable as he sat crying in my office, almost collapsing into my arms. He had mixed feelings about the need to stay and help me through my first year because he was exhausted from the process that he had endured. He needed to take time to reflect and recover. Three weeks after our meeting, the senior warden and his wife made the decision to attend another church.

Ascension also lost members over the liturgical changes that were initiated. The charismatic core began to seek other churches that were more “filled with the Spirit.” I did what I could to share our vision and invite them to be part of it, but to no avail. Once again Heifetz reminds us, “Leaders are always failing somebody. With or without authority, someone exercising leadership will be shouldering the pains and aspirations of a community and frustrating at least some people within it. Adaptive work often demands loss.” Nevertheless, those who left were replaced tenfold by those who came and stayed after those early years.

As we moved into my third year at Ascension, the long-range planning committee agreed that a “fresh eye” would help us all see where change and strategy could be helpful. The decision was made to invite the Rev. Kevin Martin for an evaluation of the church. Over the course of a weekend, he met with groups of parishioners (based on their longevity in the church) as well as all leadership, vestry, and staff. The result of his time with us was a ten-page report that offered seventeen concrete and objective actions that he thought could help the church grow to where we believed God was leading us. To this day, we refer to this document as a reminder of where we were and where we are. I

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126 Heifetz, Leadership., 235-36.
believe that the application of the aforementioned theories toward the hope of reconciliation has proven fruitful for the kingdom of God. Over the ten years of our common ministry, God has increased our membership, our average Sunday attendance, and our stewardship (see illustration #3). Even as old traits attempt to rear their head, the community is now more self-corrective, and the focus has shifted more consistently toward health and grace. I always need to be reminded that we are to welcome the broken from the battlefield. None of us is perfect, and we all have our issues. In his book *Servant Leadership*, Robert Greenleaf instructs leaders,

> Acceptance of the person, though, requires tolerance of imperfection. Anybody can lead perfect people--if there were any. But there aren’t perfect people. It is part of the enigma of human nature that the “typical” person--immature, stumbling, inept, lazy--is capable of great dedication and heroism if wisely led. Many otherwise able people are disqualified to lead because they cannot work with and through the half-people who are all there are.  

For the tools that have been available and the grace of God in our imperfection, we are deeply thankful and mindful.

A leader in the church is servant first. This is one of many insights that I gleaned from my father’s ministry. The language for this lesson was reinforced for me in Greenleaf’s book when he points out,

> The difference [between leader-first and servant-first leaders] manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest-priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?  

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128 Ibid., 27.
My father also taught me to “leave things better than you find them.” It is my prayer and hope that this is what I have been able to do for the Church of the Ascension. It has been a blessing to use the tools available for the furthering of the *missio Dei* in this place.

**Illustrations**

Illustration #1 - “St. Mark’s” ten-year parochial report
Illustration #2 – “St. Paul’s” ten-year parochial report

Illustration #3 Church of the Ascension ten-year parochial report
Chapter 7
Conclusions, Interpretation, and Recommendations

This thesis set out to evaluate types of relational dysfunction in churches through the lenses of family systems theory and conflict theory. My goal was to devise a program for the triage, recovery, and reconciliation of these relationships so that church communities that had experienced crisis could move beyond the issues and be able to focus on God’s mission for the church.

It became apparent as I discussed the initial theories of family systems and conflict that using only those two processes would be inadequate. Over the course of time, experience would reveal that a wider array of tools was needed to glean the necessary information for promoting reconciliation and healing. Would a doctor use only blood pressure as a data point if that doctor wanted to get a complete picture of the patient? The study of the social systems revealed the unique character of church communities. They are one of the few social systems that contain families within a family. This dynamic magnifies the complexity of communication within that given system. In Bowen’s terms, each family has its own set of emotional triangles. Beyond that, each family within the church establishes other sets of emotional triangles and becomes, in essence, “emotional units within emotional units.”129 The emotionality of those units requires added evaluators beyond the original two theories in order to provide depth of analysis more applicable to the process. This is why I believe that added discussion of shame and contempt was an important addition to the process.

129 Gilbert, Leadership., 21.
As each type of dysfunction, either clerical-centered or congregational-centered, was processed through the case studies, it became apparent that the original hypothesis that the problem was either clerical-centered or congregational-centered dysfunction could not be supported. It is my conclusion, after reviewing the systems at work through my understanding of emotional complexity, that a “both/and” approach will serve this process better. In *Healthy Congregations*, Peter Steinke reinforces the “both/and” approach in saying, “A systems approach claims that any person or event stands in relationship to something. You cannot isolate anything and understand it. All parts interface and affect each other. The behaviors are reciprocal to one another, mutually reinforcing. Thus change in one part produces change in another part.”\(^{130}\) It will then be important to apply any diagnostic tools to all parties within a triage process.

When a people are in crisis, they resort to a protective thought process that is designed to keep them safe. This same effect limits people from thinking creatively in order to get out of a dangerous predicament. This state of shock minimizes a person’s ability to respond to the crisis at hand. Violation of trust, exposure of shame, and unmet expectation can create the same effect in a congregation. In the midst of the crisis, a person or group of people can cease to think in creative ways, which limits possible solutions to the problem at hand.

It is because of this response effect that I include information gleaned from the Alban Institute study conducted by Susan Nienbar. If a dysfunctional congregation has a sense of what “functional” looks like, it may have a greater chance to attain it. Her research also gives any congregation, whether in crisis or not, a lens with which to gauge

its current health. Nienaber begins by saying, “Much of the literature in the field of congregational conflict focused on what causes conflict, how to prevent it, and what to do when a church is already in conflict, but little has been written about congregations who have successfully recovered from extremely high levels of conflict and trauma.”

In the summer of 2005, Nienaber led an Alban Institute study of twelve congregations that had been identified as in recovery and renewal. The criterion for inclusion in the study was a sense from denominational executives or others working with these congregations that they were experiencing deep transformation, not just another plateau before the redevelopment of their issues. “By concentrating on these churches’ successes, we move away from the problem-focused, deficit-based language and theories that so often frame the way we talk about conflict and trauma in churches who find themselves in similar situations.”

The twelve congregations studied were a combination of four denominations—Episcopal, ELCA, United Methodist, and PCUSA. Six had faced the trauma of sexual misconduct by their professional staff, and seven had high levels of conflict over the leadership of their pastors. Natural and manmade disasters affected three other congregations: two dealt with fires, and another had experienced both a tornado and a flood after a fire. Premature deaths of staff members occurred in two other churches, one by suicide. At the same time, nearly all the churches were feeling the ripples of such underlying issues as alcoholism, sexual addition, harassment, major depression, and anxiety disorders within both the clerical staff and the congregational membership.

132 Ibid., 1.
The difference in this study, as compared to the myriad of books about healthy churches and healthy leaders, is that Nienabar studied the common practices that came to light as indicators of their recovery. The demographics of these churches fit the normative aspect of most churches. There were no extraordinary resources available to them other than themselves. As she found, “They worked with what they had, themselves, mostly, and didn’t give up. At the core of their success in bouncing back from conflict, I believe, lies a simple yet profound decision: They chose to heal.”

Her study would reveal that the most commonly cited negative effect of any of these issues was the loss of members. Other negative effects included various forms of pain, stress, loss of spirit, and uncivil behavior. Common to all the churches were issues of staff loss, a sense of betrayal, erosion of trust, loss of focus on the congregation’s mission and purpose, burnout, and feelings of demoralization. The following traits and practices were significant and consistent among all the congregations as they began to recover their health:

**Facing Pain** These lay leaders were willing to confront difficult and painful realities. They knew that they could not deny the issues or sweep things under the rug. They learned that they had to confront the brutal facts of what was happening and find appropriate ways to name the issues. As one lay leader advised, “Do not ever be afraid of openness. Determine the issues early on and create vehicles to talk about them. Don’t allow strong feelings to go underground and fester.”

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133 Ibid., 2.
134 Ibid., 1.
135 Ibid., 2.
**Focusing on God** The ability to stay spiritually grounded was another trait that enabled lay leaders to help their congregations heal. Many of these leaders understood the need to keep their focus and the congregation’s on God. Many engaged in a regular practice of prayer or other spiritual disciplines, both individually and corporately, in order to stay grounded amid the turmoil and to seek God’s guidance. One congregation’s leaders, for example, formed prayer teams to pray for the recovery process. “I think we worshipped our way through the crisis,” one leader remarked.136

**Keeping at It** These leaders also demonstrated patience and persistence. Nienaber discovered through her study that the average length of the recovery period, from the onset of the trauma or conflict to the final stages, was approximately 4.75 years. It took a great deal of persistence on the part of the leadership to allow the congregation to take whatever time it needed to recover. “Hang in there,” one lay leader said. “Admit that recovery will be long, slow, and difficult. Don’t be overly optimistic about when it will end.”137

**Exuding Calm** These leaders were nonreactive. They were calm—at least on the outside! One lay leader, an attorney in his professional life, spoke about how hard it was to deal with the media frenzy regarding his church’s conflict. “We were flooded with calls, as well as local and national news reporters. If a certain professional basketball player hadn’t signed a multi-million-dollar contract, we would’ve been front page news! It took a lot for me to appear calm.”138

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136 Ibid., 3.  
137 Ibid.  
138 Ibid.
Listening with Care  Within the congregation, these leaders maintained this same nonreactive stance. They listened well. They didn’t respond defensively, curtly, or disrespectfully. They took time to listen and practiced good empathy. “Listen and take time to truly be present. Develop trust first. Don’t force an agenda going forward. Give people time to go in the new direction to which God is calling them.”  

Informing Others  They also communicated well. The lay leaders in our study emphasized the need to keep the congregation informed and to be as transparent as possible. The leaders communicated to the congregation in various modes, newsletters, e-mail, announcements in worship, congregational gatherings, and staff meetings. Except for information protected by confidentiality standards, they kept the congregation informed as to what was happening. 

Putting the Congregation First  Another practice that made the leaders we studied so effective was that they put the best interests of the congregation first. They did not view leadership as being about their own personal or political agendas. They were not out to be heroes or to gain public recognition. The congregation’s well-being, purpose, and call were most important to them. This ability to stay focused on the congregation enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of these leaders. “Find those members in the congregation who are strong, true believers and have excellent leadership skills,” suggested one study participant. “They will be the ones who will keep the congregation’s larger purpose before them.”

139 Ibid.
140 Ibid., 4.
141 Ibid.
**Holding a Vision** Perhaps most important, the lay leaders of resilient congregations were able to provide hope through their vision. They could see the big picture. In a sense, these leaders could see the future; they could focus not just on the crisis at hand but on the larger landscape and the greater opportunities for change that presented themselves.\(^{142}\)

**Asking for Help** At the same time that these leaders were effective on their own in many ways, another strength they possessed was a willingness to ask for help. They weren’t committed to going it alone. They knew that they didn’t need to trust solely in their own abilities and willingly took advantage of outside resources, like the church that secured the services of a parliamentarian because its governing board meetings were so overwrought with conflict.\(^{143}\)

**Being Flexible** These leaders also adjusted according to what was needed. They were flexible. They were willing to try new things and to be creative. They also were able to find ways to carry on with business as usual during the crisis. “We had nothing after the fire,” one lay leader said. “We had no altar, no cross, no place to worship. Our staff had to figure out how to do their jobs living out of boxes. It was stressful, but it also reminded us of what the real purpose was in our being together. Since the fire, we’re not so attached to a building anymore!”\(^{144}\)

**Making Tough Decisions** Part of the job these leaders took on involved having to make tough decisions, and they proved themselves up to the task, despite how wrenching the decision-making process was at times. For instance, several lay leaders agonized along with their pastors over personnel issues, including the possible termination of staff

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\(^{142}\) Ibid.

\(^{143}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 5.
members. Nevertheless, they recognized that the health of the congregation depended on “getting the right people on the bus,” to quote author Jim Collins.145

**Learning Humility** Humility was one lesson the lay leaders in our study had to learn. As one new pastor explained, “This was a big church with lots of people and lots of resources. Before that very high level of conflict with the warring factions, folks thought they were a pretty impressive church. This is a conservative church, and when I asked the search committee what really happened here they all got quiet. Finally, the chair said, ‘We let the devil in and he really beat us up.’ This is a much more humble congregation now.”146

In her summary of the study Nienaber said, “In my consulting experience I’ve learned that it’s easy for leaders in crisis to become rigid, to get locked into positions—into their own ideas of who is to blame and what is the solution. The lay leaders who participated in the Resilient Congregations Study show us again the importance of rising above our own perceptions about what we think is happening and what might be causing the struggles.”147 She finished by quoting a point made in Ronald Heifetz’s *Leadership without Easy Answers*, that leadership requires “time in the balcony”—time to focus on the bigger picture, time to look to God, time to get calm and find steadiness.148

I believe that the common factors revealed by this study give congregations who find themselves in crisis a direction to aim for. The study also underscores the hard work

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145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid., 6.
that lies ahead for any congregation in crisis. This new direction challenges the unhealthy balance of the congregation. This change of direction can be one of the most challenging parts of congregational healing. The steps necessary for recovery in the aftermath of crisis often challenge the “way we’ve always done it,” and the tough decisions that are necessary for a successful recovery can often feel “less than pastoral” when they are applied. In my experience, people can be so concerned about hurting someone’s feelings that they fail to make hard, but healthy, choices. If a congregation chooses the former instead of the latter, any hope for recovery will be greatly minimized.

The Church of the Ascension, for reasons unknown, attracts people who have been wounded, either spiritually or emotionally, by the greater church. Because of this pattern, I am exposed to different stories about how individual and group behavior in the church, on the part of both laity and clergy, have caused deep damage. It is with this background that I take John de Gruchy’s warning that the church must work toward reconciliation seriously. Most people who walk through the doors of a church do so with the hope that one way or another that particular church will address their spiritual needs and be a source of grace in their lives. They hope that the words preached and the sacraments shared will fill the holes that so deeply affect their hearts. When a church becomes the source of the suffering, the damage can be soul-deep and devastating.

Since reconciliation “is a reality we appropriate now by faith and we do so in anticipation of its eschatological fulfillment,”¹⁴⁹ we are called to enter into it with the greatest of care and awareness. As stated earlier, when dysfunction hits a congregation and its leadership, the mission of God is hindered. The energy of the church is turned

¹⁴⁹ De Gruchy, Reconciliation. Location 89.
inward upon its own problems instead of outward to the world. Time, energy, and money are all used for its recovery instead of the spread of the gospel. But what kind of message would be sent to the world if the church did a better and more profound job of uniting? The actions taken in South Africa following apartheid still resonate throughout the world. Truth and Justice Commissions have been formed in other areas of the world that are desperately looking to replicate the work done in South Africa. The continued impact of the measures taken in South Africa was evident in the international attention given to Nelson Mandela’s funeral.

What could it mean to the world if the greater church did more work in reconciliation than in defamation, whether within a denomination or between faiths? Again, “The act of reconciliation happens within the practice of speech and listening. Reconciliation begins to take shape in the midst of action that is based in hope and love.”\(^{150}\) My hope would be that dioceses would take greater measures for the healing and reconciliation of their churches. The media are rich with stories of fallen pastors and wrecked churches. Might the mission of God be more positively affected if these churches could lead the way through a path of reconciliation?

**Recommendations**

This project is far from exhaustive in covering the issues that follow clergy misbehavior and congregational crisis. For immediate crisis-response procedure, I recommend *Wholeness After Betrayal* by Robin Hameal-Urban. Her book contains not only a wise response process, but also sample statements that help expedite early-phase

\(^{150}\) Ibid. location 244.
crisis intervention. For situations that call for possible legal intervention, I suggest *When a Congregation Is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct*. This resource offers readily available direction that can be applied immediately.

The process that I present is designed to begin after the initial crisis has been addressed. This process has helped me and the teams that I have worked with to get to the core of the underlying issues that fueled the crisis in the first place.

- Establish a prayer team to cover the church with prayer as it proceeds.
- Complete the Congregational Development Readiness Survey as provided in appendix #1.
- Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of both congregation and clergy through the lens of Friedman’s understanding of family systems theory and conflict/trust theory as presented in this paper in order to identify specific areas of impact to include:
  - Thorough history of the church’s inception, its original mission and vision, and its history of leadership. The model that I would use is one based on the congregational work done by the Rev. Kevin Martin. This process entails inviting groups of parishioners, based on how long they have attended the church, to join in small-group discussion. Each group should represent a five-year period. This dynamic allows for more open conversation based on the evidence that, if the groups are mixed, those who are newer to the church will defer to those who have been there longer. The “time of attendance” differentiation also helps to reveal
generational opinion of the church’s history. Questions to be asked in these groups should cover:

- A history of crisis and its impact in the church over the years.
- Events in which the congregation experienced success
- History of leadership strengths and weaknesses
- What each group saw as its part in the present crisis.

- Investigation of places where shame/sin might have occurred and how this factor became evident or not in the community.
  - Was there evidence of either personal or group contempt, either other-centered or self-centered in nature?
  - Is there a history of leadership antagonism between the leaders and the congregation, or between rival leaders?

- The equipping of clergy and lay leaders with leadership tools and mentors.
  - Is there a diocesan resource team?
  - What role does the Canon to the Ordinary, other officials, including the bishop, play in crises?
  - Is there a healthy church in the diocese that can play a mentor role?

- For the laity, leadership seminars for all who are elected to the vestry, as well as for paid church staff.

Future Suggestions:

- I would like to see leadership seminars taught in seminary. I did not get a good presentation of leadership material until my first year of the Sewanee Advanced Degree Program.
• I would like to see a “life-coach” as part of a diocesan response team. As a member of the diocesan staff, this person could be an objective partner with the clerical leadership in order to equip the clergy in places where they are deficient.

• Diocesan-provided consultants who can mediate the conversation and engage objectively in the hard discussions that create effective and adaptive change.

• Making available the Alban Institute data for restored congregations so churches will have an example of what healing looks like.

• Finally, a liturgical service of reconciliation for both clergy and congregation. We constructed one for Ascension soon after my arrival, which I believe was pivotal for all who attended. It contained:
  
  - A time for people to write down their pains and then physically nail them to a wooden cross.
  - A time for confession, for both personal and corporate sins.
  - Instruction about forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal.
  - A Eucharist and time for personal prayers, laying on of hands, and anointing. This can be accomplished by the clergy response team, the Canon to the Ordinary, or the bishop.

This service provides liturgical space for grief and for healing but places the context of the crisis within the gospel, pointing toward renewal and transformation.
<p>| Appendix #1 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| <strong>Congregational Development readiness survey</strong> | <strong>80 % of Episcopal congregations are in plateau or decline- are you one of them?</strong> | <strong>Responsible party</strong> | <strong>Due date</strong> | <strong>Completed Y or N</strong> |
| <strong>Data Gathering</strong> | Begin to study your congregation at: <a href="http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/studying-your-congregation-and-community">http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/studying-your-congregation-and-community</a> enter diocese, congregation, etc., get print-out of last 10 years of stats from parochial reports | | | |
| <strong>Get current copies of</strong> | <strong>Year-end financial reports for last 5 years (include operating, savings, and restricted/endowment funds)</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>P and L comparison for past 5 years</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Clergy compensation and or raises for past 5 years</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Vestry minutes for the past 3 years assembled in a notebook</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>newsletters for the past 3 years (weekly or monthly)</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Copy of mission statement</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Copy of long or short range plan, strategic plan</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Any previous consultant’s reports or recommendations</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Copy of last 3 clergy evaluations</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Copy of last three annual parish meeting reports and minutes</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Copy of newcomer’s, visitor’s or guest packets</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Current goals or trajectory?</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Stationery/ logo(s)</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Any recent surveys or data gathering instruments</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Make a list of all ministries- active and inactive in the church for the past 3 years- What programming in the congregation is geared to what age demographic?</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Does the church have a website? Does it accurately reflect you as a congregation?</strong> | | | |
| | <strong>Does your congregation have a clearly understood theological position on issues? Is this position shared by clergy and lay leaders?</strong> | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial/ stewardship</th>
<th>Has your budget been increasing in the past five years?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clergy receiving COLA adjustments last 3 years?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Clergy receiving merit raises- last two years?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No mortgage or outstanding loans? (If so, balance amount?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Surplus in annual budget for new programs/ministries/ activities?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Operating fund reserve for emergencies?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Last every member canvass?</td>
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<td>% of budget funded by annual pledges</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Year round stewardship (not just in the fall)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>ASA increasing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seating capacity of nave</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 or more Sunday services?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Contemporary service?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Blended music (mixture of organ and keyboard, hymnal 1982 and others)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rite One and Rite Two available</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Midweek services?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you track/follow up on newcomers?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you chart/track attendance and make data public?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ushers and Greeters at all main services?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Music before the service? Prelude? Reflective or upbeat?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adequate/mood lighting in nave?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can one smell coffee brewing during worship?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is décor pleasing? Is altar area uncluttered and purposeful?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What does the décor in church say about your congregation?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you use art/music/video clips/movies?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is the Bible reverently displayed and used</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Are service times appropriate for a variety of tastes and lifestyles/reflect community preferences?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Adequate time/planning and environment for people to genuinely experience God?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Balance of male/female/old/ young scheduled?</td>
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</tbody>
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93
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pews/chairs comfortable?</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevant and inclusive language?</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Do you have an information table/display?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fellowship</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monthly social gathering?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Coffee hour with 50 percent participation of worshipping attendees?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Multiple, intentional, small groups?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Warm, supportive, friendly congregation?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Special annual events (beach weekend, July fourth picnic, Mother's day brunch, Father's day breakfast?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>ECW or Men's club</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Cursillo gathering (at least 1x/mo)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are vestry members trained annually?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lay leader training?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Adult formation program?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Vestry mentoring?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Vestry and key lay leaders involved in Bible study/prayer groups?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Lay leaders attend diocesan conferences or committees?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Multiple adult education opportunities?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Know where church is in the congregational lifecycle?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What attention is paid to those who have lapsed or left the congregation?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Do Leaders encourage and support the rector?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>What marketing options are open to spread the word about the ministry of this congregation?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>How do you define your congregation? Is this information shared by clergy and lay leaders?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Children and Youth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Any visible playground or youth gathering spaces?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TV/video/computer accessibility other than the office?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Regular children's Christian education?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Nursery with trained staff?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Crib and Toddle nursery?</strong></td>
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<td>First communion preparation available?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Education for all ages?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursery have clean linens, ample diaper and wipes of various sizes/ changing area?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are children registered into nursery/emergency contact info/ and can parents be found in church easily?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy/rector</td>
<td>Length of tenure?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning to stay or leave in __ years?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liked or tolerated by most parishioners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate of Episcopal seminary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not first time to be a rector?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous track record of growth in previous congregation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual evaluation by vestry or congregation?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does he/she attend clerics/deanery or diocesan functions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average sermon length?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is he/she prepared?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are sermons well thought out and easy to follow?</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Major conflicts in the past five years?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most dramatic current conflict&gt;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No clergy involuntarily terminated, forced out, or fired?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous history of growth?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health of nearby Episcopal congregations?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health of nearby non-episcopal congregations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach/ social ministry</td>
<td>(one point for each monthly event, i.e. soup kitchen, migrant ministry, job fair)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are people involved in your community and responding to community needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do folks in your congregation participate in mission trips, or other outreach events?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff/lay staff</td>
<td>Office staffed 30+ hours per week?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answering machine with warm friendly voice?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficient/ Professional atmosphere in office?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is the information on your answering machine clear and relevant?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate lay staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate clergy staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are staff trained and competent?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Are the grounds well-manicured?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buildings painted recently/pressure washed clean?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows clean?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathrooms clean and easy to find?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signs clearly pointing to nave/office/nursery/restrooms/classrooms?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paved parking (attendants in parking lot?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the sign readable while traveling at speed limit in front of the church?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bushes trimmed and weeds pulled from beds?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Front doors of church clean and recently painted?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exterior safety lighting for night meetings/services?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do rooms or nave have an odor?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Publications</strong></td>
<td>Regular typos in bulletin/newsletter?</td>
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<tr>
<td>User-friendly publications?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Past issues readily available?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do bulletins/publications use jargon/insider language?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are weekly events published in Sunday bulletin and website?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brochures explaining parish history, ministries, website, and policies?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Successful ideas</strong></td>
<td>Focus on healthy churches - not successful or big</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders who empower others to do ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry tasks assigned according to gifts of members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devoted spirituality marked by prayer and putting faith into practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational structures that promote ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspiring worship services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowering leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift-oriented ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passionate spirituality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspiring worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holistic small groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need-oriented evangelism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loving relationships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Small fellowship groups that are loving and healing |
| Need oriented evangelism that meets the needs of people that the church is trying to reach |
| Loving relationships among church members |
| Track visitors and prospective members |
| Recruit and training effective lay leaders |
| Choose church location carefully |
| Create ministry focused on unchurched |
| Be guided by vision that is clearly articulated by the pastor and is shared by lay leaders |
| Set growth goals / have business plan |
| Plan continuity in program and facility |
| Mission must be driven by urgency |
| Evangelism must include intentional discipleship |

8 characteristics of growing Episcopal churches

| Have less worship, educational, and fellowship space than they need (they grow even with inadequate space) |
| Have fewer life-long Episcopalians |
| Have a proportion of young adult members (21-60% fosters growth - more or less hurts growth) |
| Have joyful worship |
| Are more likely to use drums |
| Attender cards in place |
| Letter and call from clergy |
| Invitation to a special dinner |
| Lay visit (bread or flowers) |
| Newcomer’s class (longer the better) |
| Invitations to special events |
| Intake interviews |
| Placement in a ministry area of newcomers |
| Evaluation |
| Exit interviews- keeping in mind it is 5 to 10x more difficult to reach former church members than unchurched lost people |
| Treasurers should alert clergy of new visitors who drop check in the plate |
| 2 questions to all newcomers: How did you get here in the first place? What made it possible for you to stay here? |
| Read: Discontinuity of Hope- Lyle Schaller Leading Change- John Kotter |
| Biblical model of church growth found in Acts requires a core of converted Christians |
| 10 realities learned the hard way |
| Prayer- regular, predictable times of prayer undergirding all activities and ministries |
| Pain- with change comes pain- expect it, plan for it, acknowledge it |
| Poverty- there will be incredible pressures on the church budget- don't always balance the budget with clergy/staff salaries |
| Parking- getting folks from parking lot to pew is one of the most important and difficult jobs that you face |
| Pastor- be consistent, devise a pastoral expectation plan and print it for a pastoral covenant that people can count on |
| People- who is God calling you to reach |
| Process- how do you move people from parking lot to membership? |
| Programs- do a few things really well- clarify and simplify |
| Planning- before launching a new service the church has to be half full- keep in mind critical mass |
| Potential- develop your potential consistent with your core values- most churches are driven by personalities- strong ones |
The preceding congregational development readiness survey was a product of my time as chairperson of the Diocese of Central Florida Congregational Development Commission in 2008-2011. Some parts may not be applicable to all congregational sizes.
Bibliography


