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# Countertransference as Koinonia

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COUNTERTRANSFERENCE AS KOINONIA

by

KARIN A. CRAVEN

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

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## ABSTRACT

### *Countertransference as Koinonia*

by

Karin A. Craven

This thesis inquires after the *lived-through* experience of community in the congregation by the pastoral leader. It is predicated upon the multiple self whose plurality is understood through psychoanalytical and postcolonial theories as well as by developmental processes illumined by interpersonal neurobiology. The phenomenological inquiry into one pastor's experience of community in the congregation yielded *in vivo* themes – movement, joy, and open; connect, conflict, and centering; table, hospitality, love, and diversity -- that were understood broadly from the wondering perspective of desire. Closer theoretical analysis of these *in vivo* themes from theological, psychological, and interpersonal neurobiological conceptual categories was ordered by privileging *bottom up* experiences – sensations, images, feelings, and thoughts -- of the relational body and its wisdom.

This phenomenological description of community engages two differing but related theological understandings of community or *koinonia*. The first such understanding is from a Neo-orthodox Protestant perspective that emphasizes an asymmetrical ordering of divine and human relatedness through the Holy Spirit. In this framework that draws upon and innovates from Karl Barth, *koinonia* is reconciliation, where human and divine coinhere in interlocking relationships.

The spirited paradox of human-divine presence, action, and agency joins with relational insights of the emotional body in community or the second understanding of

*koinonia*. Of particular importance in this particular conversation is how new understandings emerge around embodied and conceptual realities of trust and truth; witness and participation; time and power; and freedom.

The engagement of these realities in the second understanding of *koinonia* is from a liberation theological perspective that privileges the suffering body and its emotional wisdom from a stance of relational integration. The interplay of Neo-orthodox Protestant and liberation theologies provides for the proposal that *koinonia* is the emotional coinherence of relational bodies. Thus, the unconscious relational dimensions of experienced emotion, that is, countertransference, are constitutive of *koinonia*. The *in vivo* themes flesh out the significance and implications of countertransference as *koinonia*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The great affair, the love affair with life,  
is to live as variously as possible,  
to groom one's curiosity like a high-spirited thoroughbred,  
climb aboard, and gallop over the thick, sun-struck hills every day.*

*Where there is no risk, the emotional terrain is flat and unyielding,  
and, despite all its dimensions, valleys, pinnacles, and detours,  
life will seem to have none of its magnificent geography, only a length.*

*It began in mystery, and it will end in mystery,  
but what a savage and beautiful country lies in between.*

--- Diane Ackerman

Ah! How the terrain of inner and outer relational landscapes and people collude, collide and in some fashion come together at this point, however momentary, even as they become the rich ground that supports my ongoing journey of living the questions and bearing witness to fleshed out spirit in other places with other people. My heart is full of gratitude as I look back in recognition of those who have invited me into their lives, thereby enriching, challenging, and encouraging my own growth into fuller life first as a person that in turn has shaped my work as an ordained chaplain and scholar theologian of the church.

The process of tending to what is most alive within me is the foundation of this work, shaped and formed by so many people in my past and present even as any creative work also anticipates the future, or life beyond this dissertation. This *surplus* of presence within my words is a gift of lived and living questions with many people.

Writing a dissertation is a privilege and a joy, perhaps most fully for the writer, as it also makes great demands on family life. While in some aspects a solitary and at times lonely endeavor, it is actually, also an intense experience of companionship with those who have come alongside me and helped me to bear up under the burden of the barren and vulnerable times, the inchoate spaces before words gather and gain flesh. Together testimony emerges, bodied forth because of one another. I am grateful for such steadfast companions and ongoing conversations in this journey.

In the words of a children's melody, this process of listening to words and how they live within and between my traveling companions is a dance that describes the work and joy of writing. Aselin Deblin sings, "Sweet is the melody so hard to come by. It's so hard to make every note bend just right. You lay down the hours and leave not one trace, but a tune for the dancing is there in its place." For dancing companions near and far, and their embodied emotional presence in this writing process, I am grateful.

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throughout my many years of seminary experience has helped me to balance thinking processes with the emotional feeling-work of being present in and to my body.

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For my baptismal minister and first Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor, Rev. Jim Anderson: He invited me to explore and learn from my life, inquiring after the meaning of my ongoing experience of running. It was then I became aware of and began to think through how motion connected me with the experience of my feelings even as motion itself expressed emotion.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPE Clinical Pastoral Education

IBPN Interpersonal Neurobiology





CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

*The Guest House*

*This being human is a guest house,  
every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!  
even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.*

--- Rumi

Personhood understood as multiplicity of the self is an emerging concept in psychoanalytic theory, interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB), and postcolonial theologies with implications for pastoral care.<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalytical psychology pays particular

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<sup>1</sup>Numerous essays and books bear witness to the importance of multiplicity of self in current conversations about interdisciplinary perspectives on personhood. J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen and Eric P. Wiebe, eds., *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011). See also Pamela Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011). Michael Nausner, "Homeland as

attention to countertransference as a mutual, relational, and emergent reality of the multiple self. IPNB looks to patterns of attachment in the creation of the relational mind and embodied brain. Postcolonial theologies render more complex the dynamic of the multiple self. Its engagement with lived experience is in conversation with the Bible, with personhood and with Scripture, each understood as reproduction of and resistance against imperial discourse. What it means to be human is a fundamental query that is being explored across a range of disciplines, and not as isolated academic queries only, but with awareness of and responsiveness to ongoing work in the fields of theology, religious studies, spirituality, philosophy, cognitive and evolutionary anthropology, interpersonal neurobiology, psychology, psychiatry, and cultural studies.

The relational experience of being human seems to be at the fore of these explorations. Human capacity for self-reflexivity grounds the turn from self to encompass the other, exploring immanent and transcendent perspectives as constitutive of relational personhood.<sup>2</sup> There is intentional focus on the emergent quality in the relational dynamics of self, other, and God. Thus, attention to the self involves another turn to consider the human self more broadly construed as a subject. This turn takes seriously the role of power in all human relationships, especially socio-economic and political contexts in its shaping of the human person. As such, the body is marked and re-marked in the flow of power dynamics in the sociocultural arena. Attention is paid to the positionality, the situated location of the person. The social construction of the human subject through

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Borderland: Territories of Christian Subjectivity,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup>The thrust of this conversation necessarily invites re-consideration of conventional theological understandings of immanence and transcendence. See Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007).

the interplay of competing discourses is ongoing, connected to the power of institutions and movements that may or may not contribute to human flourishing.

In the swirl of powerful discourses that situate persons as social creatures, subjectivity is understood as “conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of an individual, her sense of self and her ways of understanding her relation to the world.”<sup>3</sup> Race, class, and gender are important examples of discourse, as are tradition, faith, and the Bible. Practical theologians in the area of pastoral care are attentive to this inner world of individual experience as it relates to these competing discourses, mindful that each discourse is linked to institutions, language, and authority structures and that individuals have the capabilities and competencies to actively engage in negotiating their moral agency as thinking and feeling subjects.<sup>4</sup>

The church as institution is an authoritative structural source of discourse with certain habits and practices, cultures and subcultures. In various ways throughout history the church has asserted the place of the congregation as formative for learning and knowing, a process fundamental to becoming more fully human. Personhood emerges from relational encounters and experiences with others, including God. Pastoral care implications for personhood understood as multiple have to do with an enlarged understanding of the experience of community within a congregational setting. More particularly, the pastoral leader’s internal lived-experience of community in the congregation can be understood theologically, from the perspective of *koinonia* and also

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<sup>3</sup>Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austen, eds., *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 135.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 136-7. See also the communal-contextual paradigmatic emphases of pastoral theologian John Patton. See John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

psychologically, from the concept of countertransference. Knowing deeply about this relational multiple self from the pastor's inner experience of congregational community may yield new insights about personhood even as it explores the particular nature of community in the congregation.

An important aspect of such knowing that constitutes human personhood is the reality of the unconscious that becomes known in and through human discourse and relationships.<sup>5</sup> Consciousness speaks to consciousness while at the same time one's unconscious dimensions tug at another's unconscious, and one's consciousness gets *hooked* by the unconscious of another. This relational and multilayered communicative reality conditions and forms not only our listening and speaking, but also our very selves. At this most basic level, communication between persons suggests our self is a multiple entity, born from various and ongoing embodied discourses and emotional attachments to the other in particular situations that are contingent and provisional.<sup>6</sup> This understanding is broadly understood in psychoanalytical theory as *countertransference*.

### **Statement of Problem**

The query into countertransference and *koinonia* is grounded in my lived-experience. I am passionate about the Christian imagination and the journey of becoming whole and holy people in community. I have suffered from Christians who fear the

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<sup>5</sup>See C.G. Jung for his model of the psyche as it impacts communication.

<sup>6</sup>See infant research and attachment theory as it is understood in the interpersonal neurobiological perspectives of Daniel J. Siegel. See also the claims of archetypal and analytical psychology where the conceptual figure of the shadow introduces us to the multiplicity of strangers that dwell within our unconscious psyche. Alterity is thus constitutive of human personhood. Relational psychology asserts the self as multiple from its origins with dissociation, positively understood, as the psychic mechanism of growth and development. Postcolonial theorists also affirm multiple subjectivities and speech of the Other within the distinctive space where differences are negotiated between the colonized and the colonizer.

embodied psyche, are confused about what it means to be in relationship, and thus, are more rigidly defend against others, to include the Spirit of the living God. Thus, I have experienced the church as both an enlivening community that is encouraging and challenging, and as a deadening congregation that hurts without regard to self or others. The church needs leaders who can navigate well the intrapsychic realm for the sake of healthy and flourishing communal life that exists in, among, and between people. The church is called beyond the comfort of community to engage others and reach out to the stranger and alien. This call looks to the stranger who resides within at the same time as this call looks to the alien who confronts us in an irreducible objective reality as the Other.<sup>7</sup>

In other related ways, this proposal continues an early interdisciplinary dialogue begun when I was in high school. My personal experience and inquiry in high school became a freshman scholarship proposal that was accepted at The College of Wooster. *The Experience of Stress and the Relevance of the Jewish Christian Tradition* introduced me first to the physiological and emotional aspects of stress and then to the tradition of contemplative prayer that later led into the praxis of liberation theology of Latin American theologians. I became interested in exploring a dynamic and relational view of self in community that tended to its inward and outward dimensions, aware of larger

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<sup>7</sup>Difference, or alterity matters. Otherness continues to be important for me to explore, both in terms of human and divine difference. Of late, I have become aware of this essay by a Latina theologian whose other work on God's transcendence is formative for me. See Mayra Rivera, "God and Difference," in *Building Bridges, Doing Justice: Constructing a Latino/a Ecumenical Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009). A more recent and robust book that addresses not just difference but also boundaries and border-crossing in terms of the politics of diaspora is Namsoon Kang, *Diasporic Feminist Theology: Asia and Theopolitical Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014). For a collection of biblical essays on the Gospel of John that seeks to address the transglobal world, increased growth of diaspora communities, and Neo-colonialism see Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, eds., *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power, The Bible and Postcolonialism*, edited by R.S. Sigiritharajah (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

socio-economic and political forces and structures that impacted people daily. I was curious about discerning obstacles to human change and transformation, about how the practices of the church might make a difference in addressing issues of injustice and forming us more rightly as the people of God. I wondered about the presence of God's Spirit in the midst of my own and other's actions and intentions. How is the human spirit understood as it relates to psychic mechanisms and to God's Spirit? How do psyche and soul form and inform human bodies in the process and practices of intentional community such as church?

The common emerging ground between that project and this research is the lived conviction and experience that interdisciplinary attention to intra-and inter-relationality and subjectivity is important for community leadership that seeks transformative change for the sake of justice and the common good, both inside and outside the church. In this regard, I am indebted to theological insights that emerge broadly from two theological trajectories of thought, those of liberation theologians and those of Neo-orthodox Protestant theologians. Furthermore, and in the dialogue that emerges from those theological perspectives, my ongoing commitment to social and embodied practices of formation in the church presupposes a commitment to the reality of the emotional material body that suffers.<sup>8</sup>

The human body and the common experience of suffering is the shared ground of psychology and theology. Countertransference assumes the emotional and physical self

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<sup>8</sup>Theology begins with lived experience. See Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995). See also M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, *Innovations: African American Religious Thought*, edited by Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). Postcolonial theologians further enlarge and render more complex the conversation about the human experience of suffering bodies.

as the ground of its exploration in and among people. This proposal is about the lived-experience of fellowship with others, that its theological and psychological reflections may yield more fruitful wisdom that is, in fact and in life, embodied for the sake of human bodies everywhere.

### **My Argument**

This thesis is concerned with describing and interpreting, psychologically and theologically, the pastoral leader's internal lived-experience of community within the congregation. Broadly speaking, the phenomenological research is descriptive and at the same time, interpretive, detailing the *lived-through* pastoral leader's experience of fellowship in the congregation through the stories of one Presbyterian minister, identified by his colleagues as a *fruitful and effective leader*. *Working-through* lived-experience is how we as human beings make sense of life and all of its exigencies.<sup>9</sup> It is hoped that this description and interpretation find resonance in readers, such that there is integration, where the emotional response of the sensate body meets the *aha!* of the intellect's imaginal and conceptual understanding in newly awakened and focused consciousness. The reader response may be more than a provisional meeting of the mind and body that opens us up to experiencing different aspects of ourselves, however. It may be also the

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<sup>9</sup>The Freudian notion of *working-through* is highlighted in Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). It also links with the view of philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher that hermeneutics, or interpretive understanding, is hard work and practice. See chapter one in Donna M. Orange, *The Suffering Stranger: Hermeneutics for Everyday Clinical Practice* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011).



stirring up of the spirit, both human and divine, and thus the beginnings of integration into a greater wholeness of authentic encounter with ourselves, others, and God.<sup>10</sup>

The research analysis, therefore, functions as a *witness* beyond the bodies of the researcher and interviewee, beyond the body of data to make visible personally the invisible or inexpressible that is an *excess* of meaning, theologically and psychologically. More than thick description and interpretation, one of the functions of this *surplus* of meaning is, in my view, a *call* and renewed commitment to the pragmatic activity of *praxis*.<sup>11</sup> In other words then, the historic and wisdom-filled nature of practice that is fruitful personally is stretched to encounter if not embrace the notion of human agency that seeks increased justice in social relationships. Furthermore, in these disciplined modes of meaning-making the *play* of the data allows for the possibility for something new to emerge in the relational space of conversation. Such play is the other function of *excess* meaning that re-frames norms and practice into liberating and integrating *praxis*, the heart of which is increased justice and recognition of all humanity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Integration has nine domains that are implicit in this assertion, per the work of interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel J. Siegel. The trajectory of integration is toward *complexity* that allows for the *cohesiveness* and *coherence* of emerging newness. Emotion and its regulation is important in this regard. Such a journey might be understood theologically through the work of practical theologian James E. Loder with his emphasis on *coinherence* in Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit in negating the negation of the human spirit.

<sup>11</sup>The notion of *surplus* or *excess* is influenced by John Caputo as well as postcolonial theologian Jorge Rieger. See John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup>See the following for theological and practical notions of *play*, the latter of which is indebted to insights of W.D. Winnicott. Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Play*, trans. Reinhard Ulrich (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972). Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology and Joy*, trans. Reinhard Ulrich (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973). Michael S. Koppel, *Open-Hearted Ministry: Play as Key to Pastoral Leadership* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008). Jerome W. Berryman, "The Transforming Moment and Godly Play," in *The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience: Exploring the Vision of James E. Loder*, ed. Dana R. Wright and Keith J. White (Eugene, OR: PICKWICK Publications, 2014). These theologians are interested in transformation as the *telos* of practical theology as influenced by the theology of Karl Barth. Moltmann however, is also open to the insights and *telos* of liberation theology. See chapters

This research project is creative collaboration between human bodies and bodies of knowledge for the sake of *transformation* understood not just as transcendent power of insight that comes from the outside, but also as the immanent spirited struggle within and between people who re-think theology from the bottom up. As such, it takes seriously the reality of difference and raises questions of power and authority, identity and agency in these interdisciplinary processes of knowing and becoming.<sup>13</sup> In so doing it also raises questions about how to understand and speak about God's presence in this process. I turn now to the discipline of practical theology and the method of relational integration so as to explicate more fully the commitments that ground these assertions.

### **Definition of Practical Theology**

Broadly speaking, the discipline of practical theology establishes its work in human experience, curious about life's robust meaning in light of God's active presence in the world in terms of responsive practices of faith. This general definition is nuanced

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ten and eleven in Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, eds., *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

<sup>13</sup>Difference, understood as alterity or *otherness* and how it is valued is integral in my choice of interdisciplinary method. Seeing and respecting difference is a theological reality. See M. Thomas Thangaraj, "Let God Be God: Crossing Boundaries as a Theological Practice," in *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics*, ed. D.N. Premnath (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). It is also a congruent extension of the influence of postcolonial theory and liberation theology in my reading and thinking, teaching and learning. See Mary C. Boys, "Learning in the Presence of the Other: Feminisms and the Interreligious Encounter," in *Faith and Feminism: Ecumenical Essays*, ed. Diane B. Lipsett and Phyllis Trible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014). For a perspective that takes into account the classroom as a world of feelings and emotions see bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994). In a similar emphasis that takes into account the time and spatial dimensions of doing theology in a global world see Kwok Pui-Lan, "A Theology of Border Passage," in *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics*, ed. D.N. Premnath (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). Identity and power are necessarily implicated in emotional processes of learning and teaching. See also Kwok Pui-Lan, Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu, and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds., *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015). Thinking about theology as global is to think about contextual theologies in more radical ways in the twenty-first century. See William A. Dyrness and Oscar Garcia-Johnson, eds., *Theology without Borders: An Introduction to Global Conversations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).

in the field of practical theology in many different ways, with some practitioners cognizant of the larger horizon of public theology.<sup>14</sup> Neo-orthodox Protestant and liberation theologies have influenced my theoretical commitments in the field of practical theology. Liberation theology foregrounds my views on the multiple self, my research analysis, and is congruent with my method of interdisciplinary work. It is also broad enough to encompass the particular emphases of feminist, womanist, Asian, and Latina theologians.<sup>15</sup> Neo-orthodox Protestant theology is the background from which I consider formative notions of *koinonia* in conversation with my research findings and analysis.<sup>16</sup> In this section I consider practical theology as a general field with certain characteristics and concerns. I then turn to the emphasis of liberation theology, specifically that of James Poling, and finally highlight the Neo-orthodox Protestant perspectives in more broad strokes. That latter theological perspective however, will become more focused later when I consider the work of Theresa Latini as it relates to *koinonia*.

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<sup>14</sup>See practical theologian Elaine Graham's most recent book as she examines the work of public theology in post-secular society characterized by *reflexive consciousness* in a pluralistic world of renewed religious presence and unbelievers. She draws upon the insights of Gustavo Gutierrez and Jurgen Moltmann as she views public theology's task not just that of interpretation but of change and transformation in solidarity with the "non person, the godless and the godforsaken." Her emphasis on praxis and performance in solidarity with the secular for the common good is in alignment with the assertions of practical theologian James Poling. She advocates for an *apologetics of presence* after her analysis and critique of post-liberal and radical orthodox theologians in the academic arena and popular evangelical movements in society at large. Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Society* (London: SCM Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup>For a book that has an extensive womanist bibliography see Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, ed. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society, Religion, Race, and Ethnicity*, edited by Peter J. Paris (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006). Also of note is part five, *Appropriation and Reciprocity*, in which liberationist theologians such as Letty Russell, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Ada Maria Isaia-Diaz comment on their engagement with womanism. A more recent publication provides a differing perspective on womanist thought, "one that seeks out and elaborates the 'metaphysical architecture' of womanism, examines and analyzes the practical wisdom and social genius of womanists, and imagines womanism 'out of bounds' that is, beyond the confines of womanism as identity and womanism as theory." See Layli Maparyan, *The Womanist Idea* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), xi.

<sup>16</sup>See chapters ten, eleven, and thirteen in Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*.

The following features characterize practical theology as a distinct field of study. These core commitments interpenetrate one another. The complexity of *theory-practice* defies an easy linearity. Practical theology is no longer understood as *applied theology*. Its orientation toward *practice and performance* is attentive to *embodied* patterns that are multilayered, individually and communally, in a variety of *social contexts*. Human life experience is dynamic and viewed *holistically* in terms of knowing and being, and thus tends to “emotions, intuition, imagination, and relationality” in all of its situatedness vis-a-vis environment, time, and history.<sup>17</sup> Of necessity then, practical theology draws upon the social scientific contributions of other fields beyond that of theology for descriptive understanding. This *interdisciplinary* work is *provisional* and *open* (-ended) with *porous boundaries* to other disciplines precisely because of its emphasis on embodiment, context, and practice.

Practical theology is necessarily self-conscious then, about its *theological norms* that condition its perspectival commitments and value its *hermeneutical significance* for the *lived-through* experience of community. This discipline leans into human action and agency that is *critically constructive* from an *eschatological* and *teleological perspective*. The practical theologian then is self-reflexive about her commitments, values and questions that position her work, attentive to how she combines the core features of the discipline into a coherent approach to research.<sup>18</sup> *Complexifying situations* is integral to the task of practical theology as it seeks to explore and interpret the polyvalent nature of

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 3, 4-5.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1-7.

life.<sup>19</sup> The following sections identify my commitments to the tasks of practical theology, and the thesis as a whole reflects the play of and my appropriation of these emphases.

### Emphases of Liberation Theology

James Poling considers practical theology as “theological interpretation of unheard voices of personal and community life for the purpose of continual transformation of faith in the true God of love and power toward renewed ministry practice.”<sup>20</sup> His definition of practical theology takes seriously the nature of sin within socio-political contexts shaped by processes of domination and empire while also drawing attention to transformative processes of meaning that engender hope. Poling’s faith and theology have been significantly formed by his work with “those who have been victims and abusers of domestic violence and other forms of violence such as racism, genocide, and colonial oppression.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, in this trajectory of practical theology, human experience that privileges the suffering body is an authoritative norm and source, as is the imperative for liberating praxis.<sup>22</sup> What undergirds the significance of his view

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<sup>19</sup>John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>20</sup>Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, 241.

<sup>21</sup>James N. Poling, *Rethinking Faith: A Constructive Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>22</sup>See Chapter Five on *empirical practical theology* for its general orientation as to differing modes of studying and engaging directly the present context. Richard Osmer identifies four trajectories within this model of practical theology: hermeneutical, transforming praxis, Neo-Aristotelian, and confessional. It is important to note that I have benefitted from insights of practical theologians in all of these modes throughout my seminary education. At the same time however, I also realize that the transformational emphasis of liberating praxis constructed and utilized by white theologians is open to critique precisely because of normative and eschatological views of the future that condition views of transformation differently than do practical theologians of color. See Chapter Sixteen on *white practical theology*. Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*.

of practical theology for my interpretive purposes is his specific understanding of *lived-experience* as six interconnected and unfolding movements.

First, there is perception of difference and otherness that leads, secondly, to awareness of *tensions within the self*.<sup>23</sup> The ability to perceive difference, especially the contrast of one's good and evil tendencies as constitutive of one's personal identity is self-conscious reflection that refuses to split or project any aspect of otherness onto other people. The binary of good and evil is revelatory not only of self and others but can also lead to awareness of God.<sup>24</sup> The tensed inner self-awareness reveals the formative and fragile nature of personal identity, constructed, as it is through relational attachments that are the human source of experienced good and evil in life. It is in these ongoing human attachments that the multiple self is formed that inherently also become the needed places for continual transformation. Thus, *tensions within the self* as posited by Poling, is, in my words, the multiple self and a primary place of theological reflection in *lived-experience*. "Researchers in practical theology learn to question previous assumptions about autonomous identity, and they begin to pay attention to the hidden desires of their own hearts."<sup>25</sup> Poling goes on to assert, "Theological reflection requires a reformulation of one's personal identity, and eventually of one's *theological anthropology* or theology of humankind."<sup>26</sup> My work is in alignment with these emphases.

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<sup>23</sup>Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care*.

<sup>24</sup>Poling, *Rethinking Faith: A Constructive Practical Theology*, 161-162.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 162. Looking ahead to chapter four, *desire* assumes hermeneutical significance for practical theologians as it relates to the experience of *koinonia*.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

The flow of these first two movements leads thirdly, to awareness that extends outward to the specific tension of oppression and liberation concretized in institutions and ideologies of communities that (in)form lives. So congruent with the reformation of what it means to be human is the call to think anew about community, especially the conscious and unconscious dimensions of the multiple self engaged with other multiple selves that are conditioned by contextual limitations of freedom. “Reflection requires a reformulation of corporate identity, and eventually of *ecclesiology*, or theology of community.”<sup>27</sup> Fourthly, awareness of conceptual ideas, images and metaphors of God are questioned as either abusive or redemptive, thus leading to pragmatic activity of re-framing the doctrine of God. We take in those God-images through the sensate body, awakened to the impact of their presence in our lives and in so noticing, our senses are (re)tuned. There is liveliness to intentional perception whose gaze is not objective but whose loving eyes also take in unheard voices. For the sake of vivified pastoral practice and a renewed call to social justice, these human senses of sight and sound work together to transform faith as a perceptual lens of intentional awareness.

Fifthly, practical theologians as researchers into *lived-experience* are called into “making a personal commitment to practices of transformation” that is, at its heart, a response to the question of Christology. “What transformation has been promised in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that could become reality in this particular situation?”<sup>28</sup> This question is not just about the specific in-breaking of God’s transcendent power making all things new and, in so doing, more socially just. It is also a

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 163.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 166.

personal question of discipleship that assumes the immanent presence of God's Spirit active within human lives. "How does the God of love and power call us to become agents of transformation as disciples of Christ?"<sup>29</sup> Human agency seems to be renewed in this call to reflective action. I would further posit that transformative discipleship thus implies a shared relational space in which the Spirit is actively moving in and among people, responsive to the socio-political analyses of particular contexts and to the common human practices of life together.

Finally and with a corresponding congruence, this method of practical theology calls for the "*development of spiritual and embodied practices,*" which is to say further in the words of Poling, "a reformulation of one's professional identity and, eventually, of one's *theology of ministry.*"<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the embodied spirit of ministry may lead one to consider that the role of the Spirit just might be to secure *trust enough* in and among people so as to enable the just flourishing of bodily witness as individuals and as a gathered body of Christ.<sup>31</sup>

From this definition then, and significant for my purposes comes the notion "that the theology growing out of pastoral practice can go beyond anthropology to speak about the doctrine of God."<sup>32</sup> While this research project presupposes the plural self, in its

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>31</sup>I am indebted to Rev. Paul Rogers who has, from a lifetime of international ministry experiences, thought long and hard about how the role of the Spirit is to provide security and enough *trust* in the promise to then be vulnerable in vivified witness as the body of Christ in mission. Such Spirited movement may be considered the heart of witness. This applies to any person of faith and has implications for the office of ministry. How can a pastor in the office of ministry be vulnerable for the sake of being faithful to that ministry? It seems that countertransference opens one up to the vulnerability of intersubjective transformation.

<sup>32</sup>Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care*. Practical theologian John Patton asserts this view as he comments on James Poling's definition of practical theology.



query into the pastoral lived-experience of *koinonia*, it is open to and curious about new understandings not just about personhood and practices, but also about God, because to talk about personhood from a theological perspective is to also speak about the divine presence and power active within and among people.

Poling's social transformation definition of practical theology makes clear the lived interconnections of questions about constructions of humanity and God, about church as an institution and as a gathered body of disciples that prompt further questions about the agency of the Spirit and the pastoral leadership of ministry. Furthermore, such an understanding of practical theology provides a rich background to think through the theological claims of the multiple self as it emerges from the vulnerable body.

#### Emphases of Neo-orthodox Protestant Theology

This historical trajectory of practical theology is indebted to the work of Karl Barth, especially his emphasis on the living triune God and Jesus Christ while also engaging the scholarship of the historical-critical method. The context of Nazi Germany formed his conviction that human experience is not the normative source for theological reflection even as he also highlighted Reformed themes of sin, distortion, and idolatry in his consideration of the human condition. Practical theologians who work within the flow of this stream work affirm the *marginal control* of the witness of Scripture and theological traditions of church as they engage in social scientific conversation, drawing on key doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church. Their task is to discern the signs of the times and God's ongoing activity in the world for the sake of the flourishing of all life.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 173-174.

Central to this task and *telos* is Chalcedonian Christology understood from a Trinitarian framework. Such a starting point means “the divine and the human, the eternal and the temporal come together in harmonious, beautiful, and just order in the person and work of Jesus Christ.”<sup>34</sup> There is an implicit affirmation then, of God’s ordering and guiding work in the world to the *telos* of new creation in and through the relational presence of the divine three Persons. Human life and community is affirmed as good, especially because it participates in and mirrors the relational love of the Trinity. At the same time however, this gift of life is conditioned by sin, understood “as a psychological and sociological wildcard that distorts and disfigures human life at every level... due to the combination of tragic personal choices as well as embedded structures of injustice, racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, and heterosexism.”<sup>35</sup>

Amidst the reality of sin, Neo-orthodox Protestant theologians privilege the local congregation as a place from which to perceive, receive, and respond to God’s grace through the proclaimed Word and liturgical practices of the church. Practices are the normative element that carry not only the historical tradition and values of the church but also invite people to en flesh these faithful elements in their very lives.<sup>36</sup> The church as the body of Christ witnesses to what God is doing in its gathered community, in society, and in creation. This particular emphasis on discerning God’s work of liberation, justice, reconciliation, and preservation prompts these practical theologians to look “for manifestations of divine light in particular places and communities in the world and seeks

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 174-175.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>36</sup>Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 21.

to bring the church into alignment with such divine activity.”<sup>37</sup> It is from this perspective that engaged participation in religious practices is valued for creating and sustaining an open receptivity for the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

The norms and sources of authority are rooted in Jesus Christ as witnessed to in Scripture, meaning God’s revelation in the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ecclesial tradition in terms of creeds and confession secondarily function as authoritative and interpretive guides to discerning God’s continued transforming activity. Social sciences assume a tertiary position of authority. Their value for insight into “the culturally conditioned, linguistically mediated, racially textured, and sexually embodied character of human individual and social life” hearkens back to the incarnation of Jesus in a specific time and place in history even as it affirms the complexity of human lived-experience.<sup>39</sup>

These theological and confessional affirmations shape and render more complex the theory-practice relationship even as the emphasis on individual and communal experiences and engagement of practice deepens theories. “Neo-Protestant practical theologians tend to affirm that the significance and viability of theory can be known fully only in relation to practice. Likewise, they would urge that practices bear larger, transferable theoretical meaning and significance.”<sup>40</sup> Normativity matters then, in assessing these complexities. A threefold emphasis of norms emerges. First are the

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<sup>37</sup>Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 176. See also Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 22.

<sup>38</sup>Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 177.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 180.

standard norms of scholarly work that privileges coherence, correspondence, comprehensiveness, and cogency. Second are biblically grounded norms. Third are notions of fruitfulness.<sup>41</sup> The theory-practice relationship is negotiated in its understanding of and approach to context.

The importance of context for Neo-Protestant theologians is related to the problems and particularities of the human lived-experience and the role of social sciences in attending to their descriptive analysis and explanation that is then interpreted theologically. Richard Osmer identifies the interplay of theology and social sciences through the movement of four questions that he views as the task of practical theology. “What is going on” is the descriptive inquiry. “Why is that going on” is the interpretive question. “What should be going on” is the normative movement that leads to the strategic query of “what should be done about it.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, the insights of social scientific inquiry and theological perspectives interact to bring clarity of possibilities for the presenting contextual situation. This movement of practical theological inquiry is necessarily open-ended and provisional as it seeks to ascertain how to aid or intervene in a range of individual and communal human situations for the sake of flourishing. This movement also allows for the social sciences to “provide crucial perspectives on contemporary experience that can, in turn, serve as catalyst for fresh thinking about well-established and biblically grounded ecclesial traditions.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 182.

Neo-Protestant practical theology is well positioned to engage with a variety of theological perspectives and issues. In particular, it offers valued perspectives about the human condition that can be explored from and in conversation with other theologies, particularly those from a liberation perspective. In this regard, Gordon S. Mikoski draws attention to the need for Neo-Protestant theological engagement with liberation movements, postcolonial theory and practice, and the need to develop more fully notions of mystery, paradox, and affect. He also suggests the importance of expanding methods, noting that “[m]ore work needs to be done on methodological pluralism. Instead of ‘solving for X’ (as if there were a single way to do practical theology) neo-Protestant practical theologians can embrace a wide range of practical theological methods in order to address to complex challenges that present themselves to contemporary church and society.”<sup>44</sup>

### Practice and Praxis in Practical Theology

Having introduced the two models of practical theology that bear upon the exploratory, descriptive, and interpretive aspects of the research question, the following section addresses the method of interdisciplinarity. As we turn to the method of relational integration, it may be helpful for the reader to keep in mind the interplay between *praxis* and *practice*. In their introductory remarks about practical theology, John Swinton and Harriet Mowat note, “The aim of Practical Theology is to enable personal and communal *phronesis*; a form of practical wisdom which combines theory and practice in the praxis of individuals and community.”<sup>45</sup> They go on to state even more clearly that “[t]his

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 185-186.

<sup>45</sup>Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 26.

phronesis does not aim for knowledge for its own sake, but for an embodied, practical knowledge which will enable a particular form of God-oriented lifestyle.”<sup>46</sup> This view of practice is congruent with the foci of Neo-Protestant theology that emphasizes historic tradition and thus narrative, whose value is in life-shaping wisdom for communities and individuals. Thus, the practices of the church interact with the practices in the world as the focus for engagement and inquiry.

Praxis in practical theology, on the other hand, foregrounds the narrative of justice in the Bible and thus, tends to common daily human practices as they are understood through socio-political contextual analyses of power. Theological wisdom emerges from reflection upon bodily experience of suffering marked by oppression and marginalization. Praxis so understood speaks from and to ethical imperatives and leans into human agency amidst historically defined contexts of freedom. This praxis is interested in social change and thus, praxis itself is viewed as transforming because of its precommitment to social justice. In an introduction to practical theology from a liberationist perspective, Katherine Turpin clearly makes a distinction between practice and praxis with her comments:

Liberationist practical theologians tend to focus more on public praxis as the starting and ending point of theological reflection rather than focusing primarily on increasing faithfulness and discipleship through the use of Christian practices within communities of faith that are more central in other parts of the field.<sup>47</sup>

This distinction between praxis and practice is a matter of emphasis in the field of practical theology. On the one hand, praxis engages its interdisciplinary partners in

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>47</sup>Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 157. See also Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986). Her chapter on Jurgen Moltmann highlights his importance as a political theologian that conditions my broad theological commitments.

mutual learning in the context of the struggle for social change, using critical social theories as well as being open to groups and movements so as to achieve common goals.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, practice from a confessional trajectory privileges theology as a dialogue partner, thus giving rise to a “stratified model of reality,” meaning “[d]ifferent fields focus on different levels of reality.”<sup>49</sup> It is differentiated focus that characterizes this particular mode of interdisciplinary dialogue.

It is helpful to keep in mind that distinctive emphases are one way that boundaries are delineated between inner and outer, whether that be the inner life of individuals and their ensuing way of life, or the gathered body of Christ and its scattered form in the world. Boundaries seem to matter, however porous and permeable they may be.<sup>50</sup> In this case, the interplay between practice and praxis allows us to think with each emphasis and wonder about its norms and authority, tracking the implications of our social constructions not only of practical theology as a discipline but also the *territories of Christian subjectivities* as people of God in conversation with the social sciences.<sup>51</sup>

Might the fundamental notion of the *multiple self* enter in here, even now, as we wonder about how each emphasis of these two modes of practical theology engage the formation of the self from the subjective particularities of each discourse? Might we wonder further about how the boundaries of each discourse are navigated? What liminal

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<sup>48</sup>Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, 74-75.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>50</sup>A foundational boundary of which we become aware of as people of the Book, is the differing ways in which we read and thus, interpret the Bible. Foundational in this regard is Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

<sup>51</sup>The presence of this particular chapter haunts this assertion. See Nausner, “Homeland as Borderland: Territories of Christian Subjectivity.”

space is created? What newness emerges? How is that shared? Or is it protected? I think it is helpful to lean into some ideas about boundaries and beloved territories as we anticipate the ensuing rationale of relational integration as a method of interdisciplinary dialogue in the discipline of practical theology. It is also to claim practically, and from the outset, the connection between liberation theologies and postcolonial theory, and how their mutual influence conditions my understanding of ambiguous inter-relational space and the self as multiple. To do so further verges on wondering about possibilities of projection that function as part of larger countertransferral processes in this conversation among theologies.

#### The Practical Theologian: *Territories of Christian Subjectivities*

Our bodily experience of personhood emerges from the ground. We are created from the dust and dirt of many territories. The space beneath our feet – homes and hideaways, neighborhoods and schoolyards, churchyards and cities – conditions the conversations we engage in with others. Geographic terrain molds our bodies. Our bodies are marked by the spatial dimensions of the land and times in which we live. The body is emplaced and displaced repeatedly as we inhabit different landscapes that in turn become inner terrain that we navigate at differing levels of conscious awareness in our waking and sleeping moments. As Christians we even affirm that we are not at home in this world through which we must travel.<sup>52</sup> As sojourners and strangers, we are marked by that journey and its territorial discourses as people on and of the way.

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<sup>52</sup>I grew up with this notion through the opening words of the Lord's Supper, written by my pastor W.T. King, who drew upon the Didache. "I am a stranger and sojourner as all of my ancestors are --- these are the words of the Psalmist --- these are our words. For we are not at home in our own world. We are not at peace with one another nor with the planet. We are fellow travelers, journeying though a lifetime of exile, looking for our true home. We are the children of God, and yet we are scattered like grains of wheat -- turning, tumbling, insulated, isolated, and in and of ourselves of no great use at all. But look at this: a



The location of our lives and the practical embodiment of many discourses defy any one territory or land in which we may find ourselves at home. Power and perspective, agency and freedom texture the landscapes in ongoing fluid ways. Michael Nausner explores the logic of “a *theological understanding of homeland as borderland*. Such an understanding implies a Christian existence that never can claim a homeland with comfortably confining borders, but exists in a constantly shifting landscape.”<sup>53</sup> Significantly he goes on to quote Homi K. Bhabha to affirm boundaries as fields of negotiation: “A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*.”<sup>54</sup> Boundaries are places of emergence with internal and external dimensions.

As practical theologians we are present to – meaning we are conscious about – where we stand, what our beginning points are as we seek to make meaning of life’s experience. Imagine then, that the ground on which we stand changes and so the differing context evokes a new *presence* (of awareness and insight), bumping up against other earlier claims that are grounded personally in the matter of our lives. So we enter into conversation not just with ourselves but also with others and other bodies of knowledge, so as to make sense of life, thereby creating more fertile ground of questions and affirmations, marking more territory and covering more ground (of material substance) as we continue to negotiate our lives and relationships. Crossing boundaries and treading on

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loaf of bread, a sign from God, a sign that God will gather all God’s children who are like grains of wheat, and shall form them into a loaf that will give nourishment and sustenance.”

<sup>53</sup>Nausner, “Homeland as Borderland: Territories of Christian Subjectivity,” 122.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. This assertion about presence and boundaries will become more important, objectively and subjectively, in light of interpersonal neurobiological emphases about the *window of tolerance* in each mental-state.

new ground keeps us on our toes and gives us clay feet. We are mutable mud fashioned into multiple selves.

Such is our own bodily presence: we are a complex of multiple perspectives and thus, our interdisciplinary conversation is never a singular affair. We show up as and body forth our multiple selves in conversation, one to another. This complex subjective reality of presence is important to keep in mind as we think through the method of relational integration.<sup>55</sup>

### **Method of Relational Integration**

In this method of inter-disciplinarity, the distinctive nature of different disciplines is axiomatic as those differences shape an ambiguous relational context that is charged with anxiety.<sup>56</sup> At stake is the nature and experience of presence in human relationship in the midst of anxiety that is managed by dynamics of power and control. Thus, the method of relational integration takes seriously the role of anxiety in human relationships of learning with and from one another, and is self-consciously working against hierarchical or asymmetrical views of relating one discipline to another. This method is made explicit in the work of biblical scholar Jeanine K. Brown, psychologist Steven Sandage, and sociologist Carla Dahl.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Acknowledgment of the multiple self mirrors the reality there are multiple centers and thus, multiple margins as the fluid context in which doing theology is a global undertaking. See Kwok Pui-Lan, "Teaching Theology from a Global Perspective," in *Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis*, ed. Kwok Pui-Lan, Cecilia Gonzalez-Andrieu, and Dwight N. Hopkins (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

<sup>56</sup>Attachment histories with primary caregivers condition the experience of anxiety as well as shape one's capabilities and competencies in navigating relational contexts charged with anxiety.

<sup>57</sup>Asymmetrical models of inter-disciplinarity posit theology as *queen of the sciences* over psychology based on a distinction between special and general revelation. This method of interdisciplinary dialogue characterizes the published literature of James E. Loder, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, and Theresa F. Latini, practical theologians who address *koinonia*. While not all practitioners would agree with

Accordingly in the practice of this method, equal relations order how power and authority are at play in interdisciplinary conversation. Three assumptions are at work. One is that just as persons are equal authorities in terms of knowing and becoming so are disciplines equally authoritative. Second is that the priority of relational dynamics is between people, not just between abstract bodies of knowledge. Third is the sociopolitical context of knowing, to which I would add also the economic aspect.<sup>58</sup>

These foundational assumptions of relational integration as method acknowledge and address two general tendencies in psychological and theological dialogue whose subtext often is unacknowledged anxiety about power and control in talking across disciplinary boundaries. One tendency is that integration, understood as the linkage of differentiated elements, is often viewed abstractly as it applies to ideas and epistemologies. A second tendency is the concern to prioritize and thus order disciplines involved in integration, with the goal of setting and controlling conversational boundaries. Ambiguity or confusion is the issue here, with the asymmetrical model favoring hierarchy as a way to negotiate power and authority in relational dynamics of conversation across disciplines. In contrast, the egalitarian model posed by the method of relational integration is interested in *differentiation of the self* as transformative precisely

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this specific phrase as well as make the argument in different ways, I think each would agree that their emphasis is that theology is more *comprehensive* in making sense of the human condition in relation to the mystery of God. This claim follows from the *logical priority* emphasis in the Chalcedonian Doctrine that privileges the divinity of Christ over his humanity.

<sup>58</sup>Steven J. Sandage and Jeannine K. Brown, "Monarchy or Democracy in Relation to Integration? A Reply to Porter," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 29, no. 1 (2010): 24. See also Carla M. Dahl, "Wholeness and Holiness: Selves in Community with God and Others," in *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation About Christian Formation*, ed. Carla M. Dahl Jeannine K. Brown, and Wyndy Corbin Reuschling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011).

in its valuing of difference as posed by the other.<sup>59</sup> Because it is the *relationship itself* that provides the context for the conversation, constructive dialogue across disciplines in the method of relational integration accounts for the *embodied relationality* of people and ideas.<sup>60</sup>

This relationship is understood as *differentiated collaboration* wherein each person is able to balance autonomy and connection in the presence of anxiety about relating across disciplinary differences. Crossing disciplinary boundaries for fruitful creative conversation is a messy proposition, but not all of the engendered anxiety is negative. Commenting on this interdisciplinary conversation between theology and psychology Steven Sandage notes, “Relational differences between equals are a good problem because they pull for differentiated relational maturity. Facing anxiety within a supportive relational context can be a central pathway toward spiritual transformation.”<sup>61</sup> Just as persons seek to be themselves while also connecting with others, in like manner, one discipline seeks to maintain its integrity while also connecting with another discipline. Differentiation values the distinctiveness of difference and rejects fusion. Differentiation also assumes *integration* and thus, transformation.<sup>62</sup>

Integration is the linking up of different parts of something. From an interpersonal neurobiological perspective, it is the integration of energy and information as elements of

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<sup>59</sup>Brown, “Monarchy or Democracy in Relation to Integration? A Reply to Porter.”

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>62</sup>For a nuanced psychoanalytical view of integration that explicitly takes into account the multiple self see Pamela Cooper-White, “Interrogating Integration, Dissenting Dis-Integration: Multiplicity as a Positive Metaphor,” in *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

the embodied and relational mind. Thus, in a relationship it is the differences unique to each person that become linked when there is respectful empathetic understanding and compassionate conversation in and between self and other. Integration is significant because it is a process that moves toward harmony of well being, meaning flexibility that allows for adaptability, coherence, energy and stability.<sup>63</sup> This integrative process happens in three dimensions: at the neural level in the embodied brain, within the subjective mind, and between persons in empathetic relationships, and is characteristic of a securely attached and thus, receptive person who is curious, open, accepting, and loving. When integration is blocked there is rigidity or chaos at various levels.<sup>64</sup> However, when there is the flow of connection in integrative conversation, there is also the awareness of the self as plural.<sup>65</sup>

What is at stake in interdisciplinary dialogue is the process of integration, of discerning *coherent* connections and thus, at the same time, also discerning those places of disconnect. In other words, integrative conversation values what is unique and distinctive to each discipline while also seeking what may be the creative common

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<sup>63</sup>Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 206.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 206. From an interpersonal neurobiological level, there are nine domains of integration: consciousness, bilateral, vertical, memory, narrative, state, interpersonal, temporal, and transpirational. See Epilogue in Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2012).

<sup>65</sup>Siegel makes some concluding remarks about integration and the “self.” He notes, “Defining the self as a singular noun is limiting. A broader view is that a self is a part of a much larger interconnected whole: the self can be seen as a ‘plural verb.’ When we reflect on the notion of mind as an emergent process of energy and information in our bodies and in our relationships, we come to sense that our personal experience is a ‘node’ in which energy and information flows through us, connects us to other nodes of flow, and makes us a part of a larger ‘mindweb’ of interconnected individuals now, and across time. Within that interconnected whole rests the many ways we can experience our ‘selves’ in the world.” See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 387.

ground of true connection.<sup>66</sup> That this is a messy, open process and not linear is further noted by Sandage. “Nevertheless, the identity of each discipline is partially mediated by its differentiation from the other. The disciplines always and already interpenetrate one another and our goal is to make this explicit.”<sup>67</sup>

What is exciting about these collaborative conversations is that in crossing boundaries one comes into possession of new knowledge: boundaries are not stable, but fractured and shifting, an edgy place of meeting difference that is open and multidimensional where something new just might happen.<sup>68</sup> In this liminal space of mutual meeting, there is *play* with what is given and found in the discourse of each discipline, in the talking and thinking, feeling and listening, sensing and imagining. It is a place of knowing through openness to *not-knowing*. It is a relational process of integration that proceeds by processes of dis-integration.<sup>69</sup> I imagine that energy drives

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<sup>66</sup>Dahl, “Wholeness and Holiness: Selves in Community with God and Others,” 13.

<sup>67</sup>F. LeRon and Steven J. Sandage Shults, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 23.

<sup>68</sup>This line of thinking with its valuing of complexity has a certain congruence with Christian personal realism. The open-ended *complexity* of human interactions and intersubjectivities is an important aspect to emergence of personhood as the human organism on all levels seeks greater wholeness. See chapter two in Christian Smith, *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010). There is also the biblical narrative trajectory that values crossing boundaries for the sake of inclusive hospitality. From a marginal perspective that takes seriously what might happen when engaging relationships among the physical body, the spirit, and spirituality, and social justice activism see Elisa Facio and Irene Lara, eds., *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2014).

<sup>69</sup>Postcolonial theologians influenced by Homi Bhaba speak of *interstitial space* and *hybrid identity* in this regard. Theologian LeRon F. Shults reminds me that disciplines are not objective wholes with fixed boundaries so much as “a dynamic force field of interconnected and open explanatory events.” He goes on to say, “One of the reasons it is so difficult to let (even part of) our disciplines fall apart is that our own identities can so easily become fused with the disciplines (or coalitions) with which we identify.” See LeRon F. Shults, “Dis-Integrating Psychology and Theology,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 40, no. 1 (2012), <http://go.galegroup.com.boaz.luthersem.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA2889806457v=2.1&u=mnaluther&it=r&p=EAIM7sw=w> (accessed 3/20/2013). The importance of the interplay of knowing and *not-knowing* is integral to how I understand and use the concept of *play*. The role of *not-knowing* in terms of knowing and

the conversation, a desire or yearning that stems from personal rootedness, body and soul, within one's discipline that leans into another's yearning and desire framed by a different discipline. Our shared disciplinary play speaks from and to the human experience of ourselves as people who have and are moved by desires.<sup>70</sup>

Relational integration as method therefore, involves both knowing and becoming as people who are open to being transformed through mutual dialogue across differences. Epistemology and ontology are not viewed as separate but grounded in the experience of the human body whose openness to another human body in time and space engenders a process that creates a shared space in which to play with energy and affect, with questions and concepts.<sup>71</sup> Our embodied conscious and unconscious selves are engaged in

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becoming is exemplified in learning theories expounded by James E. Loder, Etienne Wenger, and Esther Lightcap Meeks.

<sup>70</sup>One can see here traces of influence from Anne Belford Ulanov, Pamela Cooper White, and Emmanuel Lartey here as well as Etienne Wenger, James Loder, and Esther Lightcap Meeks. The significance of desire has to do with human agency and choice in the context of historical freedom as it relates to the many discourses that shape our subjective selves. Feminist theologians who write from an awareness of desire include Brita L. Gill-Austern, Wendy Farley, and Sarah Coakley. In differing ways, womanists and Korean female theologians also address the role of desire. Interpersonal neurobiology might frame desire from the concept of the *triangle of well-being* wherein the "mind is the emergent, self-organizing regulatory process, relationships are the sharing, and the brain is the embodied mechanism of energy and information flow." See Daniel J. MD Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, edited by PhD Allan N. Schore, Series Editor (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2012), 28-12, 28-13. Implicit in both psychological and theological conversations about desire is also a journey toward the inner experience of freedom relationally, understood as a transformed experience of *being* itself, beyond identification with situated pain and suffering. Already it is important to note the paradoxical tension of what might be termed universal or essentialist and that which is privileged as particular, situated, contingent, contextual and provisional. The conceptual realities of desire and freedom encompass these polar opposites as does notions of knowing and becoming. The interplay of these tensions will be at work throughout this dissertation. For one perspective on this tension see Sze-Kar Wan, "Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality? An Asian-American Reading of Galatians," in *Interpreting Beyond Boundaries*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, The Bible and Postcolonialism, 3, edited by R.S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). An important pastoral perspective on desire that implicitly takes into account the ambiguity of the globalized world of Empire must also look at the underbelly of desire, which is to say, aggression. See Kathleen J. Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

<sup>71</sup>Interpersonal neurobiology helps us understand our human capacity to grow more open in the experience of anxiety. *Window of tolerance* and *plane of possibility* are primary concepts that explain the intra- and inter- relational aspects of our capability and competency in becoming more open to others,

these spaces of conversation. As the method and practice of relational integration is played out and anxiety is experienced, the place where this is noticed is in the feeling body. The curious attitude of openness of those who seek to know even as they are known might be considered a willingness to be *vulnerable* in the flesh and bone process of becoming more human.<sup>72</sup> And so at this point, it makes sense to explore the social flesh of vulnerability.

### Relational Integration and Vulnerability

We are and have bodies. As humans we know this to be true in the play of the experiencing and interpreting self. The body constitutes our way of being in this world. In a trans-global world of consumer capitalism bodies are marked further by discourses of need and desire, patriarchy and religion. The social production of bodies through the interconnections of such discourses discloses the *vulnerability* of the human body. Keying off the work of Bryan A. Turner who seeks to develop a sociology of the body as foundational to any theory of action, his inquiry into “vulnerability explains dependence on others for protection and sustenance” and in so doing, and significant for my purposes,

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beginning with our very selves. D.W. Winnicott has much to say about how play creates relational space in terms of infant and parental attachment experiences. Postcolonial theorists and theologians are attentive to how oppression creates and conditions the experience of relational space in its interior and exterior dimensions of experience through the notions of *interstitial space* and *hybrid identity*. In these modes of seeking understanding, these models privilege the human body as integral to conceptual ideas of space. A further subtext for these models is that each also assumes a human capability to play within situations of risk and vulnerability, which is to say, anxiety.

<sup>72</sup>*Ipseity* is the notion of *suchness* toward which all growth tends in its differentiated complexity that allows for the emergence of ever more complexity in developmental growth of humans. It values the role that difference plays in this integrative process and uses mindful awareness practices to engage the felt sensations of anxiety in the body. See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*.



amplifies the method of relational integration with its attitudinal emphasis on interconnectedness and bodily openness.<sup>73</sup>

Bryan's conceptual theory relies upon etymology of the word *vulnerability*, derived from the Latin meaning *wound*, and understood practically and metaphorically. *Vulnus* refers to bodily wounds and also provides imagination about human frailty. "Wounds are open and they open us to life; the wound is a metaphor of the human condition."<sup>74</sup> In such opening, there is whole bodily suffering whereby we receive wounds as well as give wounds to others. In its etymological development, the understanding of woundedness was amplified by religious devotional practices of meditation on the Seven Wounds of Christ that then evolved further into the veneration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whereby the spiritual and moral dimensions of suffering were emphasized, rather than its physical material aspects. Significantly then, Bryan notes that

To be vulnerable as a human being is to possess a structure of sentiments, feelings, and emotions by which we can steer a passage through the social world. Our vulnerability is also part of our capacity to draw sensual pleasures from our openness to experiences.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, Theory, Culture and Society, edited by Mike Featherstone (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2008), viii, 243-244. The theory of social action is predicated on a sociology of the body that emphasizes the social dimensions of developmental process. First, that embodiment has to do with contextual ordinary practices of everyday life such as eating and walking. Second, the body is sensual and enlivened in its social relations of experience. Third, the process of embodiment is ongoing within a social milieu of peopled interconnections. Fourth, the bodily process of becoming is at the same time a process of becoming a self. See page 245. For a classic on the body and vulnerability see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For a collection of essays that addresses suffering, desire, and creativity with such authors as Mayra Rivera and Grace Jantzen, see Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller, eds., *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006). The triple oppression of African American women raises the issue of the vulnerable body in ways the church has yet to address. See Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins, eds., *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Linda E. Thomas (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>74</sup>Turner, *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 244.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

The spiritual and moral aspects of wounding nevertheless are still beholden, held and experienced within a material physical body whose sensations give rise to emotions and feelings, sensuality and sentiments. Vulnerability as woundedness connotes an openness of the embodied and relational multiple self to the world and its creatures.

The wounded nature of openness comes into clear focus in the experience of evil. The suffering of evil exposes vulnerability in its exterior and interior dimensions. First, as human beings we are vulnerable to the external forces from outside that inflict harm. Secondly, we are vulnerable in our capacity for human self-reflexivity that impels and seeks after reflective understanding in the experience of violence.<sup>76</sup> The inner and outer openness of the bodily self therefore can move us toward or away from others. This movement not only expresses but also is constitutive of vulnerability and further leads us to consider that vulnerability so understood is thus linked positively and negatively to the experience of desire.

At this point and as it relates to the human experience of vulnerability, it is helpful to note that desire opens and closes us up in our way of intentionally negotiating our lives in this world. Theologically we might understand “that desire is the phenomenon that perhaps more than any other phenomenon relates us both to the world and to ourselves, and orients us, directs us, and *individualizes* us.”<sup>77</sup> The complexity of desire as a presence

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 255.

<sup>77</sup>Jan-Olav Henriksen, “Desire: Gift and Giving,” in *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology*, ed. F. LeRon Shults and Jan-Olav Henriksen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2011), 2. This author emphasizes the pre-subjective element of desire such that desire is not construed as having to do with need or lack in relation to others, including God. Previously on the same page he notes, “Desire is not primarily an element in consciousness, to be appropriated intellectually; rather, it exists in the world as the world is given with my body and its perception.” Therefore in the emotional maturing of our human development through language and reflection, we are called to understand the complex and ambiguous reality of desire that expresses intention, cognizant of the dialectical relationship between desire and subjectivity. Desire may be a sign of transcendence, “a reminder

and power that moves us and shapes our subjectivities and individual proclivities serves to highlight the extent to which we are vulnerable beyond control of our conscious rational selves.

Indeed and from a psychological perspective, vulnerability is considered a subjective self-state and its suppression leads to aggression. Conversely, when aggression is suppressed, vulnerability is then felt as defenselessness. Conscious awareness of these two states of affect – vulnerability and aggression -- is important in working with and relating to others, including the inner others of the multiple self, in ways that privilege difference while also honoring commitments to live from empathy and justice-love.<sup>78</sup> The relational journey with others asks us to lean into ourselves:

By embracing our embodied selves, in all our complexity, and by befriending the very particular vulnerable and aggressive self states or ‘parts’ that we find within ourselves, we are more likely to know and enlist those parts in meeting others who differ from ourselves and stretch us beyond our comfort zones.<sup>79</sup>

In the method of relational integration the subjective and objective experience of human vulnerable openness and its inherent risks of sociability might be understood through the framework of friendship.

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that the law by which we understand and control desire is something that cannot allow desire to be totally suppressed, subjected, or controlled by us, because desire is *the condition for the individuated, desiring and conscious self.*” See page 13.

<sup>78</sup>The importance of aggressive energies first understood by W.D. Winnicott is expanded upon in ways that link vulnerability and the movement toward (subjects and objects of) desire. See Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality*. A more recent book that addresses the integrated reality of aggressive and erotic energies is from a psychoanalytical perspective. See Ann Belford Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

<sup>79</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 161. This basic psychoanalytic understanding of desire and its unconscious dynamics is extended into the field of national discourse about others, implicating love and hate in new questions about social attachment and otherness. See Niza Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

## Relational Integration and the Hospitality of Friendship

My imagination around relational integration as method is given further shape by the musings of theologian Nancy Elizabeth Bedford even as it speaks into my experience of companionship and conversation with my doctoral peers. She reflects on *real presence* in the hospitality of friendship as it relates to theological method that is attentive to power dynamics and difference.<sup>80</sup> Keying off a Johannine emphasis of friendship in the Spirit (15:13-15), Bedford comments,

I would posit that theology, inasmuch as it is God-talk among friends of God, is inseparable from friendship. Theology can be seen as an exercise in gratitude for God's friendship, carried out in friendship with others. As such, it can become one of the dimensions in which friendship is played out: one of its material practices.<sup>81</sup>

The practice of informal spirited theological conversation with friends is an ambiguous and changing enterprise that at times is not easy. The differing international vantage points from which we live and speak, think and write are a material product of

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<sup>80</sup>Her reflections call to mind theologians Letty Russell and Jurgen Moltmann, each of whom initiated, fostered, and enjoyed international and ecumenical friendships. Russell's *kitchen table* theology grew into initiatives that gathered and supported Asian female theologians. Moltmann speaks of his indebtedness to global friendships in *A Broad Place: An Autobiography* and *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*. From an international perspective, Bedford's comments connect with those of sociologist Carla M. Dahl. See chapters one through three in Jeannine K Brown, and Carla M. Dahl, Wyndy Corbin Reuschling, *Becoming Whole and Holy: An Integrative Conversation About Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011). For a proposal of a friendship Christology and a friendship theology see the chapter by Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Friendship – The Forgotten Category for Faith and Christian Community: A Perspective for the Twenty-First Century," in Jurgen Moltmann and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Passion for God: Theology in Two Voices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

<sup>81</sup>Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker, eds., *God's Life in Trinity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 36. Nancy Elizabeth Bedford is influenced by her earlier life in Latin America, with its distinctive personal and dialogical ethos that, according to her, characterizes Latino/Latina theology and anthropology. Gail O'Day affirms that in the Gospel of John "the language of love and friendship . . . describe how the Word-made-flesh lives. . . . Friendship is a theological category that renders a spirit/flesh dualism impossible, because human beings love and live as friends in our bodies, just as Jesus did." See Gail R. O'Day, "Sacraments of Friendship: Embodied Love in the Gospel of John," in *Faith and Feminism: Ecumenical Essays*, ed. Diane B. Lipsett and Phyllis Trible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 89.

global transnational processes fleshed out in conversation, oriented around desires for freedom and agency, liberation and transformation, informed by our mutual classes in theology and psychology, and given specific shape by our communal-contextual research interests and questions. My learning situation is not unique nor is it confined to institutions of higher education. Increasingly, the fluidity of global and local interactions characterizes human interactions in all sectors and institutions of human society.

Bedford draws attention to the complexity of interconnected lives that are both local and global with insights from the noun forms of the verb *entreverar*, meaning to “mix or intermingle.” The noun forms signify and complexify the notion that “participation and involvement in the life of another” is akin to a “material encounter that is disorderly in the sense of entanglement or a melee like an ancient cavalry battle.”<sup>82</sup> Putting together these two images evokes the significance and role of human bodies in the space of theological conversation among friends. Such is how, on the one hand, she characterizes the space of engaged subjectivities, situated knowledges, and multiple planes of difference, and on the other hand, affirms “the possibility of relations of mutuality and friendship between persons whose social standing is quite different, by virtue of being loved equally by God whose love was manifested in the Incarnation.”<sup>83</sup> The hospitality offered by friendship is a complex space for theological dialogue. The inter-relational space needs to be roomy enough to move around amidst class difference, yet close enough to see and feel the presence of one another, to continue the back and forth dialogue. This hospitable space of engagement involves the whole person who is

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<sup>82</sup>Volf and Welker, *God's Life in Trinity*, 39.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

content not to be orderly, but able to thrive in ambiguous spaces created by processes of active entanglement with an aim of *working-through* life together.<sup>84</sup>

In friendship, theological conversation is charged both positively and negatively in lively exchanges, and is a mutually constructed space of learning how to speak from different places of life experience for the common good of human flourishing; a shared practice space of learning to negotiate the anxiety of difference with an open heart; and a resting place of love and trust that is transformative.<sup>85</sup> This outer space of hospitality is powered by an inner heart space of welcome characterized by love.

### Research Question

The core research question asks, what is the pastor's internal lived-experience of *being hooked* in the context of *koinonia*? *Being hooked* is a phrase that references the affective experience of emotion and feeling because of past experiences and relationships that impinge on the present moment of relational experience. *Affect* refers to the physiological state of primary emotions of which we become conscious through feeling and then understand cognitively through associations of memory that in turn render meaning.<sup>86</sup> Thus, intensity of emotion and feeling characterizes affective experiences. My

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<sup>84</sup>Harkening back to Freud yet going beyond, *working-through* refers to the interpersonal shared task of feeling and interpreting unconscious material that emerges into conscious awareness. This task is integral to *witnessing* and extends its notion as understood biblically and by the philosopher Kelly Oliver in her books cited in the bibliography.

<sup>85</sup>My ongoing thinking about relational integration as a method of interdisciplinary work has opened me up to consider research methods, pedagogy and praxis from a variety of minority perspectives, which is to say, not the dominant perspective of the western European tradition in which I have been schooled. Consider the following authors and perspectives: Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008). Facio and Lara, *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives*. hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.

<sup>86</sup>Pamela Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 325, 330. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio makes a

research question presumes the human ability of the pastor to connect with direct felt experience – both one’s own and the other’s -- and be self-reflective about its meaning.

And so the inquiry into the pastor’s lived internal experience of community in the congregational context relies upon interpretive phenomenology as the research methodology. This methodology encircles the main question with a spiraling cluster of related open-ended questions that keep opening up the lived-experience of the main question. Hence, the importance of related questions: what emerges when the fellowship experience of church as experienced by the pastor is understood and interpreted through the lived reality of countertransference? How does the concept of countertransference make sense of the pastor’s lived-experience of church? These questions inquire after a description of lived-experience for the pastor in the specific community of *ecclesia*, with specific attention to the inner dimensions of experience for the pastoral leader. The scope of this project therefore is limited to exploring the intrapsychic dimension of countertransference from the experience of the pastor.

### **Key Terms**

#### Countertransference

Countertransference, traditionally understood within the therapeutic and psychoanalytic relationship of patient and analyst, is the analyst’s emotional, cognitive, and behavioral response to the transference of the patient. Transference is the patient’s projection of parents or other authority figures, usually from childhood, onto the analyst.

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significant distinction between feelings and emotions. The former is “inwardly directed and private” and the latter is “outwardly directed and public.” He believes both emotion and consciousness are linked and to that end, theorizes that connection in his book. See Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: A Harvest Book Harcourt, Inc.1999), 36-37.

Countertransference is the subjective experience of the patient by the analyst. This *classic* concept can be construed as a relational, embodied, and imaginative way of knowing.

This relational and thus, mutual, knowing, within this transference space is characterized by processes of projection, introjection, projective identification, containment, and enactment.

Projection is the unconscious process by which an inner object-image or fantasy is *put onto* another person, such that the other person is thus related to through the lens of that particular externalized object-image. In other words, we rid ourselves of those aspects of ourselves that we do not want to acknowledge or accept as constitutive of our personhood and put them onto another person or group of people. Scapegoating is one dimension of this unconscious activity. Introjection is, on the other hand, the unconscious act of taking in bits and pieces of experiences and other people into one's self so as to build up the self through the relational functions of body, emotion, and imagination.<sup>87</sup> Projective identification is the intensification of projection such that the other person receives, internalizes, and acts out the projection. As an unconscious process, the receiving person is not aware consciously of this relational dynamic. No longer is the projection *onto* the other person; instead it is *into* the other person.

Containment has to do with *safe enough* personal boundaries that keep open and foster trust in the relational space between one person and another. It is this *transitional* or *potential space* that allows for creative exploration and imaginative insight to emerge spontaneously in the relationship between analyst and patient. This therapeutic *facilitating environment* is a realm of play and rest in which the observing self interacts

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<sup>87</sup>This psychoanalytic concept connects with IPNB's view of memory and narrative integration as it relates to attachment patterns.



with one's experiencing self in the presence of a trusted other. Enactment refers to the ongoing, nonverbal communication that occurs in this context. That every action has multivalent meaning highlights the complexity of interaction and the importance of subjective awareness as an analyst and as a patient. Enactments are the condition of possibility for insight that is, at the same time, a newly accessible personal encounter and experience of the self.

These relational processes at play have not often been addressed in pastoral care or counseling. Instead, they are more typical of pastoral psychotherapy where the intersubjective nature of communication between pastor and parishioner takes seriously the empathetic exploration of the unknown and therefore, the unconscious that exists in, among and between the conversational pair. However, it is precisely this focus on relational and emotional processes that allow the unconscious to become conscious that is important to the relational focus of pastoral care.

This dyadic relationship typical of pastoral psychotherapy is experienced in the pastoral care assessment of minister with parishioner, and extends into the wider pastoral care ministry of the congregation itself. This extension of the *classical* view of countertransference is known as *totalist*.<sup>88</sup> More generally, the bodily, imaginative,

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<sup>88</sup>More contemporary understanding of countertransference is from this perspective. Pamela Cooper-White outlines the history from which this distinction arose as well as its distinctive help in the psychological and theological realm. She uses the term *pastoral psychotherapy* throughout this book with no clear definition. It is interchangeable with *pastoral counseling*. For her, "[p]astoral counseling, or psychotherapy, is defined as a distinctive form of counseling in which the full resources, theoretical knowledge, and clinical methods of secular psychology and psychotherapy are brought together with pastoral theological method and practice to provide a holistic approach to psychotherapy that honors and integrates the spiritual dimension of each patient's life and experience." See Pamela Cooper-White, *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 131. The term *pastoral psychotherapy* however, is more clearly yet differently defined in another book. The beginning words of the introduction affirm, "Pastoral psychotherapy is the calling of a growing number of religiously committed clinicians around the world." Amongst Christian counselors are a "large number of secularly trained but theologically committed psychiatrist, psychologists, social workers, and marriage and family therapists. They share a belief that the psychotherapy they perform is a ministry, performed on

emotional, and cognitive dimensions of listening and responding are present in every relationship, and assume conscious and unconscious layers of communication. Thus, the dynamics of countertransference are understood from within a larger relational paradigm of intersubjectivity that is relevant to the basic human yearning to know and to be known, to love and to be loved.<sup>89</sup>

Such yearning is fraught with inherent tensions within the self and other, and is appropriately mirrored in the edges of the disciplines that collide and collaborate, contain and cover over the intersubjective space of countertransference. This conceptual arena of countertransference is a fluid environment that is impacted by emerging work in interpersonal neurobiology and continued advances within the understanding and practice of psychoanalysis. Hence, the shared foundational theories of object relations and attachment, of the multiple self and postcolonial discourse are also implicated and nuanced in ever-new ways as we gain more insight into what it means to be human.<sup>90</sup>

The emergent, and thus, creative, interaction among the embodied brain, mind, and relationships has to do not only with the domain of interpersonal neurobiology but also with the content and processes of countertransference. Theology too has its place in this discourse about how relationships shape who we are and condition the possibilities of who we can become. Feminists and womanists illumine the competing discourses that

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behalf of God and/or their religious community. They believe God to be an ally, an active agent in the process of formation and re-formation of persons. The experience moments of surpassing holiness in their therapeutic encounters.” See Brian W. Grant, *A Theology for Pastoral Psychology: God's Play in Sacred Spaces* (New York: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>89</sup>See Ann Belford Ulanov’s discussion of the range of how intersubjectivity is understood by prominent psychoanalysts today. Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*. See also Susan J. Dunlap, “Discourse Theology and Pastoral Theology,” in *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

<sup>90</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*.

determine human subjectivities and (de)form human bodies. Asian feminist theologians' use of postcolonial theory in addition to indigenous religious traditions com/plicate the relational space of human inter- and intra-subjectivity.<sup>91</sup> Their work points to the divine initiative of taking on human flesh in Jesus Christ, and undergoing suffering as a human being. It is thus through bodies that we experience the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Theology so understood thus begins with reflection upon the situated body, tending to what is enlivening and deadening in communal relationships. With such a focus, feminist, womanist, Asian, and postcolonial work in Christian theology provides this research with its primary theological angle.

There is little written specifically for pastors or lay leaders that addresses the intra-psychic and inter-subjectivity of relationships from an interdisciplinary perspective of theology and psychology, especially working within the communal countertransference situation of the church. One reason for this may be the way the pastors have been seen as *called* and *set apart* from others by virtue of their office as pastor. Theological views of the pastor's role may be an obstacle to seeing the pastor as a person who is involved in countertransference in the same way that parishioners are. This is a primary limitation within the literature on countertransference. The work of Pamela Cooper-White is an exception. However, her work is limited to the pastor's use of the self in pastoral counseling even if she, per her own admission, is also "interested in

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<sup>91</sup>The term *com/plicate* is used by psychoanalyst and practical theologian Cooper-White to indicate the multiple self as enfolded and enfolding many different domains and images of self-understanding that are covered, uncovered, and discovered in changing patterns akin to a kaleidoscope. In using this term she is indebted to Deleuze and postcolonial theory of hybridity as she seeks to link up her experience of countertransference with other related discourses regarding the multiple self. See chapter six in Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*.

anthropology, both psychological and theological, that explores the multiplicity of persons.” She goes on to say,

not only in terms of pluralism and diversity of human beings in our relations with one another, but multiplicity as *internally* constitutive of each individual mind/self/subject, at both conscious and unconscious levels.<sup>92</sup>

Thus the significance of this proposal cannot be overstated. To date, there is no published study regarding the pastor’s internal lived-experience of community that exists between the leader and his or her congregation, and then analyzing that experience theologically, from the perspective of *koinonia*, and psychologically from the concept of countertransference.

In a multicultural world that is religiously plural and in constant flux, ordinary communication in the church is wrought with those conscious and unconscious dimensions that are both lively and deadly. Then when the congregation recognizes or acknowledges an imperative toward change and transformation its anxiety becomes more charged. A lack of awareness of the reality of countertransference in pastor-parishioner communication and experience may impede the work of the Spirit as it moves the Church into the future. Likewise, an abuse of the intersubjective space and relationship between pastor and parishioner can cause deep suffering that damages or destroys *koinonia*. Cultivating a familiarity with the multiple inner dimensions of human identity so as to loosen rigid and habitual ways of responding to self and other is a summons to interact creatively with difference and to receive the Other, including God.

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<sup>92</sup>Cooper-White, “Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling,” 103; Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective*; Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*.

In the process of query in, among, and between human bodies that know and bodies of knowledge, attentiveness to particularity and its boundaries, and awareness of the deadliness or aliveness of desire and repression active in the space of relationship leads us to consider the psychic mechanisms of hostility and hospitality in the household of God. Countertransference is not just about content and interplay of representational images, it is also a dynamic experience and inquiry into ongoing inter-relational processes between human bodies that are conscious and unconscious. In so doing, human agency, freedom, and transformation are implicated, as is the subjective human experience of God's presence. This thesis proposes to explore how the relational experience of countertransference may render more robust and complex the concept of *koinonia*. In particular, the dissertation explores the intrapsychic dimension of countertransference from the perspective of the pastor's lived-experience of fellowship in the congregation.

### *Koinonia*

While this conceptual reality of fellowship will be explored more fully through the work of Theresa F. Latini, it is helpful now to take note of its contours from the perspective of a word study that focuses on the theological significance of *koinonia*. Drawing upon its Greek background allows for robust description of this word. Imagine the creation of a web of associated meanings. It is first important to know that the background ethos of *koinonia* is that of *koinos*, meaning *common*.

In secular Greek language *koinos* addresses what is common in a threefold way: "in terms of what is possessed, i.e., ownership, property, and ideas; what matters to all, i.e., societies, monies, and resolves; and what is construed or denoted as having no or

small worth.”<sup>93</sup> Another secular Greek perspective draws upon *koinos* in its meaning of “fellows or participants.”<sup>94</sup>

It is with regard to the individual and communal dimensions of Greek society that *koinos* assumes further significance due to theoretical emphases. Because order is a foundational Greek principle for reality, common ownership of land literally grounds the vision of society. Yet individuals and their rights are also privileged too, with an eye to what they contribute to society in terms of duty and integration therein. So the reality of private property and the vision of a communal social economy is a tension of opposites, thus prompting theoretical discourse about the common and society. Pythagoras and Neo-Pythagoreans, Aristotle and Hesiod, Stoics, and Cynics each addressed the reality of the rich and poor through the lens of *koinos*.<sup>95</sup> It is noteworthy that the ethical vision of communal ownership was lived out among the Pythagoreans, similar to the Jewish group of the Essenes.<sup>96</sup>

These general meanings of *koinos* are not found much in the Hebrew Bible or used in Judaism. Instead, a different word is used to denote *common* and it is with reference to the contrast of holy. Interestingly, *koinos* is used with this specific meaning and only in apocryphal writings such as 1 Maccabees.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged in One Volume*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 447.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 448.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 447.

New Testament usage of *koinos* highlights both that which is *common* and that which is *profane*. While ritualistic categories of clean and unclean have been done away with, the overtones of common as profane address a sense of worth in terms that reference the background regard for the holy. More positively, *koinos*, when used to speak of *common* faith and *common* salvation, leans into the holy reality of community understood in light of Jesus. It is noted that

[t]his life in community is not based on economic theory, legal socialization, or philosophic imitation of nature, but expresses the loving fellowship which renounces ownership (cf. Lk. 12:33) in order to help others (Acts 2:45). The phrase in Acts (“having all things or everything in common”) is a Hellenistic one.<sup>98</sup>

Briefly and in sum, *koinos* is significant in broadening the following consideration of *koinonia*. We are challenged to wonder about differing societal emphases on communal life together when we think about what it means to be a relational person. We cannot help but notice that the common good is valued and likewise, that human life is connected ultimately to the land.<sup>99</sup> There is interplay between the individual and society, a movement between parts and the whole. The trajectory of this impulse issues in a cluster of ideas that circle around notions of the *group* and *sharing* or, *koinonia*.

Secular Greek use of *koinonia* is used with reference to *sharing* in human life, meaning *participation*, *impartation*, or *fellowship*. Characteristic of coming together in diverse relational ways that are ordered, such as enterprises, legal relations, and marriage, it is above all in friendship that fellowship is exalted. Also highly valued is the sharing

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 448.

<sup>99</sup>See Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002). Even now we see the traces of these ideas in our current use of *common* as adjective and noun as defined in the dictionary.

that is citizenship, for its political ordering is integral for “the preservation of society, and indeed of the cosmos.”<sup>100</sup> Greek religious thought also draws upon the ethic of *koinonia*, as people share “in divine power through common meals.”<sup>101</sup> Such human-divine communion happens in and through sacrificial feasts or even sexual union. Group engagement that has depth and breadth of participation is vital sharing that seemingly not only characterizes life but also gives life its livingness.

Such *association* is the hallmark of the Greek world. This sharing is not characteristic of the Israelite-Jewish sphere. The term *koinonia* is not used much in the Hebrew Bible, and in rabbinic literature *fellowship* conveys a general meaning or, from a more religious perspective, that of *table fellowship*. Significantly then, “[t]he absence of the group for fellowship with God marks off the OT from the Greek world. The righteous in the OT depend on God and trust in him. But do not regard themselves as his fellows.”<sup>102</sup> Distance rather than association characterizes divine-human covenantal relations.

Having stated this difference between the Greeks and Jews however, it is important to note that Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher in Alexandria and a contemporary of Jesus, gives us cause to pause and reconsider this rather stark bifurcation of Hebrew Bible and New Testament emphases. Philo seems to straddle both world perspectives in his use of *koinonia* that highlights “the rare sense of ‘giving a share’ or ‘imparting.’”<sup>103</sup> For example, he uses “the group for human fellowship with God, e.g., in

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<sup>100</sup>Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Abridged in One Volume*.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 448-449.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 449.



the cultus. He also uses it for the ideal common life of the Essenes.”<sup>104</sup> In his use of *koinonia*, the boundaries between Greek and Jewish worldviews seem to be permeable.

The understanding of *koinonia* in New Testament writings has a threefold emphasis of *group*: “to share in something,” “to give a share in something,” and finally, the absolute sense of “fellowship.”<sup>105</sup> The substance of what is shared within and among the group varies widely. On the one hand, it seems to be a sharing in what is mortal and therefore encompasses sin, guilt, and judgment. On the other hand, the substance of sharing seems to be exclusive because it participates in the holy through redemption. For the author of I John, this *sharing* is abiding, first in the Father and the Son, and then extending to believers for the sake of unity or fellowship in one another that is a living bond.<sup>106</sup>

In his writings, the apostle Paul describes various dimensions to the conceptual idea of *people as a group sharing in something* or, in other words, *koinonia*. Foundationally, he provides a religious depth to this group, writing about fellowship with the Son of God. This identification with Jesus Christ is known by faith and is incomplete in the present, while at the same time awaiting final consummation at end times. The shared activity of identification is the gospel and faith that issues in service with fellow Christians. Such partnership is a material sharing of goods as well as the grace of being bound to one another in bearing the burdens of suffering. This is the outward communion or visible participation of sharing in the group. The inward expression or communion of

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 449-450.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 450.

this particular fellowship is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Significantly different than the sacrificial feasts of that day, among Christian believers there is not mystical absorption into the divine but rather an identification enabled by the gift of the Spirit and witnessed to by the reception of bread and wine.<sup>107</sup>

The New Testament commonly also uses *koinonia* in ways that convey a sense of "to give a share in something."<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, this Greek meaning is more rare in and of itself, yet, and at the same time, it is used in the letters to congregations at Corinth, Galatia, and Rome, as well as by the author of Hebrews. This dichotomy is striking when one considers that some of the biblical texts speak from and to the injunction to *share* in the church's collection for the poor. There seems to be relational and material emphasis on tending to bodily needs due to extreme poverty that links differing parts of the church together through local yet shared efforts to collect money. So there is fellowship among differing congregations of the early church. (Gal. 2:9; Rom. 15:26)

Another dimension of this sharing is straightforward talk from the perspective of Paul who, as a teacher, admonishes the church in Galatia: "Those who are taught the word must *share* in all good things with their teacher." (Gal.6:6; See also Phil.4:15) And he gives the same message to the Corinth congregation, noting "If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits?" (1 Cor. 9:11) *Sharing* then, values both the spiritual and material stuff of life and seems to suggest that in fact, each emphasis is of reciprocal worth that verges on grace. Another letter to the

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 449. In the summer days of Ordinary Time, we have been singing about participation in this Eucharistic *sharing* or *koinonia* in our post communion canticle, "Now the Body Broken," written by Ray Makeever.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 450.

Corinthian church suggests that this sharing might actually be so. In speaking about the churches of Macedonia Paul writes, “For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of *sharing* in this ministry to the saints.” (2 Cor. 8:3-4) Even if those who are giving are not materially well off, Paul encourages the congregations in Corinth to follow through on their promise of generosity to others. His letter highlights that “[t]hrough the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of Christ and by the generosity of your *sharing* with them and with all others.” (2 Cor. 9:13)

Finally, the anonymous author of the letter to the Hebrews notes, “Do not neglect to do good and to *share* what you have, for such sacrifices are a blessing to God.” (13:16) In all these writings there is movement and activity toward others that is both bodily and material in orientation as well as spiritual. Furthermore, there seems to be a spatial and temporal openness to others that is joyful, even cheerful in its regard for the other.<sup>109</sup>

Brief as this biblical word study of *koinonia* is, associative identification with the material and spiritual needs of others in terms of the common good seems to be an ethical imperative and vision that orders life in community. This ordering of life assumes more particularity in the understanding of *koinonia* posited by practical theologian Theresa Latini. Her proposal will be explored in later chapters.

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<sup>109</sup>As a congregation we inhabit this attitude of *sharing* in an offertory song by Brett Hesla. We sing, “Give us our daily bread ... may we satisfied. May we be satisfied (x3) ... with only what we need. Never be satisfied (x3) ... if any be denied.” This song is found in *Worship in the Spirit of Jesus* (2004). Ray Makeever wrote the post-communion canticle we currently sing in Ordinary Time. This song also highlights *sharing* in terms of being sent out of this particular fellowship with the gospel message: “Now the body broken; now the blood is shed; now the eyes are open to the living Bread: Bread of life, Bread of hope, Bread of peace. Now with wills united, now with open hands, now with hearts delighted hear our God’s command: ‘*Share* the life, *share* the hope; *share* the life, *share* the hope; *share* the life, *share* the hope, *share* the peace.’” This song is found in *Dancing at the Harvest* (1997). Significantly, both composers have written these texts while inhabiting the worship life and missional commitments of justice as bodied forth by the congregation of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN.

### Significance of the Study

This proposal takes seriously the claim that God has accommodated the gospel message to human beings precisely through the bodily medium of people sharing it with one another. The social and collective body of Christ is the lived experience of believers, created and sustained by the power of the Risen Christ, which is to say, the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that is experienced in and through our bodies, and it is the Holy Spirit who enters into and can transform the intersubjective space that exists between persons in Christian community. This corporate sense of spirituality, so important historically to many Christian traditions and especially to the Reformers, is vivified anew in this day and age, as neuroscience and psychoanalytical theory help us understand the dynamic emergence of our very selves from the interconnections of embodied mind, brain, and relationships. New and emerging understandings of the emotional corporeal body in relationship thus opens up and renders more complex the practice of spirituality and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the congregation. The congregation as the body of the risen Christ has been understood spiritually. This proposal wonders about the experience of *koinonia* in ways that lean toward understanding the congregational body as a continued incarnation of suffering bodies that witness to the just reign of God in the midst of much brokenness and injustice.

There is already too much unnecessary suffering at the hands of church people and within the communal body of Christ. The psychological mechanisms of denial and repression, of projection and enactment are all too well and alive in many congregations. Which of us does not harbor memories of people who are scapegoated within congregations? Persons whose needs and behavior are not met with understanding and

empathy are often scapegoats who carry some aspect of the unlived emotional life of the group that cannot be held in tension with other emotional aspects of life together in community. At some level, such outcast people carry not just the sins of others, but *body forth* the others' intolerable emotion and feelings as it relates to the needs, values, and norms of the congregation. Perhaps we are the very ones who have suffered this scapegoating process in relation to professional church staff, deacons, or elders. Maybe we identify with our biblical ancestor Joseph whose brothers tore him apart from the family, their intent suggesting they acted as wild animals. Perhaps we resonate with the lepers who were cut off from the practices of communal life, and thus were denied access to aspects of themselves that only community could call forth. Yet all of these marginalized people and disavowed aspects of ourselves are part of the creation to which God has bound God's being. They are needed for the growth, development and transformation of each person individually and collectively as the body of Christ.

Now is the time to step back, and from the perspective of interdisciplinary dialogue, inquire into and communicate more fully about the wondrous and mysterious truth of how we are fashioned as people, so that our lives in relationship become more healthy and resilient witnesses of God's *shalom* as we journey together through this world.<sup>110</sup> In theological terms, God's *shalom* is lived out in the covenant that God has made with the creaturely world. Countertransference is a creaturely part of the intimacy for which we were created, both with one another and with God. Countertransference helps us make sense of our relational interconnectedness as members of the body of

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<sup>110</sup>Pastoral theologians Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austen affirm this trajectory. They comment, "Too little attention has been given to the contributions of psychology and theology to building ethically, spiritually, and psychologically mature congregations where healing and transformation happen." Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austen, *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, 36.

Christ. As a psychological concept it serves to identify, explore, and mediate the differing discourses and power dynamics that constitute human subjectivity or personhood within discrete and interconnected social spaces. In so doing, countertransference can help us discern, provisionally, contingently, and situationally the subjective presence of inner others that is called forth by the external objective presence of others in the world.<sup>111</sup> The importance of this work for congregations in a multicultural world with a global economy cannot be overstated.

The world is the vulnerable, yet good and generous, space of dependence in which we meet one another and God. It is the larger social space inhabited by the church. Torah piety and gospel imperatives speak about covenantal obligations to the neighbor and to the weakest members of society, to the stranger and those who are cast out.<sup>112</sup> This particular biblical discourse highlights these people as being singularly important to community in a world of oppression and social injustice. What is marginal and lowly, unacknowledged and invisible is now seen, experienced as valuable, and given prominence throughout the witness of Scripture. In the New Testament the apostle Paul asserts the priority of all members of the body of Christ, drawing upon bodily imagery in

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<sup>111</sup>Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, Post-Contemporary Interventions, edited by Stanley Fish and Frederic Jameson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). See also Phillis Isabella Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*, Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins and Linda E. Thomas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>112</sup>Johanna W.H. van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise the Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005). Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: The Relation of the Bible and Pastoral Care," in *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, ed. Patrick D Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Walter Brueggemann, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

his argument, that all people must be cherished and valued because their life and experience matter in the formation of community.<sup>113</sup>

Countertransference processes help us see this theological truth clearly. It helps us see that the outcast and the stranger also reside in each of us, within our emotional body. We come to this subjective awareness of the multiple self in and through the irreducible presence of the external Other(s) as they impinge upon our bodies and emotions. The permeable openness of the church community to the world is blurred with competing discourses whose interplay impinges upon the church and contributes to the shaping of the multiple self.

No longer can we afford to ignore hard conversations about racism and class, gender and sexuality, oppression and injustice in the worldwide context of imperialism and transnational migration. To do so would be to ignore aspects of our inner selves that we deny or disavow, putting them off onto or into other people. It would also ignore the intersubjective spaces where the Holy Spirit chooses to be present and active. No longer do we understand those conversations as being *out there* only. Those discourses also enter the social space of the church in and through each individual body. Each of us is marked and joined together by these discourses. Just as the human body is formed in and through these discourses so is the body of Christ.

These discourses are related intimately to human subjectivity in its inner and outer dimensions. They condition the personal experience of socio-cultural and emotional bodily freedom in time and history. They situate the embodied psyche and relationships

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<sup>113</sup>J. Louis Martyn, Robert Tomson Fortna, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990). Jouette M. Bassler, *Navigating Paul: An Introduction to Key Theological Concepts*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*.

in social justice issues of faithful living as disciples of Christ.<sup>114</sup> Countertransference processes help us to understand the emotional resonance, power and import of these multiple discourses in the lived-experience of relationships. The knowledge gained from tending to and negotiating these unconscious dynamics enable congregational ministers to lead from the inside out, to make wise and compassionate choices from the vantage point of a more holistic theological anthropology that takes seriously the unconscious and posits the self as multiple.

The dialogue between psychology and theology consciously values and seeks the wisdom of emotional processes. It seeks to discern and express God's Spirited presence within the boundaries of human relationships, and it promises to stir up new ideas about what life together can look like in the midst of anxiety for the sake of engendering and supporting a more whole and holy people of God and its witness in the world.<sup>115</sup>

### Summary and Preview

In this chapter I provided an introduction to my dissertation, a statement of the problem, my rationale for this dissertation, a definition of practical theology and its emphases in liberation theology and Neo-Protestant theology that relate to the overview of the practical theological method I am using, an image of the practical theologian as a

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<sup>114</sup>Dunlap, "Discourse Theology and Pastoral Theology." Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*.

<sup>115</sup>I am aware of how anxiety conditions the human situation as it has been addressed by theologians and writers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably Paul Tillich and the existentialist authors. In the realm of psychology, family systems theory has addressed the flow of anxiety within church systems. My interest is to go more deeply into the unconscious realm through the interface of psychoanalytic theory and interpersonal neuroscience with their focus on the significance of emotions that is connected to but different from anxiety. Practical theologian Andrew D. Lester draws out the interdisciplinary importance of emotion. See Andrew D. Lester, *The Angry Christian: A Theology for Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).



multiple self, consideration of the hospitality of friendship in light of the emphases of relational integration as an inter-disciplinary method, my research question, an explication of the key terms of countertransference and *koinonia*, and my argument for the significance of this study.

The following chapter continues the introduction by situating the research question in the larger fields of psychology and theology, tending to theoretical concepts before explicating the methodology and its rationale. While later chapters address in more detail the two overarching concepts as the backdrop to analysis of the research findings, it is important to acknowledge at the outset the influence of specific voices in those theoretical fields as it relates to the research question and my choice of methodology. In some ways, chapter two continues to highlight the significance of the research question. In other ways, it is concerned to show the theoretical assumptions and biases from and through which I navigate the research process methodologically. Stated more generally and positively, chapter two is concerned to show the principles and values of chosen authors that have guided the development of my research question generally and that more specifically, in later chapters, condition my writing voice as I describe and interpret the pastoral leader's internal *lived-experience* of community within the congregational context.

Relational integration as a theological inter-disciplinary method is inherently dialogical. Just so, the following chapters continue to unfold that dialogue in back and forth conversation, becoming more detailed and complex, rendering the description and interpretation more nuanced, psychologically and theologically, for the sake of

*transformation*.<sup>116</sup> As a reader you might think of this exploratory process through the image of a Mobius strip.

Imagine a thin twist of paper whose ends are taped together. This spiral forms a double helix, a loop whose continuous line is a surface. Now think about tracing a line on its surface: the beginning and ending of the line are contiguous so that the ending is also the beginning. Notice too that the twist gives the loop a surface that is both inner and outer. This is a Mobius strip.<sup>117</sup> In a similar vein, my writing is continuously looping around intertwined psychological and theological concepts that have intra- and inter-relational significance. With each return to my starting point (or research question), there are new layers of description, interpretation and meaning that unfold, new questions and connections that might emerge.

Such a spiral journey of exploration opens the writer and reader to flashes of insights that one can inhabit because it encompasses both familiar and strange concepts in new ways. In the words of anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson,

To get outside of the imprisoning framework of assumptions learned within a single tradition, habits of attention and interpretation need to be stretched and pulled and folded back upon themselves, life lived along a Mobius strip. These are lessons too complex for a single encounter, achieved by garnering doubled and often contradictory visions rather than by replacing one set of ideas with another. When the strange becomes familiar, what was once obvious may become

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<sup>116</sup>In some ways this attention to the trajectory of transformation is a theological assertion of how words matter, an acknowledgement that we live and die by words in the process of being nourished by them. It is also a nod to Christian personal realism that values what emerges from increasing coherence and complexity in systems. Just so, and also from the perspective of IPNB, transformation emerges from such integrated differentiation. These notions nuance other emphases of transformation that typify *white practical theology* as noted in chapter sixteen in Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*.

<sup>117</sup>Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 29. Parker J. Palmer and James E. Loder also use the image of the Mobius strip in their work. However it is her work that first introduced me to that concept.

obscure. The goal is to build a complex structure in which both sets of ideas are intelligible, a double helix of tradition and personal growth.<sup>118</sup>

Transformation happens in returning repeatedly to concepts and experiences, and in that journey, allowing oneself to be open to surprise, indeed, allowing oneself to be carried by surprise to fresh places of understanding.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

CHAPTER TWO  
MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

*I would love to live  
like a river flows,  
carried by the surprise  
of its own unfolding.*  
--- John O'Donohue

*When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens.*  
---Leviticus 19:33f.

**Introduction**

In this chapter I first provide an overview of the conceptual fields that have shaped my thinking about the research question. In doing so I invite the reader firstly, to anticipate intuitive connections in and among theoretical, biblical, and theological concepts as they relate to the research question and secondly, to wonder how those trajectories of thought might shape the choice of my research methodology. My next task in this chapter is to introduce my research methodology, present its rationale, defend its claims, detail its process, and present the analytical findings.

This thesis is self-conscious about the construction and space of relationships. At this point it is important to acknowledge the energetic pull that has drawn me toward certain concepts and authors as they have contextualized my understandings of countertransference and *koinonia*. They ground my research in basic ways. They are what I *held lightly* as I entered into the methodological research process. They defined the

space in which I play conceptually and at the same time, what I *bracketed out* so as to engage on its own terms the analytic findings from my research methodology. Being upfront with what conditions my own biases is congruent with phenomenological assumptions of methodology.<sup>1</sup>

### Importance of the World as Horizon of Inquiry

The research question of countertransference as an important aspect of the pastor's experience of *koinonia* takes seriously the lived-experience of the self amidst the ongoing scholarly conversation about how to understand personhood in the wake of post-structural and postmodern emphases on identity. Of significance is postcolonial literature that informs the disciplines of theology and psychology on the multiple self from the perspective of empire as a dominating force of power. In other words, the world understood as processes of empire is the horizon of inquiry into countertransference as *koinonia*.<sup>2</sup> This world horizon further understands that the congregational context is the church in mission.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Douglas H. Sprenkle and Sidney M. Moon, eds., *Research Methods in Family Therapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), 86. Shawn Wilson asserts, "Feeling is connected to our intellect and we ignore, hide from, disguise, and suppress that feeling at our peril and at the peril of those around us. Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual research is a goddam lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie to other people. Humans - feeling, living breathing, thinking humans - do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first and then to the people around us." See Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, 56. From the perspective of Hans Georg Gadamer, it is our pre-understandings that make it possible for us to make meaning of experience. Thus, while his philosophy informs some schools of thought in phenomenology he does not believe in Husserl's phenomenological affirmation of *bracketing*. See Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 111.

<sup>2</sup>Cooper-White's theological anthropology, historical and working views of countertransference are based on the multiple self and thereby relies upon postcolonial perspectives, including that of empire or imperial hegemony. See also essays by K. Samuel Lee and K. Brynolf Lyon in Kathleen J. Greider, Deborah van Duesen Hunsinger, and Felicity Brock Kelcourse, eds., *Healing Wisdom: Depth Psychology and the Pastoral Ministry* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

<sup>3</sup>It understands too that perhaps inquiry into the experience of countertransference as *koinonia* may illumine or even *talk back* to processes of empire. Practical theologians are beginning to draw upon

The question of countertransference as *koinonia* is the inquiry of exploring the relationship between countertransference and *koinonia* as an intra- and inter-personal subjective reality. Although the context for this exploration of countertransference is intersubjective, this query is concerned with exploring the intrapsychic dimension of the pastor's lived-experience of *koinonia*. As such, it wonders about how countertransference is an experience that shapes *koinonia*, which is to say, fellowship that has to do with the interpenetration of human and divine spirit in the relational body.

### ***Koinonia: Fellowship of God's Spirit and Human Spirit***

Given this basic definition of *koinonia*, foremost in this inquiry is tracing the movement of God's Spirit and human spirit in its inner and outer dimensions. Thus the human body and spirit ground this exploration, personally and communally. Furthermore, the experience of the immanent and transcendent aspects of God's Spirit come into play in and through the historical human body that is situated in time and space.

This dissertation responds to what has been written on *koinonia*, with particular attention to its spirited interaction. While several Reformed practical theologians have written about *koinonia*, this thesis draws upon the distinctive work of Theresa F. Latini whose work is situated broadly with the Neo-orthodox Protestant stream of practical theology.<sup>4</sup> Her contribution is writing with clarity about the relationship of divine and

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postcolonial perspectives to frame notions of practical theology. See Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2013). Melinda A. McGarrah Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013). World events urge that practical theologians also consider the relationship of their discipline to the tasks of public theology in the public square. See Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Society*.

<sup>4</sup>Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger, "Practicing Koinonia," *Theology Today* 66 (2009). Theresa F. Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011). Van Deusen Hunsinger and Latini are influenced in particular by the Chalcedonian

human action, considered a core problematic in theology. She addresses this issue by constructing a Neo-Barthian practical theology that tends to divine-human action in three dimensions: Trinitarian, ecclesial, and societal.<sup>5</sup>

New Testament literature bears witness to several dimensions of human-divine fellowship. We have traced already this broad lineage of *koinonia* in chapter one. Latini however, specifically identifies five dimensions of *koinonia*, following and also innovating from the later work of Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth as understood by George Hunsinger. She quotes Hunsinger who notes that “[i]n Barth’s theology I think it may fairly be said that *koinonia* is the ground of all being. *Koinonia* stands for the final reconciliation and interconnection of all things through a living, luminous statement of internal yet diverse relations.”<sup>6</sup> As we will see, action and energy, nature and relationality across time and space are thus implicated in *koinonia*.

The interpretive key to understanding *multidimensional koinonia* is through the emphases of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. The reality of communion is one way

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Formula as used by James E. Loder in his understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. See James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989); James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998); James E. Loder, Dana R. Wright, and John D. Kuentzel, *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology: Essays in Honor of James E. Loder Jr.* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2004); Kenneth E. Kovacs, *The Relational Theology of James E. Loder: Encounter and Conviction*, Practical Theology, edited by Iain Torrance, Richard Osmer, and Gordon S. Mikoski, vol. 2 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2011).

<sup>5</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 194-195. It is important to note that in other streams of practical theology, this core problematic is addressed differently, if at all. For differing notions of Jesus see especially Carter Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). For other notions of the Spirit see Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God*. For notions of discipleship (and implicitly the mission and ministry of the church) as it relates to the *telos* of creation, see Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2008). The aforementioned books align more with the stream of liberation and feminist practical theologies.

<sup>6</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 77.

to understand the paradox of human-divine nature and action in our life together as individuals and as church. Latini, following Hunsinger, uses the words *intimacy*, *integrity*, and *order* to highlight key emphases that derive from the confessional understanding of the two natures of Jesus Christ that emerged at this church council. She notes how intimacy and integrity mark all *koinonia* relationships and that some such relationships are further marked by order. In all of these relationships the Spirit is present as the agent of communion. The Spirit mediates between God and Jesus, Jesus and the Church, church members and one another, and the church and the world. Jesus is the center of relations: humans exist in him and through him to one another while also being united to God.<sup>7</sup>

Generally speaking then, there is the *inseparable unity* of intimacy between divine and human natures of each acting subject. This *coinherence* interpenetrates all five dimensions of *koinonia*, meaning there is inseparable uniting of divine-human action with one another: “Jesus indwells the Father; the church indwells Jesus; the members of the church indwell one another and the world.”<sup>8</sup> This indwelling is intimate participation. Such intimate unity has integrity, meaning that the indwelling of each acting subject in the five connective relationships of *koinonia* is without confusion, marked by the unique, irreducible particularity of individual subjectivity. Difference matters and is valued. This *indissoluble differentiation* indicates that there is no loss of identity for each acting subject in unity with the other. In *koinonia* relations between God and persons, the order of natures is asymmetrical, meaning that the divine nature is privileged in precedence and

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 77, 78.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 77.



initiative.<sup>9</sup> For example, “[i]t is only through God’s action that the church exists, let alone joins God in ministry in the world.”<sup>10</sup> Such divine initiative and action describe covenantal relationships with people of faith. This pattern of Chalcedon – intimacy, integrity, and order – although rooted initially in the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, grounds the multidimensionality of all *koinonia* relationships.

First is the inner life of the Trinity, followed by the human and divine reality of Jesus Christ, the indwelling of Christ’s Spirit in the church, the mutual indwelling of believers in one another, and finally, the church’s connection with the world. These relationships are interconnected through the Spirit and find their central focus in Jesus Christ who is God’s Word of revelation and work of reconciliation.<sup>11</sup> In fact, it is *this reconciliation* that is the “creation of *koinonia*,” a single event understood in three tenses of time: objectively completed in the past, experienced incompletely in the present, and anticipated as consummated future hope in the *eschaton*.<sup>12</sup>

To understand the multidimensional aspects that are constitutive of *koinonia* is to understand the centrality of God’s justifying work in Christ Jesus: reconciliation is *koinonia*. This is the heart of God’s revelatory work. Latini states clearly,

Jesus reveals the nature of God; he reveals God’s intent for creation; and thus he reveals what it means to be truly and fully human. He reveals the reality of multidimensional *koinonia*, and he accomplishes it through his life, death, and resurrection. He reconciles us to God and each other for the sake of *koinonia*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 77, 80.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 80, 81.

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

Reconciliation has happened once and for all in Jesus Christ. The divine and human coinhere in Jesus. He is fully human and fully divine, without separation or confusion between these two natures. Internally, Jesus as the Christ is a *koinonia* of divinity and humanity within his own body. Externally, this *koinonia* of the God-man establishes fellowship between God and humanity. We can understand further this mystery by noting two patterns of thought that are highlighted by Barth.

One pattern hearkens back to the early fathers. The anhypostasis/enhypostasis formula states, “Jesus’ human nature has no existence apart from the Word of God. Jesus of Nazareth does not exist except in union with the eternal Son. Jesus’ life is contingent on participation in the life of the Word.”<sup>14</sup> This first pattern of *coinherence* supports a second pattern of *correspondence*, meaning “Jesus’ humanity corresponds perfectly to his divinity. In his life history, Jesus lives in perfect correspondence to God the Father.”<sup>15</sup> Of note is Latini’s assertion that “[h]is speech and action mimetically reflect the *koinonia* of the Trinity. He is the image of the invisible God. Jesus Christ lives in a perfect *koinonia* of divine and human action. He loves God in gratitude, obedience, humility, long-suffering, and self giving.”<sup>16</sup>

It is this vulnerable dependence on God and mediated through the Spirit that allows resonant presence between God and Jesus Christ such that in and through that particular relationship, Jesus Christ and humanity are united. In other words, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the reconciliation of God and humanity is a communion of

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

divine and human action. Humanity then, participates in divine life. “Humanity has no being except as it is upheld by God.”<sup>17</sup> This intimate indwelling with Christ follows the pattern of Chalcedon: distinct particularity is honored in this human-divine union with divinity accorded the privileged status of initiative that orders action in this relationship. *Koinonia* however, is imperfect in the relationship between Christ and the church, unlike the perfect *koinonia* within the Trinity and constitutive of the Incarnation.

Despite the reality of sin that conditions *koinonia* for humanity, the church and its members, the pattern of correspondence and coinherence that describe the *koinonia* of Incarnation become two normative guidelines for the church.<sup>18</sup> Correspondence has to do with the witness. Coinherence has to do with participation. “Through ecclesial practices the church corresponds to Christ and participates in Christ. As the Son corresponds to the Father, so the church is called to correspond to Christ. It is called to witness to Christ in word and deed.”<sup>19</sup> The corresponding *witness* of the church is in its coinherent *participation* in the reconciling work of Christ for the sake of the world. The *participatory witness* of the church in God’s reconciling action is qualitatively different than that of Christ.

The work of salvation and liberation as mediated through the church however, still offers a generous relational space of freedom in which to experience a taste of reconciliation even as its hospitality offers some sense of communion. The church’s witness of God’s love in Christ “participates in Jesus’ ongoing ministry of communion-

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 198.

creating reconciliation in the world. The church is dialectically included in Christ. Its identity is dialectical: ‘I Not-I But-Christ.’ In a limited sense, therefore, the church mediates divine action when it lives out its *koinonia*.<sup>20</sup> We are reminded that *koinonia* is reconciliation, all encompassing in depth and dimension, with visible and invisible dimensions that are best known through the eyes of faith and the imagination of the heart.

If *koinonia* is “known by faith and shaped by theology,” it is because of ontological assertions that all of life is contingent upon God.<sup>21</sup> Pointedly, it is the following affirmation:

Jesus Christ is the Word and work of God, the Word of revelation who works for reconciliation for the purpose of establishing *koinonia* between God and humankind, among humans irrespective of sociological descriptors and between human kind and all creation. Thus the origin and *telos* of human existence and of the church’s vocation is multidimensional *koinonia*.<sup>22</sup>

Biblically and from the perspective of faith, we might say, “we live and move and have our being in God” and that “all things hold together in Christ.” (Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17) At the same time, this reality is tempered by sin. Thus, “... *koinonia* “not as a fully realized actuality but rather as an in-breaking, transforming actuality, can be discerned in, through, and in spite of the church.”<sup>23</sup> The present limitations of *koinonia* between Christ and the church points practically to the asymmetrical ordering of this relationship as well as highlights the power of the Holy Spirit: “...Christ is both immanent and transcendent of the church – within and above it, present and absent in it, united to it but not bound by

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 208.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

it. His work of reconciliation continues outside of, in spite of, and often in opposition to the church.”<sup>24</sup> The Spirited work of Jesus Christ is not limited to the church but continues in his own action and agency.

Thus, Barth’s constructive theology as innovated by Latini allows for understanding about how to relate human action in the realm of God’s saving economy and therefore, offers one interpretive framework from which to explore the relational and ontological reality of *koinonia*. However, and as the body of Christ, there seems to be an emergent dynamic to the presence, agency, and action of the Spirit, both human and divine, in the lived-through experience of *koinonia* – not only in a congregational setting and among its members as they gather, but also in the sent church as members live out their vocation in solidarity with the world. So in the present eschatological age it is helpful and important to track the visible and invisible dimensions of multidimensional *koinonia* that seemingly continue to emerge as a dynamic reality.

Specifically, we might wonder about the relational *freedom* of participation and witness that exists in the *koinonia* of the church, not only in terms of its present members but also in those who are absent or, in other words, the communion of saints. Is there any ghostly haunting that overshadows present experience and received tradition? What do discipleship and hospitality look like in terms of narrative coherence and multiple stories within a particular congregation? Is there any liminal space of interaction between newcomers and oldtimers that offers the condition for possibility of new life arising from

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 82. See also the footnote on page 87.

this interplay? Is there the possibility for differing strands of participation in congregational life and missional service?<sup>25</sup>

The complex interconnections of *koinonia* relationality shape the life of the church and its practices in visible and invisible ways. In affirmation of the transformational reality of *koinonia*, we might wonder about flows of power, emotion, will, agency, and action within and between members of any congregation. “In the present mode of reconciliation, *koinonia* seeks expression in, under, and even against ecclesial practices.”<sup>26</sup> To that end and for the sake of discipleship formation in a multicultural and pluralistic world we might wonder about congregational ability to hold and play with theologies arising from the suffering bodies of women and men throughout the world. This is the task of the present day: making cohesive and coherent narrative sense of lives fragmented by the violence that is omnipresent in communities. What does coinherence and correspondence mean in and for the witness of the church in our world today as we consider multiple emphases of the biblical narrative that shape our inner lives and outer commitments? Do our congregational practices witness to bodies marked with suffering as well as graced with faith, hope, and love?

By these questions I mean to draw attention to the dependent and vulnerable unity constitutive of *koinonia* in congregations. Congregational life is contingent upon the presence of Christ within its midst as the church gathers together around Word and sacrament. Sabbath rest might be considered waiting upon the Lord in vulnerable dependence. As Latini notes,

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<sup>25</sup>These questions are indebted to the work of Jessicah Duckworth in conversation with the work of Etienne Wenger.

<sup>26</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 86.

The church lives in perpetual dependence on God's Spirit. *Koinonia* cannot be conjured up, created, or controlled by the church or its members. No ecclesial practices can instantiate *koinonia*. Therefore, the church prays and waits for Christ to encounter it again and again in the power of the Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

The Gospel of Luke imagines that Jesus comes in the night as a thief. Just so, might we imagine that Jesus arrives in the guise of Muslims or immigrants, neighbors who are not yet known to us even though they arrive in the light of day? Might the affirmation, negation, and reconstitution of the church and its members happen as an encounter with Jesus Christ, now understood as an encounter with the alterity and difference of the stranger who is Spirited Other?<sup>28</sup> The indwelling of Jesus Christ may be re-imagined as the divine presence who tents with us. Thus, our indwelling of Christ's body calls us to re-imagine our humanity – or even the ecclesial church -- as people on the move who are exiles, migrants, and strangers. We shelter one another as we give and receive hospitality. Our dwelling place with God may be as solid as a weighty institution and as fragile as a tent. Our prayed-for encounter with the Risen Lord might be answered by Spirited visits from the stranger, widow, and orphan.

This image of Jesus Christ and humanity as people on the move, vulnerably dependent on intimate fellowship is not only congruent with gospel narratives but also is a glimpse of fleshing out the *telos* from which the church lives. As Christians, we live now from the future. Being *in* Christ means existing in the present moment that is redolent with and ever contingent upon transcendence. Barth says it in these words:

The Christian community has the advantage that in the beginning it already has behind it the end which it awaits. To that extent it proceeds from the fulfillment of

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 87. See text and footnote 14.

its hope. Its hope is not the expression of a longing and stirring. It is the expression of the impetus by which it exists.<sup>29</sup>

The witness and participation of the church calls for *attuned listening* that cultivates bodily and sensate perception of God's *telos* in this world so that the church may become a *resonant* eschatological presence of this end in and for the common good.

Just so, *koinonia* affirms a certain vision of life such that belonging is beholden to believing, meaning that Christian belief itself necessitates belonging to a certain congregation. Latini asserts, "This pattern of believing without belonging contradicts *koinonia*: if we take *koinonia* seriously, we cannot separate ourselves from the church. In the here and now, *koinonia* exists in, under, and against the structure of the congregation."<sup>30</sup> She goes on talk about Christians in this way: "They are joined to Christ as they are joined to Christ's body. They cannot belong to Christ without simultaneously belonging to Christ's members."<sup>31</sup> The challenge of communal belonging and belief is, of course, binding ourselves to the life of an institution that imperfectly lives out its virtues and beliefs.

The church is fragmented and its witness is incomplete, divisive even, and quite apart from its diverse manifestations historically and globally. It is the witness and participation of the church in the world that highlights this paradox of tension between the visible and invisible aspects of *koinonia*, especially when it comes to belief and belonging. This (in)visible tension reveals itself in questions about trust and truth in terms of epistemology and ontology that are especially charged in this time of (re)awakened

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.



awareness of race relations and injustice, the rise of religious fundamentalism, and seeming intolerance about difference of any kind.

The church makes visible some bodies while covering over and thus, making other bodies invisible. Some people are present and welcomed. Other folks are spurned, noticeably absent. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the practice of the Eucharist. It is at this table that we can most clearly see who is present and who is absent. We notice patterns of (in)hospitality.<sup>32</sup> At the same time however, and gathered around the table we confess, “While Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and forever, our knowledge of him regularly undergoes transformation. We cannot capture Jesus in a fixed image. He is multivalent, diverse, and richly surprising in his manifestations to us.”<sup>33</sup> Seemingly, we are called to risk both trust and obedience in hanging on and letting go of who we think Jesus is and how we experience him in our lives. This faithful task seems to be one of interpreting and experiencing, knowing and being.

This affirmation and task invite us to lean into the reality that we have subjective God-images beyond those of tradition, even as objective God-images are also challenged by a grand diversity of encounters with the Living God. We are touched by the transcendent, bodily marked with new gut knowledge of self and other, called to embody a new obedience of risk and trust. The swirling interplay of these subjective and objective God-images point to the mystery of God’s livingness in the world that the church cannot contain and at times, cannot even manifest. Practices that keep opening us up to

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<sup>32</sup> See Claudio Caravalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013). For an intercultural perspective on radical hospitality see Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor, Fatih Meets Faith*, edited by William R. Burrows (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008).

<sup>33</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 92.

transcendent life may engage us in other realms of thought and practice, and invite us into relationship with other bodies of knowledge.

Latini reminds us that “[b]ecause Jesus coexists in and with the world, knowledge and practices arising outside the church may more faithfully reflect the reality of *koinonia* than the knowledge and practices within the church. In these instances, our knowledge of God is affirmed, negated, and reconstituted again and again. All of this calls the church to a radical openness to critique from within and without.”<sup>34</sup> Such is the iconic play from the worldview that all things coinhere in Christ. Barth terms this worldly but unknowing witness to God *secular parables of truth*. He goes on to say, “The world may more faithfully practice what we have called *koinonia* that the church does. The church is admonished to recognize truth wherever it is found and to reform its own life in light of this truth.”<sup>35</sup> Truth has to do with witness and testimony, and thus change or reformation. Throughout multidimensional *koinonia* there is the interplay of divine and human action, enfleshed witness and testimony that is partial and thus, incomplete. The task of seeing and hearing truth relies upon leaning into other lives so as to discern those truths as they emerge, enfolding that secular and parabolic truth with the testimony of church history and tradition, theology and ritual.

#### Summary of *Koinonia* and its Implications

In summary, Latini constructs a Neo-Barthian practical theology whose focus is on divine and human action in ecclesial practices. *Koinonia*, meaning the communion of divine and human action, describes not only this orthopraxy, but also her methodology in

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. See footnote 17.

relating the social sciences and theology.<sup>36</sup> She clearly states, “However, divine action and human action do not yet appear to exist in *koinonia*. Only in the *eschaton* will divine action and human action commune in fullness and perfection.”<sup>37</sup>

It is at this point that my project intersects with her research emphases. My focus is on describing the messiness and ambiguity of border crossings of *koinonia* that is simply human and also divine, visible and invisible. In some ways, my interest is in describing the existence of *koinonia* that is “in, under, and against the structure of the congregation.”<sup>38</sup> In other words and congruent with Latini’s emphasis, my project of exploring the pastoral leader’s experience of *koinonia* in the congregation is most focused on the *koinonia* relationship in and among church members. Given the interconnection of multidimensional *koinonia* however, other *koinonia* relationships will be drawn in as appropriate. Incompleteness in our present age might characterize the witness of and participation in *koinonia* and yet, such a description is of considerable help in orienting, understanding, and interpreting what it means to be human from the perspective of the multiple self in a pluralistic and multicultural society.

In the consideration of what it means to be human and fashioned in the divine image, and common to her project and mine, notions of *action* and *agency*, *trust* and *truth*, *witness* and *participation* emerge. Likewise, the *three tenses of time* are an important dynamic to consider. These notions -- in conversation with the conceptual reality of countertransference -- are significant in extending and rendering more complex

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 195-196, 186.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 91.

the intersubjective reality of *koinonia* in the world of today. And all the more so is this wondering conversation helpful, given that countertransference as an ontological and relational reality also has visible and invisible dimensions.

A subtext of the aforementioned notions is *freedom* and *power*. The discourse of power objectively and subjectively conditions human-divine communion, and historically limits the human experience of freedom. In this light it is helpful to consider *koinonia* more broadly as fellowship from the larger perspective of the Hebrew Bible's witness of human vocation as covenantal relatedness to God. This larger horizon of divine-human relationship privileges a more unsettled, provisional, and open relation to in the world. At its heart is the tension of difference that keeps opening up and developing life in the midst of reality characterized by fissures and brokenness, oppression and social injustice.<sup>39</sup>

A larger biblical witness from testaments of covenantal fellowship examined and interpreted by the experience of countertransference takes seriously human body and spirit, growth and development, and learning and transformation. At the same time, such Scriptural testimony keeps wide open the world as a horizon of injustice and oppression that stands at odds with life lived in faithfulness to God and neighbor.

Countertransference connects with the deeper traces and haunting of repressed material from socio-political and cultural dimensions of particular texts and contexts, with continuing impact on all people.<sup>40</sup> Insights into brain development and the relational

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<sup>39</sup>Brueggemann, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant*. Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible*. See also Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: The Relation of the Bible and Pastoral Care." Of note is that his works take into account object relations theory as he develops his biblical theological anthropology.

<sup>40</sup>This assertion veers off into social theories of learning, as well as connects with emphases of womanist and Asian American theology. Knowing and becoming are inextricably related and also social.

function of memory from a neurobiological perspective only affirm this dynamic and its importance for emotional growth, development, and healing that is truly intersubjective, that connects the social space with the synaptic space.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the understanding of mind, brain, and relationships as integrally connected deepens and broadens the conceptual and practical significance of countertransference.

### Theoretical Definitions

Given that this dissertation explores how the relational process of countertransference renders more robust and complex the concept of *koinonia*, the aforementioned are the two major theoretical concepts. However, these concepts need to be unfolded and developed, with awareness that each concept has content and process that speaks both from and to human knowing and becoming. This recursive nature is one dimension of complexity inherent to the conversation. Another complexifying element is that some key authors write from within both domains of psychoanalysis and theology. Having noted this interdisciplinary situation however, none of these authors have so explicitly explored the proposal of countertransference as *koinonia*.<sup>42</sup> There is a gap in the literature in that respect which this dissertation seeks to fill.

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See Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, New University of Minnesota Press ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*. Inna Semetsky and Joshua A. Delpech-Ramey, "Jung's Psychology and Deleuze's Philosophy: The Unconscious in Learning," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 1 (2012). Heather Price, "Emotional Labour in the Classroom: A Psychoanalytic Perspective," *Journal of Social Work Practice* 15, no. 2 (2001). Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*.

<sup>41</sup>Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain* (New York: Norton, 2006).

<sup>42</sup>To a large extent this already existent interdisciplinary conversation between psychoanalysis and theology is reflected broadly in the work of Ann Belford Ulanov, Pamela Cooper-White, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, and James W. Jones.

These two dominant concepts are informed by other theories. Briefly stated, countertransference is nested inside the larger domain of psychoanalytic theory. This foundational theory informs object relations theory that further informs attachment theory. A more recent cross-disciplinary theory is that of interpersonal neurobiology. Finally, highlighting its presence in these theories, I address the importance of the body. This secondary theme of the body relates to and provides a bridge to the second dominant concept of *koinonia*. This New Testament concept of fellowship is grounded in the Hebrew Bible's themes of creation and covenant. The dynamic of *koinonia* is explored through the Holy Spirit and the themes of God's bodied presence through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and through God's promises to the good creation in the covenant.

#### Countertransference

Turning now to the details of texts and authors from which these two major theories are drawn, countertransference needs to be situated in its larger context of psychoanalytic theory, beginning with the writings of Sigmund Freud and how his proposal changed through the hands of other analysts engaged in years of psychoanalytic practice and conversation, to include a more expansive working definition. This *totalist* perspective is differentiated from the *classic* definition of countertransference, and reflects the work of British analysts from the *middle school* that influenced contemporary American psychoanalysts.

#### Object Relations Theory

This *middle* stream of British psychoanalysts provided foundational concepts upon which object relations theorists constructed their theories of attachment, including

W. D. Winnicott, W.R. D. Fairbairn, and Melanie Klein.<sup>43</sup> This thesis will focus on the work of Winnicott. Notably, how he informs the ongoing work of attachment theory used in psychoanalytic discussions as well as the work of interpersonal neurobiology, and so provides common ground that is fruitful to explore in a more nuanced way.<sup>44</sup>

In recent literature, there seems to be an oscillating influence between psychoanalytical and object relations theorists that is helpful to each field as they continue to explore and describe the experience of human intersubjectivity.<sup>45</sup> The work of Stephen A. Mitchell, Lewis Aron, and David J. Wallin is helpful in this regard.<sup>46</sup> They construct a larger psychoanalytic conversation while not neglecting the dynamic of countertransference, mindful of other authors who focus on more particular aspects of countertransference. Image constructions, representational processes, and the role of

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<sup>43</sup>Daniel J. Price, "The Human Being in Object Relations Psychology: Empirical Evidence for a Relational Psychology," in *Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002). Philip Culbertson, "Object Relations Theory and Intersubjective Narratives," in *Caring for God's People: Counseling and Christian Wholeness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup>The following works will be used: Dodi Goldman, ed. *In One's Bones: The Clinical Genius of Winnicott* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993). Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd, and Madeleine Davis, eds., *D.W. Winnicott: Psycho-Analytic Explorations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971). See David J. Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007). This resource is significant for its awareness of and engagement with interpersonal neurobiology.

<sup>45</sup>The reality of culture within intersubjective encounters occasions a few journal articles in the realm of psychology. The following book is a rare exception. Karen M. Seeley, *Cultural Psychotherapy: Working with Culture in the Clinical Encounter* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2000). For a theological perspective about intercultural encounters that draws upon object relations theory see Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology*. For more focused awareness of psychology and the cultural reality of African Americans see Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*.

<sup>46</sup>Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytical Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983). Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity*, Relational Perspectives Book Series, edited by Stephen A. Mitchell and Lewis Aron, vol. 20 (USA: The Analytic Press, 2000). Lewis Aron, ed. *A Meeting of Minds: Mutuality in Psychoanalysis*, vol. 4, Relational Perspectives Book Series, edited by Stephen A. Mitchell and Lewis Aron (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1996). Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*.

memory in the experiences of projection and introjection, affect and enactment, are beginning to be viewed not just in an imaginative way with a nod to bodily sensations, but also more substantially through bodily presence and its relational impact.<sup>47</sup>

Attachment theory emphasis in object relations comes to the fore with this emerging focus of the body's experience in countertransference, primarily through the work of female analysts.<sup>48</sup>

### Interpersonal Neurobiology

Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) is a natural ally to the conceptual emphases of psychoanalytic theory, a *totalist* view of countertransference, and object relations. IPNB is itself not a discrete discipline but an area of research that crosses many fields of study linked to what it means to be human—neuroscience, developmental psychology, anthropology, and psychiatry—in its quest to understand the developing mind as it emerges from the brain and is shaped by communication within interpersonal

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<sup>47</sup>Trauma theory is a related field of psychological inquiry because the body is taken seriously and connects with sociological emphasis and reappropriation of the Freudian observation of *haunting* and *uncanny feelings*. See Babette Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000). Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Viking, 2014). Peter A. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010). See also Alan Fogel, *Body Sense: The Science and Practice of Embodied Self-Awareness*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, edited by PhD Allan N. Schore, Series Editor (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2009). For a body practitioner perspective see Alan Fogel, "Rosen Method Bodywork: Practice and Science," *Somatics: Magazine-Journal of the Mind/Body Arts and Sciences* XVI, no. 4 (2012). For a theological perspective aware of trauma theory see Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). Kathleen M. O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

<sup>48</sup>Lewis Aron and Frances Sommer Anderson, eds., *Relational Perspectives on the Body*, Relational Perspectives Book Series, edited by Stephen A. Mitchell and Lewis Aron (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1998). Jean Knox, "The Relevance of Attachment Theory to a Contemporary Jungian View of the Internal World: Internal Working Models, Implicit Memory and Internal Object," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 44 (1999); Susie Orbach, "What Can We Learn from the Therapist's Body?," *Attachment & Human Development* 6, no. 2 (2004). Martin Stone, "The Analyst's Body as Tuning Fork: Embodied Resonance in Countertransference," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 51 (2006).



relationships. It self-consciously draws upon attachment theory.<sup>49</sup> The importance of IPNB for countertransference has to do with attachment patterns as it relates to processes of memory and narration.

Operative in the relational field between pastoral leader and any congregational member is the relational patterns ingrained from childhood, conditioning the experience of self and other in a number of ways. First, one's self and the other are experienced internally in one's thoughts, fantasies, and memories; externally in relation to the actual other; and in the *in between* place of the relationship itself. Memory is implicated in this mutual and shared space of making meaning. The way the mind encodes elements of experience into various forms of representation is dynamic. The mental models of self and others are created through processes of implicit and explicit memory, with narrative as the way in which the mind tries to integrate representations and mental modules.

Countertransference addresses the remembered and remembering self and thus, the state-dependent quality of memory retrieval suggests we narrate our lives from different standpoints. We can remember many selves that have existed in the past. Such narrative recollections allows for those varied mental states to be created anew in the present. The social nature of narration means that the remembering self is in creative flux in new and ever changing social contexts. Significantly then, countertransference processes as illuminated by IPNB allows us to see the self as multiple even as it allows us to read the traces of what has bodily marked us, following the uncanny feelings and

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<sup>49</sup>Classic references are to the seminal works of John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, and Mary Main. See also Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*.

incomplete memories that haunt us from partially forgotten discourses with a world of people.<sup>50</sup>

### Body and Community

Interestingly, in all of these theoretical frames mentioned thus far, the explicit presence of the body is absent, yet assumed in more implicit ways. I bring the presence of the body to the fore in my query of countertransference as *koinonia*. The individual body is seen, felt, and experienced in relationship, beginning with the maternal handling and holding of the infant body. This primary relationship between parent and child is the emergent ground from which personhood is constituted. Bodily states of sensations and feeling, emotions and images, thoughts and conceptual modules are constructed through the vulnerability of human relationships. It is from the *bottom up* experience of the body that meaning is made from life's events and encounters with others. Countertransference explores intentionally the subjective and objective experience of the body in relationship and its oscillation between the self-reflexivity of the observing and experiencing self.

The body's experience extends into community even as the body itself is materially constitutive of community. Our embodied nature is relational. We are social creatures and the body is the form in and through which we know and encounter the self and others, to include God. The embodied intersubjective experience explicated in countertransference, object relations, attachment theories, and IPNB describe not only individual experience but also the experience of community.<sup>51</sup> The bodies of people form

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<sup>50</sup>IPNB's elucidation of internal processes makes clear the intrapsychic dimensions of the pastor's lived-experience of countertransference.

<sup>51</sup>Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also select chapters in Hefner, Joan D. Koss-Chioino and Philip, ed. *Spiritual Transformation and Healing: Anthropological,*

community as the relational space that holds, positively and negatively, our mutual experience of self, others, and God. Countertransference explores that experience, beginning with the *felt* bodily sensations that signal our vulnerable needs.

The Jewish and Christian traditions are religions of the body that make clear our vulnerable dependence upon one another and upon God. One remembers the formation of the covenant people through the beginning narrative of the Exodus with its emphasis on suffering bodies and freedom, or the later formative experience of exiled community in the prophetic literature. One cannot help but think of Jesus' ministry and how his gut roiled with compassion, connecting him to women, children, tax collectors, and all who were viewed, and thus lived, as marginalized people on the edge of society. It is from these people that *koinonia* was formed, extending Jesus' love and care to others.<sup>52</sup>

### **Biblical and Theological Concepts**

#### The Embodied Experience of Community

The embodied relational focus of personhood as multiple continues with biblical and theological concepts that are attentive to these emergent dynamics in and between the self, other, and God. Postcolonial readings of biblical texts illumine the multiple inner and outer dimensions of human identity, even as such readings stir up and challenge

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*Theological, Neuroscientific, and Clinical Perspectives*. New York: Altamira Press, 2006. Jean Decety and William Ickes, eds., *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, Social Neuroscience Series, edited by John T. Cacioppo and Gary G. Berntson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009). Colwyn Trevarthen, "The Intersubjective Psychobiology of Human Meaning: Learning of Culture Depends on Interest for Co-Operative Practical Work and Affection for the Joyful Art of Good Company," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 19 (2009).

<sup>52</sup>Andrew Purves, *The Search for Compassion: Spirituality and Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1989). See also Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

habitual ways of listening and responding to Scripture and to others, including our very self and God.<sup>53</sup>

*Koinonia* formally refers to the intimate community (or communion) of believers with Jesus the Christ as is witnessed to in the gospels. Its earlier referent is in the Pauline literature under the rubric of *new creation* and being *in Christ*. It assumes the life and suffering of Christ, his earthly existence as a witness to God's faithfulness to the covenant with creation, and the embodied experience of the Holy Spirit as a pattern of communal discipleship. The creational space of such fellowship is implicitly trinitarian, and at the same time, beholden to incarnational emphasis that links Jesus the Christ to theological anthropology. In this context then, the *body of Christ* assumes a certain significance of openness and hospitality that has to do with suffering, sanctification, and the emergence of God's desired future in the Holy Spirit. This *social body* is linked with human broken bodies for whom there are personal and communal resonances in the broken body of Jesus Christ.

The authors and sources for *koinonia* reflect this researcher's inclination toward the voices of feminist, womanist, and Asian feminist theologians, and scholars who write theology from within an awareness of the psychoanalytic tradition, drawing upon its distinctive resources.<sup>54</sup> The Reformers' focus on the reflection of lived human experience

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<sup>53</sup>Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000). Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*. David Joy and Joseph Duggan, eds., *Decolonizing the Body of Christ: Theology and Theory after Empire?*, *Postcolonialism and Religions* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>54</sup>Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austen, *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton, eds., *Women out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). Biblical theology is integral to this inquiry and is not limited to the discourse of the New Testament only, but relies on the witness of the Hebrew Bible as well. Biblical scholars who, in different ways, rely upon insights of psychology are Walter Brueggemann and Kathleen O'Connor.

from biblical perspectives is foundational. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are important resources to explore the ongoing human experience of fellowship with God.

*Koinonia* therefore, is understood in the larger trajectory of the full Biblical witness.<sup>55</sup>

However, and in light of my chosen methodology, at this point it must be stated, that the following biblical and theological resources are not themes that order and determine the inquiry at hand. Rather, these concepts are background reading that form and inform the stance of the researcher even as they will be *held lightly* in the face of immersion in and identification with forthcoming conversational data from a series of interviews around a pastor's lived experience of *koinonia* in his congregation. Perhaps other biblical and theological concepts will emerge from the data as more important, and these particular concepts will be rendered less important to the constructed meaning of *koinonia*. The relevant theological and biblical concepts as they emerge from immersion in and identification with the data will be explicated in later chapters. However, the importance of the biblical and theological resources explicated below has been formative for me.

The vantage point from which both womanist and Asian feminist theologians write highlights the suffering body as the source and norm for biblical and theological reflection.<sup>56</sup> In particular, it is this discourse about the suffering female body from the

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<sup>55</sup>Seeing the Bible "whole" without a wall between the testaments is one of the hallmarks of the Afro-Christian tradition. See Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "Resurrection in Prophetic Context: "Poor Man Lazarus" and Christian Agency," in *Engaging the Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women*, ed. Choi Hee An and Katheryn Pfisterer Darr (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). This perspective is also imperative to fostering and healing Jewish Christian dialogue and relationships. See Judith Plaskow, "Feminist Anti-Judaism and the Christian God," in *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

<sup>56</sup>Interestingly, womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher and Korean theologian HeeSun Kim reference the works of one another. See this mutual, reciprocal influence in the following texts: James Newton Poling and HeeSun Kim, *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and*

lives of marginalized and oppressed women that challenges traditional interpretations of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This emphasis of the human body conditions the exploration of *koinonia* as an immersion in the concrete, visceral, embodied relational experience that also recognizes contextual realities of suffering in history, society, and religious institutions.<sup>57</sup>

Such a priority is reflected in postcolonial theory through which people's lives, the Bible, and theology are read and interpreted by Asian feminist theologians.<sup>58</sup> Of importance is the foreground of present globalization that continues the oppression of imperial power for most people in the world even as it leads us back to consider anew how empire shaped the Biblical canon and its witness. The linked lives of oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized bring to the fore concepts of ambivalence and mimicry, hybridity, and third space that render more complex notions of the self as multiple, the intersubjective space of countertransference, and the experience of *koinonia*. The value of these perspectives as they illumine *koinonia* has to do with their interpretations of historical lived experience that takes into account power, powerlessness, and the divine in the biblical text and contemporary world. Furthermore, these conceptual realities interact with notions of trust and truth – or narrative

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*Salim* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012); Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006). See also Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*; Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of Black Community*.

<sup>57</sup>Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Elaine Graham, "Only Bodies Suffer": Embodiment, Representation and the Practice of Ethics," in *Words Made Flesh: Writings in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2009). From a Reformed theological perspective see Shoop, *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ*.

<sup>58</sup>Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). See also Heejung Kwon, "Toward a Theological Anthropology of Resistance: Korean American Women's Ambivalent Subjectivity, "Third Space," and Religious Education" (Emory University, 2011); Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

perspectives that make sense of life in community -- that take on increased urgency in today's world as we respond with compassion to racialized injustice and violence and to swelling tides of migrating peoples.

The New Testament notion of *koinonia* is expanded by the inclusion of these particular voices and their unique vantage points. Practical theologians who have written on *koinonia* have tended to do so from a *top down* perspective of concepts that privileges the theology of Karl Barth as the singular lens through which select biblical texts are examined and interpreted, and psychology engaged as an interdisciplinary conversation partner.<sup>59</sup> Their approach to *koinonia* emphasizes the ordering, intimacy, and integrity of right relationship, both human and divine. Accordingly then, in interdisciplinary dialogue, these theologians regard theology as “queen of sciences,” viewing its uniqueness as a more comprehensive discipline that makes sense of the human condition, is in service to the church and dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Psychology and other social sciences function analogically as a handmaiden that points to theology as the primary field for making meaning in interdisciplinary conversation.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast, I tend to a broader regard of *koinonia*, focused on the experience of fellowship from the *bottom up*, linking the experience of suffering bodies with the world horizon of empire. Domination and oppression seem to be ongoing manifestations of human sin and brokenness throughout the millennia. The lens of biblical interpretation privileges a postcolonial perspective that is attentive to the dynamics of power and thus,

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<sup>59</sup>Van Deusen Hunsinger, “Practicing Koinonia.” Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger, *Pray without Ceasing: Revitalizing Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006); Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*; Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*.

<sup>60</sup>See the epilogue that explicates her moves “toward a neo-Barthian practical theology” in Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*.

of human agency and action. Congruent with these emphases are relational issues of trust and truth as they emerge and exist across time. The multiple subjectivity of human agency is understood further from a relational perspective that draws upon the insights of interpersonal neurobiology. It is from this interplay of interpretation of the worlds within the biblical text and today's world that an expanded notion of *koinonia* may emerge to augment the established theological literature on this subject.

### Creation and Covenant as the Spaces of Relationship

Creation and covenant are the initial biblical themes that ground the inquiry into the vulnerable space of relationship with God, self, and others.<sup>61</sup> It is here we begin to wonder about the Spirit of God's claim in human lives and our dependence upon God and others in terms of identity and community.<sup>62</sup> The work of biblical theologian Walter Brueggemann asserts over and over again the dynamic of covenantal relatedness with God and one another, detailing its mutual precarious, unsettled nature amidst broken lives characterized by oppression and injustice, marginalization and exile, liberation and restoration.

The freedom created by God's covenant with the people of Israel is an open intersubjective space charged with back and forth dialogue that finds a resonant parallel in object relations theory. Indeed, it is because Brueggemann draws upon this aspect of

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<sup>61</sup>Jill L. McNish, "The Passionate Aggression in Creation and the Human Psyche: An Argument for Its Source in and Use by God," *Koinonia* XII, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>62</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: The Relation of the Bible and Pastoral Care." Brueggemann, *The Covenanted Self: Explorations in Law and Covenant*; Patrick D. Miller, "The Good Neighborhood: Identity and Community through the Commandments," in *The Way of the Lord: Essays in Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).



contemporary psychology that his biblical work is integral to understand the human self not only as relational, but open to ongoing negotiating of one's performative identity vis-à-vis others and God. The biblical witness of covenantal dynamics of relationship renders more complex current views of *koinonia*.

This trajectory continues into the New Testament. The Gospel of John and Paul's letter to the community in Galatia provide insight into the spirited and bodily nature of participation in particular communities.<sup>63</sup> New metaphors and distinct narratives speak both from within and to the divine-human encounter and the space of fellowship, opening up imagination about individual and communal experiences of spirit and body in relationship.

### Holy Spirit

The Reformed theological perspective of Jurgen Moltmann is foundational to opening up views of *koinonia*. His emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit connects him to the pneumatological emphasis of John Calvin even as it also is a connecting thread throughout his own theological reflection. As a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century major theologian, he has furthered theological inquiry in three ways that support the trajectory of thinking *preliminarily* about this thesis question. First, his work has been translated into many different languages and thus, has impacted international and ecumenical theological conversations worldwide, which in turn, continued to impact his ongoing corpus of work. His worldwide travels were open to and influenced by his international and female

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<sup>63</sup>Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010). Bassler, *Navigating Paul: An Introduction to Key Theological Concepts*.

colleagues.<sup>64</sup> Second, his conversation partners includes not only philosophical, but socio-political, scientific, and psychological sources as he discerns what it means to be human in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.<sup>65</sup> Theologians *talk back* to his constructive work. Of particular note is the critique of Asian feminist theologian Anne W. Joh and work of womanist scholar Karen Baker-Fletcher.<sup>66</sup> Third, his broad understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit allow us to consider anew the vulnerable, dependent openness of intersubjective space.<sup>67</sup> This expansive view of pneumatology necessarily conditions his view of the trinity in and of itself, and also in its summons to hospitality as the body of Christ, more formally understood as the church.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>See his reflections in these books: Jurgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Jurgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press paperback ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009). To a lesser extent and throughout the same time period, Reformed feminist theologian Letty Russell created forums for the voices of international women theologians to be heard, supported, and disseminated. She specifically supported a pan-Asian group of female scholars, whose membership is reflected in this bibliography. Her own work on ecclesiology, included here, was rooted in her initial ministry experiences in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City in the 1950s. See Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

<sup>65</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Jurgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>66</sup>Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. W. Anne Joh, "The Transgressive Power of Jeong: A Postcolonial Hybridization of Christology," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004). Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective*. Karen Baker-Fletcher, "The Strength of My Life," in *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*, ed. Emilie M. Townes, The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner/Sojourner Truth Series in Black Religion, edited by Dwight N. Hopkins (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

<sup>67</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

<sup>68</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Moltmann has influenced other theologians whose work is important here. See Miroslav Volf, "Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity," in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006). Jurgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The*

Furthermore, Moltmann's perspectives of the Holy Spirit extend theologically the understanding and significance of the theoretical concepts of attachment theory and countertransference. In so doing, issues of God's immanence and transcendence emerge as important aspects of the suffering relational body that will warrant further engagement with feminist, womanist, Asian feminist, and postcolonial theologies.<sup>69</sup>

The aforementioned theoretical, biblical and theological concepts have been the stuff of reading and thinking as I have wondered about the direct, lived-through experience of fellowship for the pastor in a congregational setting.

### **Methodology of Phenomenology**

This thesis proposes to explore how experience of countertransference may render more robust and complex the concept of *koinonia*. What emerges when the fellowship of the church as experienced by the pastor is understood and interpreted through the lived reality of countertransference? How *does* the concept of countertransference make sense of the pastor's lived-experience of fellowship in the congregation? These questions inquire after a description of the pastor's lived-experience of *koinonia* in the specific community of *ecclesia*. The purpose of this study then, is to explore life together in a congregation *from the pastor's perspective in light of his or her past experiences and relationships as understood and interpreted in the present by the pastor*. This narrow focus of inquiry therefore tends to the intrapsychic dimensions of countertransference of

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*Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress Edition ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See also Joy Ann McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>69</sup>Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997). See also Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God*.

the pastor. As such, its methodology is that of interpretive phenomenology whose research task is to make the clear constitutive elements of the lived-experience under investigation, thus making clear its inherent psychological meaning that spans the continuum of consciousness beyond awareness. “The research always begins with a description of an everyday perspective that is to be understood psychologically.”<sup>70</sup>

Interpretive phenomenology is concerned with facts of human experience and the meaning made of experience. Thus the particular human context of individual experience is important because *that* context conditions the understanding of experience by *that* specific person.<sup>71</sup> “In general, phenomenologists believe reality is within a person’s private perceptions, within his or her feelings, intentions and essences. Most important, phenomenologists recognize a priori events.”<sup>72</sup> Meaning is generated from the interplay of outer experiences and the inner realm of perception for an individual. The facticity of experience generates a *surplus* of meaning because of a priori events, feelings, intentions, and essences. *Essence or the essential* thus has to do with ““what the human mind understands when it understands something in the flux of experience: what the mind adds to the world of fact is ‘the necessary’ or ‘the essential.’”<sup>73</sup> Essential or essence is not a substance but a personal perspective on factual events and episodes that are the stuff of human experience. Phenomenology therefore privileges truth as perspectival, contextual,

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<sup>70</sup>Barbro Giorgi, “Can an Empirical Psychology Be Drawn from Husserl's Phenomenology?,” in *Phenomenology and Psychological Science: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Peter D. Ashworth and Man Cheung Chung (New York: Springer, 2006), 77-78.

<sup>71</sup>An example of phenomenology’s focus on meaning as integral to what it means to be human is Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

<sup>72</sup>Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*, 88-89.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. One can at this point anticipate the significance of IPNB in terms of its understanding of the mind, relationships, memory and narrative.

contingent, and provisional. One can see that phenomenology has grown from a social constructivist paradigm of inquiry and therefore relates well to the aforementioned theological and theoretical assumptions of the researcher.

Interpretive phenomenology, as with any qualitative approach to research, is not intended for generalization. It can only provide an account and meaning of a specific experience under inductive inquiry. As a researcher I am not interested in a project of generalization so much as I am interested in the project of investigating the description of lived-everyday-experience, intuiting the psychological meaning embedded within the interview data from a pastor.<sup>74</sup> As an ordained chaplain the methodology of phenomenology is congruent with my experience of being with someone and trying to understand subjectively what is going on in a particular human experience that also in some way encompasses religious experience.<sup>75</sup> This unique setting of intersubjectivity is highlighted by the comments of Joan E. Hemenway.

Not only does phenomenology provide a firm philosophic base for research efforts in the qualitative tradition, it also coheres with that which has become foundational for modern pastoral care and clinical pastoral education in the liberal Protestant tradition – the belief in a divine/human encounter which takes place specifically in the world of human experience and lies within human grasp (perception).<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Generalization is not the domain of qualitative research nor is it my concern in this qualitative project that utilizes phenomenology as a methodology. The concern for a small sample size (n = 1) and how it advances the field can be answered. Phenomenology is concerned with elucidation and clarity of lived-through experience. Accurately understanding even one's person's experience provides a starting point for further exploration of the phenomenon. Further discussion of this issue continues later in the chapter.

<sup>75</sup>The chaplain's two fold task of *holding lightly* theoretical and theological constructs and using empathy in an intuitive way coincides with the researcher's need to suspend or *bracket out* judgment and preconceptions and proceed by way of empathetic intuition to describe and interpret the experienced reality.

<sup>76</sup>Joan E. Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education* (Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, Inc., 1996), 122.

The ambiguous space in which we encounter human and divine aspects of lived-through experience is explored best through phenomenology. In so doing, this qualitative research methodology also affirms the Christian incarnational focus of a God whose life and very nature are also implicated in the larger common experience and history of human creaturely nature and growth.<sup>77</sup>

Accurately understanding even one person's experience provides a beginning point for further investigation of the phenomenon. This particular qualitative method is chosen because phenomenology is consistent with the epistemological position of the research question, investigating both the pastor's broadly lived internal experience of fellowship in the congregation and the pastor's understanding of that experience of *koinonia*. The coherence of phenomenology and the research question cannot be overstated. The following overview of phenomenology invites the reader to consider further the rationale for this methodology by understanding the broad contours of this research process.

### Overview of Phenomenology

First, phenomenology as a methodology for psychological and religious inquiry relies on key emphases and a basic framework from its philosophical roots in the thought of Edmund Husserl.<sup>78</sup> Amedeo Giorgi, professor of psychology, founder and editor of the

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>There are several good books that situate this methodology in the larger background of phenomenology and the work of Edmund Husserl. See David Stewart and Algis Mickanous, *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and Its Literature* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1974). Herbert Spiegelberg is the author of two classic books. The first is Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1960). The second is Herbert Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry; a Historical Introduction*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972). In a similar vein, see Ronald S. Valle and Steen Halling, eds., *Existential-*

*Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, draws upon Husserlian principles of transcendental phenomenology to develop a descriptive phenomenological research method.<sup>79</sup> He was the first person to do so in the United States, leading a group of scholars at Duquesne University to continue the development of phenomenological research methods.<sup>80</sup> Giorgi, following Husserl, believes it is intersubjectivity that provides the condition for the possibility of intuiting and accessing embedded psychological meanings from the lived-experience of research participants. He states,

It takes another human subjectivity to relate to the subjective experience of another human being. This distinction made by Husserl (1962/1977) helps us see that neither objectification nor insufficient intersubjectivity will allow access to the data at the truly psychological level.<sup>81</sup>

What is at stake here has to do with the direct experience of the researcher, understood in a couple of intrinsically related ways. It is assumed that the intra-subjective

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*Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience* (New York: Plenum Press, 1989). More recent works that focus on the thought of Husserl are the following: David Detmer, *Phenomenology Explained: From Experience to Insight* (Chicago: Open Court, 2013). Christian Lotz, *From Affectivity to Subjectivity: Husserl's Phenomenology Revisited* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Peter D. Ashworth and Man Cheung Chung, eds., *Phenomenology and Psychological Sciences: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2006).

<sup>79</sup>Amedeo Giorgi, *Psychology as a Human Science; a Phenomenologically Based Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). See also his more recent book, Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2009). Cognizant of Giorgi's pioneering work in volumes 1 and 4 of *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* and also indebted to Husserl, Clark Moustakas develops a transcendental phenomenological model for human science research in his book, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1994). Another such example is the work of Max van Manen cited below. Each author is clearly situated in the broad movement of phenomenology, joining other researchers each of whom "owns" their particular approach as it emerges from the pioneering work of Giorgi and his fellow researchers at Duquesne University.

<sup>80</sup>Valle and Halling, *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience*, 52.

<sup>81</sup>Giorgi, "Can an Empirical Psychology Be Drawn from Husserl's Phenomenology?," 77-78. Barbro is the late wife of Amedeo Giorgi, also a psychologist, with whom he had innumerable discussions about phenomenological method as indicated in the preface to his latest book, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology*.

experience of the researcher encompasses psychological capacity and competency for the activity of intuition and resonance with the concrete lived description of the participant's experience in the moment of data collection through interviews and also later in the immersion of that same data.<sup>82</sup> Such an I-Thou relational stance of phenomenological research is understood by pastoral theologian John Patton to be “an interpersonal and interactive process rather than exclusively individualistic and subjective.”<sup>83</sup>

Additionally and at the same time, the other feature of the researcher's direct experience is the skill of *bracketing* their own reflective and conceptual understanding as they open up authentically to the intra-subjective experience of the other in the shared intersubjective space.<sup>84</sup> There is a tension of intersubjective and intra-subjective direct experience for the researcher. For these reasons then, the researcher is not one level of abstraction removed from the actual embodied social reality the researcher is seeking to explore. Giorgi states,

Collecting the data from the lifeworld means that the phenomenological findings are not based on constructs, nor does such a procedure lead to the creation of themes, categories, or indices of behavior. The phenomenon can be comprehended exactly as the participants experienced it, with all the nuances and shadings required.<sup>85</sup>

He goes on to state why the researcher is not abstractly removed from the methodological process.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*, 123.

<sup>84</sup>Giorgi, “Can an Empirical Psychology Be Drawn from Husserl's Phenomenology?,” 82-2. *Bracketing* relates to Husserl's *epoche*.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 75. The flexibility, complexity, and variability of the data are thus a result of mutual and open-ended relational trust of participant and researcher, parallel to intercommunication that occurs naturally in life experiences in the world.



[T]he final essential structure is a description of the psychological meanings that, from the original participant's description, through the researcher's analysis, become present to the consciousness of the researcher, thus fulfilling the phenomenological requirement of using only direct experience.<sup>86</sup>

Significantly then, initial intentional awareness on the part of the researcher allows the phenomenologist to be affected by one's awareness, precisely because it is not knowledge about experience so much as it is direct experience itself.<sup>87</sup>

A second reason for using phenomenology as a methodology has to do with the thick description of lived experience that is seen *freshly* or anew, implicitly not pressing toward existential truth claims of assumptions, hypotheses, or judgments. "Not focusing on objective reality as such but examining the lived experience as it is lived and taking that as a true presentation for the person who's [sic] experience it is, allows us to expand our field of inquiry."<sup>88</sup> The aim of such phenomenological reduction following and extending Husserl, is contextual and situational genuine experience that is present to the consciousness of the participant, thus bracketing any past knowledge of the researcher so as to be fully present to this particular incident or lived experience.<sup>89</sup>

The investigative focus is on the process and meaning making of situated experience through one-on-one interviews in which rapport and relational space allows

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 78.

<sup>87</sup>Direct experience of phenomenological methodology coheres with the concept of *ipseity* in IPNB, whereby the *suchness* of the self, experienced in the activity of meditation, is both described and interpreted as being a significant practice of integration that goes beyond the person to embrace an experience of Life itself. This suggestion picks up an existentialist interplay of *facticity* and *transcendence* in phenomenology. Hemenway writes, "... the researcher grounded in phenomenology is able to grasp both facticity of the situation and its 'surplus of meaning.'" See Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*, 122.

<sup>88</sup>Giorgi, "Can an Empirical Psychology Be Drawn from Husserl's Phenomenology?," 83.

<sup>89</sup>I am aware that Hans Georg Gadamer is critical of Husserl's notion of *bracketing*. See pages 110-115 in Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*.

the pastor to speak freely and think reflectively, develop ideas and trace concerns, to attend intentionally to the taken-for-granted experience of fellowship in the congregation. Phenomenology focuses on first order experiences, and so tends to the intersubjective and embodied, affective and moral dimensions of experiences, viewing experiences generally as contingent upon relationships with and to others.<sup>90</sup>

### Critique of Phenomenology

Thus, phenomenology is an inductive approach to inquiry that offers a detailed and nuanced opening up of lived-experience. This is its strength as well as its weakness. The small sample (in this case  $n = 1$ ) allows for exploring and understanding a phenomenon in a particular context with much time immersed in transcripts that allows for rich, transparent, and contextualized analysis that resonates with readers. A generally smaller size of sample can be a main objection to phenomenology as it relates to the concern of lack of empirical generalizability. At this point too, the option of grounded theory might arise as an alternative method. Each concern reflects a bias toward a larger scale of sampling as well as an impulse toward a theoretical-level account of a particular phenomenon.

### A Response to the Critique

The sample size and dimension of this study is  $n = 1$ . R. E. Stake makes the case that a representational sample is not necessary. He states,

The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer *opportunity to*

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<sup>90</sup>Johnathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2012).

*learn* [emphasis in the original] ... Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance.<sup>91</sup>

This emphasis on learning is resonant with the Reformed tradition of viewing the minister as a *teaching elder* as well as with the open curiosity and wonderment of phenomenology as a methodology.

Stake further addresses the related concern of multiple cases as regards triangulation, observing that it “has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. But, acknowledging that no observations or interpretations are perfectly repeatable, triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen.”<sup>92</sup> The recursive nature of returning to the participant with emerging patterns of connections is part of my interview protocol, typical of phenomenology. Faithfulness to the lived-experience of the participant is at stake, a slightly different way of addressing accuracy with regard to one representative case. Stake comments, “As to accuracy, differences are fundamentally more inaccurate than simple measurements. Similarly, conclusions about differences between any two cases are less to be trusted than conclusions about one.”<sup>93</sup>

I am not interested in grounded theory as a method, which is to say, developing an explanatory level account of congregational fellowship as experienced and understood by

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<sup>91</sup>R.E. Stake, “Case Studies,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 446-7.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 443. On the following page Stakes continues: “When there are multiple cases of intrinsic interest, then, of course, it can be useful to compare them ... But more often than not, there is but one case of intrinsic interest, if any at all.”

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 444.

the pastor. Nor am I interested in tending to a larger sample size in order to notice continuities and discontinuities of experience. Instead, I am interested in investigating the experiential features of *koinonia* from a singular pastor's perspective, thus focusing on meaning- and sense-making as it emerges from the intentional focus upon fellowship. The strength of this method with a sample of one allows for depth of understanding of a particular lived-experience from which one can be tentatively confident and wonder about *koinonia*, theologically and psychologically. It is from this method then, that meaning is illumined or amplified and may become the unique ground for further inquiry into the experience of *koinonia*.

Overall, these concerns about phenomenology may coalesce around a less visible reality of personhood that is axiomatic: the relational space created by but not wholly defined by the paradoxical tension of opposites that gives rise to an *excess* or *surplus* of meaning. As has already been noted, existential phenomenologists acknowledge facticity and transcendence that inhere in situations. From a feminist theoretical point of view one might name the tension of constructivist and universal positions in terms of understanding personhood. Postcolonial theologians consider the dialectic of immanence and transcendence perspectives of divine reality. In the process of increasing differentiated integration the literature of IPNB links meditation practices with *ipseity* and autobiographical narrative practices with relational attachments.<sup>94</sup> The method of relational integration assumes robust dialogical conversation that is holistic or greater

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<sup>94</sup>See respectively Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*. Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*, Guides to Theological Inquiry, edited by Kathryn Tanner (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000). Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*.

than the sum of its parts. I wonder if the aforementioned concerns about phenomenology *cover over* anxiety about accountability and relationality in the domain of epistemology as it impinges on the domain of ontology. Knowing and being are implicated in phenomenology.

The direct lived-through experience of *holding the tension of opposites* is integral to the stance of the phenomenologist even as the paradox of tensions generally seems to characterize human knowing and becoming. This affirmation underlines a phenomenological assumption: “Knowledge is socially constructed and therefore inherently tentative and incomplete.”<sup>95</sup> Holding the tensions of opposites is a relational stance of trust and openness to self, the other, and to what rises from the data. This intentional presence grounds the researcher’s accountability to the person and to the analytical findings. Accountability then has to do with being open to what emerges authentically from holding the tension of opposites.<sup>96</sup>

### **Phenomenological Protocol**

Phenomenological interviewing is curious about the immediacy and meaning of lived-experience. Methodological assumptions, rather than a rigid methodology, guide the interviewer to *live the (main open-ended) question* along with the individual person being interviewed. “It has to be said that phenomenology will never lay out mechanical

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<sup>95</sup>Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*, 85. In this volume see also chapter 6 on critical theory research as it relates to the influence of social critical theories that condition my theological and theoretical stance.

<sup>96</sup>There is a related tension of opposites as I realize my indebtedness to critical social theories that verge on constructivism even as I lean toward a more holistic paradigm in which knowledge is viewed as part of creation and cosmos such that the researcher is just an interpreter in this great big interconnected web. I am grateful for the invitation and challenge of the following book. See Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*.

techniques of research after the style of an experimental design: the target of the research is the elucidating of experience rather than the testing of causal hypotheses.”<sup>97</sup> It is for this reason that description of experience is obtained through participant interviews. Three in-depth interviews compose the query about what the experience is like for the sake of being able to have more direct contact with that lived-experience. The main question is what keeps opening up the lived-through experience. In this case, the question of what is *koinonia* like is the question of the pastor’s lived-experience of community in the congregation.

The three rounds of participant interviews are not narrowly defined in terms of a pastoral care or counseling encounter. To do so is to narrow down the phenomenological enterprise with its interest in how the participant pastor speaks of and to the lived experience of fellowship in the congregation. The researcher does not structure the interview experience through concepts so much as provide an open listening presence of rapport and trust that allows the pastor to speak freely about the experience of *koinonia* in the congregation. Rather it is through the full spectrum of consciousness itself that structure emerges as essential to the particular experience under inquiry. Following

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<sup>97</sup>Man Cheung Chung and Peter D. Ashworth, “The Meeting between Phenomenology and Psychology,” in *Phenomenology and Psychological Science: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Peter D. Ashworth and Man Cheung Chung (New York: Springer, 2006), 5. The literature tending to phenomenology as a methodology each offers its own view of data collection of lived experience through open-ended interviews. In addition to chapter 5 in Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, (1994) see chapter 6 in Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1994). In this regard, I have chosen to rely upon the protocol laid out in the book by Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

Husserl, the *lifeworld* or the embedded nature of experience is the data from the narrated concrete descriptions of lived events by the pastor living through the experience.<sup>98</sup>

The repeated emphasis on the description of lived events addresses a number of concerns acknowledged in the literature. First is the possibility of undue influence by the researcher during data collection, meaning the interview process. Second is the direct conscious experience of the researcher as she intuits the psychological meaning or structure of the lived-through experience. Third is the *thick* description. These emphases have been explained and addressed previously. I only want to highlight that description results from the play of bracketing and empathy by the researcher. It is worth noting that

Through bracketing, an experience is initially allowed to speak for itself in all its reality and facticity. Through empathy, one becomes aware of what is being perceived and engages with its surplus of meaning in imaginative and creative ways.<sup>99</sup>

In other words, intuition is part of the intersubjective reality of the researcher and the interviewee that guides data collection and analysis. “Each informs the other in a dynamic, reciprocal, non-linear process of questioning, reflecting, and interpreting ... all the while looking *for meanings that connect and that differentiate.*”<sup>100</sup>

The first interview focuses on the experience of the particular phenomenon with the intention of eliciting stories and concrete details of the lived-experience of *koinonia*

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<sup>98</sup>In the German language this construct is a genitive noun. *Lebenswelt* means “world of a life” or “world of living.” It is the world one experiences in life and the human capacity to experience it as such. The concept of *Lebenswelt* describes the human world in its pre-scientific understanding as distinguished from the theoretically-determined scientific and philosophic world view characteristic of Enlightenment thinking. The world of life is self-understood and the unquestioned ground of daily action and thinking. These reflections emerged in conversation with a friend who read about the term from the German Wikipedia accessed 16 September 2015.

<sup>99</sup>Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*, 123.

<sup>100</sup>Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*, 96-97.

in that specific congregation for that particular pastor. The second interview continues to circle around the experience of the same phenomena, seeking further clarity and detail by continuing to ask for concrete, specific stories in response to the questions. The third interview deepens and thickens the participant's description of the phenomena under inquiry based on the questioning of themes emerging from the previous two interviews.<sup>101</sup> It is those thematic connections that become the subject of query as it relates to the primary question. The intent of asking questions from the perspective of themes has to do with checking out if those themes do, in fact, seem to reflect the lived-experience of the pastor. It is also a time for the pastor to add anything else in response to the main question, for the point of departure is always the situated experience.

Thick description of lived-experience is the ground of interpretation for the particular experience under query, and thus, the pastoral experience of *koinonia*, understood theologically and psychologically, assumes more nuance and detail in the immersion and reflective analysis of the three interviews. Interpretive phenomenological analysis leans into the reality that there is always more to be learned about the complexity of life experience, trusting in the dialogical interplay of movement between the parts and the whole in the activity of questioning and observing, and describing and interpreting. This research approach self-consciously moves between the *lifeworlds* of the researcher and interviewee around the present experience under inquiry.<sup>102</sup> In other words, it is the

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<sup>101</sup>Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 108.

<sup>102</sup>van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 7.



shared intersubjectivity of the interview that connects the researcher and the research participant.

A sample of one person is sufficient for this in-depth exploration of meaning around a particular life experience as the researcher investigates connections within the participant's account, highlighting emerging themes and identifying patterns between the themes. The written description followed by interpretive analysis allows the reader to make links between these analyses, their own personal and professional experience, and claims in extant literature.

#### Selection of Interviewee

Integral to this research methodology then, was the selection of the interviewee. A letter was sent out to all ordained ministers, active and retired, on the rolls of The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. It invited them to nominate a minister(s) who was, in their opinion, a *fruitful and effective leader of a congregation* for the sake of selecting a participant in a research study whose aim was to inquire after the experience of community between a pastor and his or her congregation. The letter explained that the focus of the three face-to-face interviews with the selected minister was to gain a more complex and rich understanding of the lived-experience of *koinonia* within a congregation.

That the interviewee was an ordained minister is integral, for church leaders are often the objects of projection by parishioners. Countertransference is an inherent reality of the vocation to congregational ministry because of the intentional intersubjective nature of the church. Countertransference is the pastoral leader's response to the congregation and as such, it encompasses all of the bodily sensations, images, feelings,

thoughts, fantasies, and behaviors of the pastor in relation to the congregation as a whole. It naturally includes positive and negative experiences and relationships within the congregation itself. Furthermore, it draws upon the pastor's unresolved issues and projections that emerge within the shared unconscious congregational experience in addition to that which emerge singularly from the congregation. Thus there is a continuum of mutual perceptions, projections, enactments, and subjective experiences within the countertransference experience of church.

Selection of the one interviewee was a result of repeated recommendations of that one particular pastor by ordained ministerial colleagues in active calls locally within the tradition of the Presbyterian Church (USA) who responded to the written invitation. This denomination was chosen per my own background as it allowed for some shared biblical and theological emphases about church and leadership. From the rolls of the Presbytery office, I obtained mailing addresses of all pastors currently serving congregations within the geographic bounds of The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. Hence, that number of ordained ministers was the sample size for distribution of the letter of invitation within which was included the nomination materials. So ninety-five letters were mailed.

The nomination of an appropriate pastoral leader from colleagues was fitting because accurate self-reports of generative and effective ministry from a survey would be less likely than reports from collegial observers within the larger judicatory body of the church.<sup>103</sup> Yet the invitation also recognized and acknowledged that people would want to nominate themselves as good candidates for participation in the study. Linking the

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<sup>103</sup>Conventional wisdom of human nature assumes this is so as does numerous studies. Inflated ego and narcissistic grandiosity of religious leaders only strengthen the logic of this propensity toward inaccuracy of self-reports.

nomination of a *fruitful and effective* congregational leader with the proposed study of the experience of community between a pastor and a congregation was a helpful yet open-ended frame that allowed people to think thoughtfully about a pastoral leader within a congregational context with little guidance.

Such lack of direction was an integral part of the methodology even at this stage of the game. “In our efforts to make sense of our lived experiences with theories and hypothesizing frameworks we are forgetting that it is living human beings who bring schemata and frameworks into being and not the reverse.”<sup>104</sup> It was important for me to bracket out assumptions, pre-existing theories, or frameworks even in the solicitation of ministerial candidates for interviewing so as to remain oriented to the lived-experience under inquiry. It was also important to track what the phenomenological method was *doing* and continues to do to me the researcher even now.<sup>105</sup>

At this point it seems important to highlight that in response to my first written invitation that was sent out to ordained congregational ministers through the U.S. postal service, a male pastor responded with these words.

I’m not quite sure what you are looking for, so I’ll answer my own question and see if you find it helpful. *Who would I want to observe or learn from in local congregations?* My other noticing is that I cannot think of any spiritual giants – folk who I want [to] sit at their feet and learn how they stay connected to God and inspire others in faith and love. If you are interested in KOINONA, then it seems

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<sup>104</sup>van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 45.

<sup>105</sup>Interaction with the experience of methodology evokes, even demands, the parallel process of writing how the process is affecting me as I trace the embodiment of its energy. Ironically, field notes as written reflection is an ongoing process of countertransference reflecting upon the dynamics of countertransference! “The interpretations and theoretical links developed by phenomenological therapist-researchers are inevitably influenced by their own personal biography and family history. To increase awareness of the impact of the researcher as instrument, the therapist-researcher might keep a journal detailing experiences, emotions, insights, and questions resulting from the data collection process.” See Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*, 96.

to me that you will need to find folks of spiritual depth, a task that may be difficult.

To receive this thoughtful reflection in the initial days of research was a powerful reminder of how the participants *live the questions* from their vantage of *lived-through* experience. It was a further reminder that phenomenological inquiry is rooted in affective response that keeps opening up possibilities. Perhaps my query did not make sense at the cognitive or affective level of experience. Or maybe my invitation tapped into something that people did not want to address. In the words of phenomenologist van Manen, “Rather, we should wonder: Can phenomenology, if we concern ourselves deeply with it, do something with us?”<sup>106</sup> I had to sit and wonder if my primary question in the nominating letter was an accessible way of framing the invitation. The invitation was posed to the pastors in this way:

Thank you for your willingness to nominate a colleague(s) in ministry as a candidate(s) for further interviews about the pastor’s experience of *koinonia* within a congregation. The purpose of this study is to explore life together in a congregation from the pastor’s perspective in light of other important relationships and past experiences ... I am interested in identifying local Presbyterian ministers whose *pastoral leadership is fruitful and effective* within their own congregation. Please consider your colleagues and identify a minister(s) whose congregational leadership invites closer consideration.

As just one of fifteen respondents from a pool of ninety-five ministers who responded in this initial wave of solicitation, his comments put me on notice. I had to consider if my low response rate had to do with the fact that he was not alone in his experience of not being able to nominate a pastoral colleague. Perhaps other pastors felt the same way as he did: linking learning from others precisely because they had

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<sup>106</sup>van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 45.

something to offer in that relationship, or in my words, were *fruitful and effective leaders in the congregation*. Maybe his words about *spiritual giant* and *spiritual depth* were more resonant among his colleagues than my words about *fruitful and effective leaders*.

Despite his commentary, this pastor did in fact nominate three colleagues. Furthermore, two other pastor respondents penned personal notes of support for the trajectory of my research. So perhaps all I could conclude at this early stage was that my invitation stirred up some people and was ignored by others in the business of congregational life.

With regard to the continuing research protocol, I was most interested in following up with pastoral leaders who were named more than once by their colleagues within the geographical bounds of the Presbytery. Should there be a few individuals who were named repeatedly, thus requiring criteria for the selection of the chosen individual pastor, those criteria were as follows. First, I would disregard any nominated pastor whom I knew at any point in time. Second, the selection among any remaining individuals would be random, using a coin toss to select the pastor to interview.

After a month, the window for the receipt of nominations was past as stated in the nomination letter's instructions. Coding of responses was by hand as responses were fill-in-the-blank. From a total pool of ninety-five candidates, fifteen ministers responded with twenty nominations. There were eight male pastors, six female pastors and one person who did not identify gender. Most respondents were from the metro area, including one new church development, one Spanish-speaking ministry, and two were from more rural areas. Two respondents were from rather large conservative churches in the Presbytery and none of the respondents was from large steeple churches. These fifteen pastors named three colleagues repeatedly. The top minister was a female pastor with four

nominations and the male ministers were nominated each by three and two people respectively. I knew the two pastors who received the top two nominations. Between that reality and the low response rate I had to solicit more nomination responses, this time from the electronic platform of the Presbytery newsletter. The e-newsletter resulted in no response from any pastor at all within its stated deadline of a month.

So I continued my quest for more nominations of said individual, attending the September pre-Presbytery meeting and staying for the duration of worship, dinner, and the business meeting. One hundred and seventy nine pastors and commissioners signed in and were present at the monthly meeting. Sixteen clergy, eight men and eight women, filled out the form with twenty nominations in the course of the seven hours I was present. I greeted people as they perused the tables of resource materials and opportunities, not alone in the quest to draw people's attention to timely matters at hand. I roamed among the crowd and asked people directly, and finally used the announcement time in the midst of the Presbytery meeting to alert people to my research question with the invitation to contribute to my research.

Of the ministers who responded to my solicitation, five people stated they were unable to participate, as they could not think of any colleague who was an *effective and fruitful leader*. In response to each individual I then asked if there was a pastor who they viewed as a mentor. That characterization too did not enable them to think of a colleague to nominate. Finally I asked if there was any colleague they respected and from whom they would like to learn. Again, they could not think of any such person. Their response was resonant with their earlier colleague who named it in writing, the difference being

that in spite of his stated concerns, he ended up nominating three colleagues whereas these five people named no one at the conclusion of our conversation.

What does this inability to nominate any clergy colleague suggest? In no particular order, several possibilities present themselves: that these people do not know their colleagues well enough to nominate any of them; these people do not want to create the condition for the possibility of more work for their colleagues who are already overburdened; and finally, these people really do not have colleagues they view as being people they respect and from whom to learn as mentors or as *effective and fruitful leaders*.

This response left me feeling sad about the state of affairs of the church. I sense isolation, lack of connection in any meaningful or ongoing relational way beyond that of church business. Perhaps I am picking up on a need such as that voiced during the announcement time at the Presbytery meeting. Speaking from a personally acknowledged need, one pastor announced the opportunity for a clergy retreat and invited the gathered body to attend, the only agenda being that of getting to know and enjoy one another as colleagues. On a final note, I noticed that in the context of the Presbytery meeting where people were visible to one another, the staff of large steeple churches nominated each other and no one from other congregations. Until then, these congregational staff members had not responded at all to my two previous queries for nominations. To me, this observation may reinforce the hypothesis of isolation from Presbytery colleagues outside their particular church in the daily round of pastoral responsibilities in the congregation.

In sum then, in a three-month period of inquiry with written, electronic, and verbal invitations, a total of thirty-one clergy responded with forty nominations from a pool of ninety-five ministers. Seven ministers were named repeatedly, including more nominations for the original top three nominated clergy garnered from the first written inquiry. Of the remaining four clergy nominated, I knew two of those ministers. So the remaining pool of possible interviewees was narrowed down to three candidates, two male and one female. Within this group, one clergy member had three nominations with the remaining pastors each having two nominations. I asked the pastor with three nominations, whose name had surfaced in two different inquiries, initially from the written invitation and secondarily, at the Presbytery meeting.

The pastor most often nominated by ministry colleagues was to be notified by phone, to determine interest and availability in participating in the research project. Having received the nomination letter, he was familiar generally with the research project. Verbal consent from the selected nominee was given in the context of a phone call to that particular pastor, when I explained the purpose and nature of the study, asking if he was willing to participate in the study, and if so, then setting up a schedule of interviews. Written consent would be obtained on the day of the first interview.

#### Interview Schedule

The overall time frame for interviewing in the contexts of the field-testing and the chosen interviewee was similar. Each unfolded within a month's time. So that I got at the appropriate matters and provided the data needed to complete the research after the first interview and before conducting subsequent interviews, I drew upon a consultant, Professor Carla Dahl, a sociologist well versed in phenomenological methodology. The



first and second interview was scheduled two weeks apart. The final interview was scheduled three weeks after the second interview, allowing me to see what themes emerged within the first two interviews and to see if those *rang true* for the interviewee. Important for individual participation in the interview process at both levels was the ability for the interviewee to commit to setting aside two hours for each interview. The interview took place in the congregational office of the minister.

### Coding

Immersion in the data, the three transcribed interviews, and the lifting up of themes was by hand -- word-by-word, line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, theme-by-theme, concept-by-concept -- because of the need for direct intersubjective human attentiveness to the lived-through experience of the interviewee and the researcher that is witnessed to in the written text. Thus, no analytic computer program was used.

Phenomenology as method assumes immersion in the data and reflective (and thus, analytical) writing throughout its process, and as such, it is ongoing personal immersion in the data with no computer program coding. The passionate query into a specific lived-experience has a certain resonance between interviewee and researcher as well as between researcher and the reader of that textual analysis. Attention to affect as recorded in the interview and as experienced in the researcher is one integral indicator that the question is alive, that it speaks from and to the experience itself.<sup>107</sup> Not only is that resonance a validation of the research question, it also speaks to the need for ongoing

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 28.

self-reflexivity for the researcher, whose tools and methods are systematic and “practiced modes of questioning, reflecting, focusing, intuiting.”<sup>108</sup>

Because phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive of the objective and subjective dimensions of human lives “... a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience -- is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience.”<sup>109</sup> Phenomenology thus attends to what is concrete and particular, and at the same time, what is universal in the meaning and significance of the lived experience. Negotiating this dialectic is important and a strength of this methodology in light of previously acknowledged concerns. Van Manen states,

Thus, phenomenology consists in mediating in a personal way the antinomy of particularity (being interested in concreteness, difference, and what is unique) and universality (being interested in the essential, in difference that makes a difference).<sup>110</sup>

The meaning and significance that emerge from tending to this dialectic is for the sake of more thoughtfully informed intention, awareness, and action. For the researcher, it is a dialogical interplay between the parts and the whole in explicit ways that are true to the object of inquiry and true to the subjective experience such that “one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth.”<sup>111</sup>

What needs to be highlighted at this point is that the process of analyzing phenomenological data has to do with the researcher’s ability to stay connected to her

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 20.

own life experience with all of its biases and assumptions and at the same time be present to another's differing internal reality. This connective way of knowing imbues the analytic process with a certain openness and curiosity so as to

include immersion in the data to observe and define what is there and to notice what is not there; it must include incubation and reflection to allow intuitive awareness and understandings to emerge; and it must include creative synthesis that enables accurate and meaningful communication of the experience of the participants.<sup>112</sup>

The interpretive task of the phenomenologist then is to connect the research data with other ideas so as to make more clear the meaning and significance of the research data. It is a dance to not impose and cover over the research data but instead to structure this data with other ideas so as to understand more clearly the *lived-through* experience.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, the strength and weakness of this research model has to do with rigor, thoroughness, accuracy, believability, and transparency. These are the concerns of all good qualitative research, and are dependent ultimately upon the skills of the researcher as interviewer and writer to convey explicitly and compellingly the life experience itself, and thus its meaning. Given the variety of life experience in light of these research imperatives, "This means also that a rigorous human science is prepared to be 'soft,' 'soulful,' 'subtle,' and 'sensitive' in its efforts to bring the range of meanings of life's phenomenon to our reflective awareness."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*, 97. This process of data analysis has resonance with the learning theory of practical theologian James E. Loder. See also Esther Lightcap Meek, *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011).

<sup>113</sup>Sprenkle and Moon, *Research Methods in Family Therapy*.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

On the one hand it is clear that the common human experience is not reducible to description and interpretation because life is inherently more complex, contingent, and provisional for final, definitive statements. Life changes and each of us changes too. On the other hand, there is ongoing human need for life situations to be lifted up, explored, and illumined with the hopeful intention that more direct access to a lived-through experience is the condition for the possibility of more direct access to life itself and thus, the construction of meaning in, among, and between others.

Such methodological intention is congruent with the biblical, theological, and psychological assumptions of human relationality as outlined in earlier sections. The emphases of mutual, reciprocal, and whole bodily awareness inherent in the relational process of phenomenological interviewing for interviewee and researcher resonate with core commitments of what it means to be human.

### Ethical Concerns

The intimacy of deep listening as the primary orientation of the methodology invites consideration of ethical concerns. The seeming power differential between the researcher who asks open-ended questions and the interviewee who answers them is changed by the interview experience itself. The opportunity to reflect upon an aspect of one's life without interruption is a rare experience that in and of itself is powerful, especially because the interview is not structured as a dialogue but an occasion to ask clarifying questions of the interviewee in service to the main question. The researcher is not actively contributing to the conversation except to further its depth and detail by asking more questions that are solicited from the conversation itself.

Thus, the researcher needs to be aware that complex emotions may be stirred within the interviewee and also within the researcher. The awareness and release of emotional energy through the interview process may impact the pastor and, consequently, the congregation due to the generation of new insights, and thus new ways of inhabiting life together. Naming the possibility of transformation and deep learning is important to clarify at the outset and indeed, was highlighted as an indirect benefit to the interviewee on the signed consent form. The interviewee had numerous occasions to ask questions of the researcher so as to assess and discern whether or not he was willing to engage in reflective conversation about the experience of community in the congregation.<sup>115</sup>

At the same time, the researcher herself is actively engaged in ongoing reflective practices of writing field notes and journaling as a means to work consciously with any biases that could emerge in the context of listening and analyzing the material. In other words, the intersubjective field created by the activity of interviewing is in and of itself a situation of transference. Awareness of the sensitive nature of the interview process on both interviewee and researcher is just one way in which this research study conforms to Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards. In other, more practical ways, the collected data from this study will be kept confidential and in a locked file in Minnesota. Any published type of report will not include information that will make it possible to identify participants, although anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

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<sup>115</sup>See Appendix for the informed consent document.

### Researcher as Instrument

Phenomenology, like any qualitative method, recognizes that “the researcher is the instrument.”<sup>116</sup> As has been stated previously, the phenomenologist is not removed abstractly from the direct experience that is under investigation. There is researcher resonance within that intersubjective space of interviewing that furthers the questions and trajectory of the interview. At the same time however, the core of this thesis is the conceptual explication of my interpretations of the minister’s interpretation of his experience of *koinonia*. My background influences my interpretations and the concepts that I use to understand the experiences of *koinonia*. I have already provided overviews of influential theoretical, biblical, and theological concepts. At this point, it is important to be more personal in naming family history that conditions the relational field of discourse about *koinonia*.

In many ways, I feel as if this thesis is something towards which my life has been pointing for many years, with its inquiry into the relational self through experiences of *koinonia*. As a white, middle class fifty-three year old woman who is ordained to the ministry of chaplaincy in the Presbyterian Church (USA), the theoretical frameworks of theology and psychology have made sense of *living questions* even as I have participated for many years in practices from each discipline. As a child, my father fostered in me a curiosity and openness about the inner life while at the same time introducing me to theology and the social sciences as a way to think further about and make meaning of my questions that grew from the exigencies of my own life.

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<sup>116</sup> Quoting Michael Patton in Hemenway, *Inside the Circle: A Historical and Practical Inquiry Concerning Process Groups in Clinical Pastoral Education*, 123.

I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, went to a denominational college where my initial major in psychology gave way to a major in religion and a call to seminary as preparation for the ordained ministry. My first unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) was formative in affirming bodily practices of running and yoga, and self-reflexive practices of meditation, prayer and journaling – all activities practiced since I was a teenager and introduced to me then by my father – as important to cultivating self-awareness as it related to the pastoral use of self in ministry.

Significantly, CPE also affirmed my identity as a relational self even as it furthered my questions of alterity and difference, questions I had lived with as an identical twin. My childhood was oddly conditioned by strange questions. Over the years, more than one adult asked me, “How do you know you are not your sister and she is not you when you look in a mirror?” Or in the words of a little girl, “Who is Chris?” and “Who is ‘more Chris’?” The maternal household emphasis on equality, sameness, and fairness set up social, academic, and extra-curricular situations where particularity and difference became important realities for me and of which I needed to make sense. These ongoing situations also allowed me to notice that I had differing relational attachments to parents and other people than did my sister. This observation was extended to our family experience of weekly Sunday worship wherein I could see differing beliefs, attitudes and actions embodied in daily life by my sister and me in response to the same worship service.

My experience in seminary was interrupted by marriage to an officer in the Marine Corps and thus, I was presented with opportunities to provide leadership for spouses in military communities. In various military contexts and leadership

responsibilities, I drew upon psychological literature to help make sense of individual and group dynamics, as well as sought out the experience and insights of psychoanalysis. At the same time, I was also active in providing adult and children's education in Presbyterian congregations and Roman Catholic parishes. *Koinonia* and countertransference made sense of military and church community experiences.

Years later, as a prelude to finishing my graduate education in theology, I spent four years as a participant in the Graduate Seminar for Jungian Studies. My return to seminary, continued engagement with teaching in the church, and the resuming of the candidacy process toward ordination provided situations in which I became aware of and had to work through the dynamics of countertransference. *Koinonia* in these settings became a more complex experience for me, one in which I experienced hurt as well as joy.

Following graduation from seminary, more opportunities for CPE provided supervisory, peer and patient contexts of chaplain work in which to investigate spirited intra- and inter-relational dynamics from theological and psychological perspectives, and gave rise to more pointed questions about what it means to be a person and how God is present in relationships. These then, mark some of the ways in which I am present to the research at hand. And so it makes sense to understand that my experiences, bodily sensations, images, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, values, and responses are part of the research data.

These markers have been noted in an ongoing log I have kept, in which insights and questions also emerged from the data collection and analysis process. Awareness of the impact of myself as a research instrument is humbling in its work of cultivating a



stance of *confident tentativeness*. This paradoxical attitude comes into play as I work with the interviewee's stories and interpretations of *koinonia* in conversation with my interpretive constructs developed in the process of data analysis. The back-and-forth dialogue between interviewee stories and my constructs gives me pause to consider anew my own interpretations and constructions.

### **Interviewee Background and Method**

The minister who agreed to take place in this research will be referred to as Thomas Weston. Currently in his third call as congregational leader in a PC (USA) church, he is fifty-nine years old and has been in ordained ministry since 1985. He lives in a suburb of a midwest city with his congregation located in a neighboring suburb. In responding to my invitation to join this study he consulted with his wife over a period of a few days before agreeing to participate. He and his wife of thirty-four years have two adult children. All identifying information has been altered to protect confidentiality.

Thomas Weston was interviewed three times in his office at the church. The first and second interviews were two weeks apart, and the third interview was three weeks after the second interview. This schedule accommodated his busy schedule and allowed the verbatim transcription of the audiotaped interviews as well as time to dwell in the data as prescribed by phenomenological methodology and outlined previously. Each two-hour interview was curious about his lived-experience of community in the congregation in light of important relationships and experiences. Examples of questions on the schedule are: "As you hold people's faces and experiences in your mind and heart, what primary emotions come to mind?" "How does motion help you connect, in some ways, with your emotions or at least your bodily sensations of anxiety?" "What was a recent

homebound visit like?” The transcript was analyzed according to the coding procedures outlined earlier. Three coding experts were used for inter-rater reliability to validate that themes were present and identifiable in the data.

### **Identification of *In Vivo* Themes**

In this case, three major *in vivo* themes/codes were identified and named, each further supported by nested clusters of three *in vivo* themes as I considered how the themes related to one another and to the whole in describing Thomas Weston’s experience of community in the congregation. In his words *Who I am*, *Relationship* and *Table* emerged as major *in vivo* themes that interpenetrated one another in terms of breadth and depth, appearing to make sense of the minister’s experience and the following analysis is therefore organized in terms of these themes. *In vivo* themes are not categories but structures of experience. Poetically imagine these themes as “more like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived as meaningful wholes.”<sup>117</sup> The following themes are his *knots*, and italics indicate the use of his words.

*Who I am* describes his lived sense of self in relationship with sub-themes of *open*, *joy*, and *movement*. *Relationship* describes *presence* and his different circles of community and the dynamics to which he is attentive: *conflict*, *centering*, and *connect*. *Table* describes *communion*, activities of *eating*, *praying*, *laughing*, *crying*, and being *raised up*.

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<sup>117</sup>van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, 90.

### Summary and Preview

In this chapter I mapped the landscape of inquiry, beginning with the world as the horizon of inquiry. I made clear the assumptions that shaped my research question, highlighting theories, biblical, and theological concepts. I then introduced phenomenology, providing an overview, critique, and response to this particular methodology before detailing its protocol, to include selection of interviewee, interview schedule, coding, ethical concerns, and the researcher as instrument. Concluding this chapter was introduction of the interviewee and the *in vivo* themes or findings. Further description of the *in vivo* themes is expanded in chapter three. Chapters four and five presents the researcher's constructive interpretation of the analytical findings from theological and psychological perspectives. Chapter six concludes with tentative assertions and further questions.

CHAPTER THREE  
FINDINGS: ONE PASTORAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE DEFINITION AND  
EXPRESSION OF *KOINONIA* IN THE CONGREGATION

*There is a thread you follow.  
It goes among things that change  
But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about things you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
It is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it, you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die,  
And you suffer and grow old.  
Nothing you do can stop times unfolding  
But you don't ever let go of the thread.  
--- William Stafford*

**Introduction**

The *in vivo* themes illumine *lived-through* experience, which is to say, these *knots* articulate themes of self-reflexive thought that make sense of one pastor's experience of community within the congregation. Clustered together to form a larger *knot* are three interconnected *in vivo* themes – *Who I am*, *Relationships* and *Table* -- and their sub-themes that shed some light on the pastoral experience of *koinonia* in the church. This chapter describes these *life* themes using the pastor's words to tell the story of his experience of community in the congregation.

*Who I am* and *Relationships* are porous categories in that a sense of self is developed and fostered in relationships, which are also conditioned by the response of

that same self. In turn those relationships and that particular self are nurtured by what happens around many kitchen tables and communion tables. In fact, the subthemes of *relationship – conflict, centering, connect* – seem to be co-emergent with the pastor’s ability to be *open*, full of *joy* and *movement*, the subthemes that characterize *who I am*. These subthemes of *relationship* and *who I am* interpenetrate one another and thus give rise to recursive narration as Thomas speaks about who he is in light of positive and negative formative relationships. *Tables* provide the ordinary and liturgical contexts of *Who I am* and *Relationships* with its broad subthemes of *communion, eat pray laugh cry, hospitality, diversity* and *love*.

Any one of these *in vivo* themes could be the entry into this one pastor’s stories about his lived-experience of community in the congregation because of its integral connection(s) with the other themes. As Thomas fleshes out his stories over the course of three interviews the reader may notice a *recursive* element in the pastor’s words that render more complex and nuanced the connections between these experiential *knots*.<sup>1</sup> Congruent with how he began his reflections with me, this chapter begins with the theme of *Who I am*. Such a beginning makes sense because the reader gains a sense of how Thomas lives out his personal yet pastoral identity and thus generally orients us to his embodied professional role within the congregation.

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<sup>1</sup>The recursive nature of data analysis resonates well with the method of relational integration even as it anticipates emphases of interpersonal neurobiology whose theoretical analysis will be brought to bear in the following chapters. At this point however and because the brain is an “anticipation machine,” it might be of perspectival interest to note the following: “‘Recursive’ means that the effects of a given state of mind return to further influence the emergence of future states. We are always in a perpetual state of being created and creating ourselves.... As a person’s states of mind emerge in ways determined by the system’s own internal constraints and by the external constraints of interpersonal connections with others, the self is perpetually being created.” See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 201.

First however, it is important to set the scene of the initial interview because that background literally grounds all three interviews even as it contributes to a deeper contextual and relational understanding of the *in vivo* themes. Note that in this chapter, the footnotes function in a couple of ways and reflect two tenses of time. First they serve as shorthand field notes that reference my associations, affect, and experiences that were strongly evoked yet bracketed in the interviewing process. Other footnotes provide present explanations as I note current reflections and questions about the data, co-emergent with ongoing reading and my own life experiences as I describe and write up the analytic findings in this chapter.

#### Common Ground: Anxiety

In his opening comments in the first interview, responding to the question of “what primary emotions come to mind when you think about what community is like for you in the congregation in light of important relationships and past experiences,” Presbyterian pastor Thomas Weston describes the overall context for his experience with these words:

It’s been a joy. It’s been a privilege to enter into people’s lives in a variety of ways. It’s been a journey of highs and lows ... What allows me to have, to be in community, I think, with the best in my church community goes back to 32 years of marriage to my wife ... She also centers me on a regular basis of “Who is Thomas Weston?” you know. “What is going on in your life today? How can you be less *anxious* about this?” and we have wonderful communication with each other so she centers me so I can come to church or go out and be the pastor that I can be ... I think *anxiety* is a big piece of ministry and how to be less *anxious* in one’s life I think is vital. (1L43fp1-1L6p2)

The background context of anxiety, while not at the forefront of this research, is an important reality that conditions not just the pastoral office of ordained ministry but also the experience of the self and relationships in general. Linger over Thomas’ words

for a moment: “I think *anxiety* is a big piece of ministry and how to be less *anxious* in one’s life I think is vital.” (1L6p2)

Much has been written about anxiety generally and specifically with regard to ministry, especially from a family systems perspective of psychology. Anxiety, understood as “an internal state of agitation that may be in response to present experience, to anticipating the future, or to reflecting on the past,” might be considered an existential condition of being human.<sup>2</sup> Anxiety describes a dimension of human responsiveness and the ability to feel bodily sensations when we imaginatively move back and forth through the three tenses of time. It is the present, past, and future that is always at play in human relationships and therefore, in the shared space between people as well as in the inner embodied space of individuals.

Just so, the three tenses of time are constitutive of Christian community as well, animating the Body of Christ as we make liturgical, theological, and practical sense of our experience of time and in time. One might say that anxiety conditions our historical experience of freedom as individuals and as communities. The intra-psychic and inter-relational energy of countertransference is intrinsically related to time, where past relationships, as they impinge on the present and condition the future, may be broadly described as anxiety or more narrowly in psychoanalytic terms and with reference to emotional impact as *affect*. It is important to note that from physiological reactions of anxiety and generalized bodily sensations, people experience instinctive emotions,

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<sup>2</sup>Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, A1-5. Going beyond family systems theory propounded by Edwin Friedman and Murray Bowen, I have only recently become aware of the work of Richard Schwartz who has developed “internal family systems,” further extended by Susan McConnell’s somatic emphasis. These practitioners are inter-disciplinary conversation partners with Daniel Siegel. In the spring of 2015 Siegel and Schwartz, aware of each other’s work, are in public dialogue, presenting at a conference in Boston.

feelings, and needs as they make sense of inner turmoil.<sup>3</sup> In all these interconnected ways then, there is a felt and resonant coherence to these opening remarks of Thomas about anxiety.

Earlier I had sensed anxiety in his off tape comments just prior to the taped interview when Thomas mentioned a previous research situation where he had welcomed another pastor into the life of his congregation as a participant observer for DMin research. He characterized aspects of that process as *abuse*, particularly with regard to the final written thesis and its judging tone about the church community. Thomas then asked if perhaps there could be another staff person present for the interview. I indicated that was not possible given my methodology requiring deep personal reflection without constraint due to the presence of another person.

Inwardly, I was aware that he could stop the process at this point and decline to participate any further. Perhaps this was the beginning of the end of this interview and thus my research with this particular pastor. I might have to seek out another pastor as research participant. En route to the interview I had felt anxious and talked to myself about what contributed to that felt sense of vulnerability and what was at stake for me in this process even as I wondered what the pastor might be feeling in anticipation of the interview.

Aloud and to myself I named where I felt anxiety in my body, described what it felt like, and noted my feelings and needs. I wondered what I could honestly request of the pastor. I recalled the phone conversation when Thomas let me know of his decision to

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<sup>3</sup>See Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2003). See also Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Peter A. Levine, *Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2015).



participate in my research. He acknowledged my hard work to get to this point and said he didn't want to disappoint me by saying no. So my present experience of anxiety was tempered with gratitude and openness to him because of the memory of his initial kindness towards me. I was struck by how he had made a decision that was not solely based on his needs but that he had also considered my needs. What a kind, generous and empathetic response from one stranger to another! I hoped that such empathy for self and other would prevail in the midst of Thomas' feelings of anxiety.

So the prelude to the interview process itself made present the vulnerability and ambiguity shared by Thomas and me, strangers to one another but linked in our experience of anxiety amidst tentative openness to one another. Issues of *trust* and a *safe enough* space popped into my mind as I considered his request for another person to be in that room with us during the interview. I thought about his related needs and how my vantage point naturally conditions how I would interpret the transcript and how it would be intrinsically different from his perspective because we are unique individuals. I knew that the interview and processes of validity, reliability, and verification were collaborative whereas the analytic and interpretive writing would be solely my own work.<sup>4</sup> I wondered about the difference between being a chaplain and being a researcher in terms of how I might respond to the charged, energetic space in and between Thomas and me.

Within myself I embody both aspects as a *listening presence*. Which one would come to the fore now? Curiosity as a researcher and compassion as a chaplain is a shorthand way of noting different responses to research participants. Of course a

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas did agree with me on the in vivo themes that I identified as emerging from the three interviews.

researcher can and should be compassionate, but the primary listening and responsive perspective is that of curiosity. Participants will often be caught with some emotion and it is my role in a research interview to wonder with them. So I intentionally brought to the fore *wondering curiosity* as I began my first interview with Thomas even as I also felt somewhat still like a chaplain in my regard for his stated anxiety.<sup>5</sup>

## **Who I Am: Movement, Open and Joy**

### Introduction

This *knot* has several strands. In and through time and relationships, there is the self-perception of Thomas as to who he is that is connected intimately with the perception of others. The subthemes, in no particular order -- *movement*, *open*, and *joy* -- emerge in his reflections as he talks about *who I am*. His own testimony reveals a capacity for self-reflexivity as he speaks from and to his sense of self in terms of invested experiences, commitments and agendas.<sup>6</sup> He is also cognizant of and responsive to the witness of others who, from their particular vantage point, testify to who he is.

Knowing and being known are relational formative processes that contribute to *who I am*. In other words, personhood and relationships are integrally connected through the sensate activities of knowing and being known, of seeing and being seen. Thomas

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<sup>5</sup>*Wondering curiosity* is also the stance of the teacher in *godly play*, influenced by the theology of James E. Loder and the psychology of W.D. Winnicott. See Jerome W. Berryman, *The Spiritual Guidance of Children: Montessori, Godly Play, and the Future* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2013). In the midst of my research interviews, I participated in a three-day training session of *godly play* with the pastor and another member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church so as to become part of a teaching team for church education.

<sup>6</sup>In his final words of the last interview Thomas concludes that "to review one's life, I think is always important ... we busy our life with a lot of stuff and don't often have a chance to think back upon the why and what we're doing." (3L41-43p24)

admits, “You’ve kinda ‘got me.’ Yeah. It’s naming and seeing.”<sup>7</sup> (1L1p24) The vitality of these relational actions is ordinary but foundational for him. He comments,

You know, I can go on a walk around my lake in the neighborhood and I’ll say ‘hi’ to everybody because I want them to know they’re important. And not just that because Thomas Weston knows them but that there’s something about them ... Wanting them to know they’re loved and cared for... I guess it’s my way of bringing some *joy* or to some acknowledgement of *who they are* into the day. (1L31-32, 35, 42-43)

The impulse to see and name can be but is not always a mutual reciprocal activity of acknowledgement. Nor is seeing and naming usually linked with the feeling of *joy*.<sup>8</sup> Perception may also encompass the reality that one is not seen for who one is or that who one is seen to be may be interpreted differently than what one supposes, affirms, or intends. Misrecognition as a dynamic in relationships thus testifies to a common human experience of knowing that encompasses *not-knowing*. In the interplay of recognition and misrecognition then, it is possible to speak of negative and positive relationships and the resulting dynamics.<sup>9</sup>

There are a variety of relational contexts that reveal who Thomas is: family, community and church. While these are particular ways of being together, these differentiations of communal relationships are, at the same time, integrated within Thomas as a person. Throughout the interviews he often speaks of how he was *raised* or

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<sup>7</sup>Epistemology and ontology are integrally connected in the discipline of practical theology and in the practice of ministry.

<sup>8</sup>I was struck in the moment by an image of parent and child gazing at one another in joy, thinking back on many such moments with my own children.

<sup>9</sup>Recognition and misrecognition as relational dynamics testify biblically and theologically to the thematic realities of salvation and sin even as these concepts form the basis of theological ethics or become a way to understand the transferential field of relationships.

*raised up* in a specific relational community as he links that experience to the formation of *who I am*.

### Family

Family as the community in which we first form primary attachments is foundational to our capacity and competency in forming healthy relationships. As his family's third youngest boy in a rural Midwest community, he describes his role in the house in the words his mother says openly to others. "And Thomas? Thomas was my little girl." (1L28p7) Laughing, Thomas describes how he helped his mother with "dishes and cleaning, groceries, baking and so, you know, my wife loves that I was a 'little girl.'" (1L30p7) His older brothers helped his dad outside with the farm chores and crops.

Thomas was out and about with each parent in addition to going to the Mennonite church three or four times a week. He accompanied his mother on her visits to the "local grandmas." Later in high school when the family had moved into town, Thomas helped his father in the door-to-door delivery of milk, greeting each person by name. His eyes well up with tears as he describes the ritual of helping his dad run the milk route, remembering not only the faces but the standard orders each person would request. Summing it up, Thomas says, "That's a part of me, that caring stuff that I was brought into with the family." (2L35p7)

Significantly while he was in college, it was his future mother-in-law who posed the question of whether Thomas was called to the ministry as a vocation. She saw him and named what she was seeing in him. Thinking back upon his family life and college leadership experiences that prompted her question, Thomas states,

I didn't think I had any leadership skills but it was more gathering people together and having fun and doing good with them. So you know, I could see it back then

*who I am* today ... you know, community, being together, fellowship, *koinonia*, whatever that might be, has been kinda a part of me: wanting people to know each other, be in *relationship* together. (2L8, 17-19p8)

The foundation of family life continues to be the wellspring from which Thomas lives, orienting his personal and professional life to others. He cites his thirty-four year marriage to Abigail and their two boys as that which “allows me to have, to be in community, I think, with the best in my church community.” (1L44p1) In other words he describes Abigail as his *rock*.<sup>10</sup>

### Movement and Joy

Thomas highlights how his wife “really cherishes that small town family *relationship* stuff I bring to our marriage and that I bring to the church.” (2L43-45p1)

Describing that environment he notes,

It goes back to being *raised* in a small town and being in *relationship* with everybody in that community, where everybody knows *who you are*. Everybody, you know, will tell your parents where you’ve been. Everybody. So there’s no hiding ... you can’t run away. You got to, you have to learn to forgive and forget and *move on* ... that’s the basis of *who I am*. (2L33-39p1)

Seeing and being seen by “everybody in that community” seems to engender an implicit sense of accountability to people who know Thomas and his family. As a child learning to choose between right and wrong and being answerable to others for one’s conduct and obligations, Thomas literally “can’t run away” from transparent responsibility to others in that small town community environment. Yet he isn’t stuck either. *Movement* tends in a more generative relational direction with activities of

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<sup>10</sup>With reference to “rock,” I can’t help but think of psalm references to God as “my rock and my redeemer.” There is a sense of transcendent power and presence that is immovable, deeply trustworthy in times of trouble that is captured in this image through which I view his wife. Such biblical associations and their narrative show forth an *excess* of identity as that metaphor is used in her regard.

forgiving and forgetting. There is a sense of doubled movement in the practice of forgiveness. Movement within oneself is in the activity of *opening* to the self so that one can then approach others.

Thomas describes the foundational basis of that doubled movement in the congregation, keying off a picture with a saying that he sees daily at home. “Another day of blessing, a new chance of *joy*.” He then comments, “Every day is fresh and no matter what, you know, I hope people and think people here [in this current congregation] know that I, you know, I’m very forgiving and we *move on*.” (1L32-34p10) This forgiving movement is facilitated by an attitude of *freshness* that Thomas links to *joy* and to *openness*.

He describes *joy* as “a feeling of lightness, of *freshness*, of *newness*,” (3L26p17) initially an experience of acceptance and belonging in his first call congregation. From that experience, Thomas notes joy is best encountered in honest relationships that demonstrate “*who we* are as God’s people.” (3L38917, 3L7p18) Forgiveness seems to ground the joy in this initial congregational experience for, as he recalls, “they forgave me a whole lot for stupid things I would do, did [do]. You know, as a first call, whatever my stupid things may have been.” (1L31-32p11) Thomas characterizes these first ten years in ministry as *joy-filled* (3L6p18) and notes, “I get goose-bumps when I sense *joy*. I will tear up.” (3L15p19)

For Thomas the experience of joy seems to be multi-faceted. He indicates it is an orienting attitude that one can cultivate. Joy is also a feeling within oneself, the description of which seems expansive and open. In these interior dimensions joy has to do with *freshness* and *newness*, even a *lightness* of feeling. Further described as discrete

bodily sensations, the feeling of joy seems to be responsive to others, emergent from relationships of acceptance and honesty. Not only is joy a felt relational sensation in and between individuals, it is also visible in communal relationships, a witness to situations of belonging, honesty, and forgiveness. In all these facets there is a sense of dynamic movement in the experience of joy that in its openness and freshness, its very lightness, verges on transformation.

Thomas cultivates this stance of joy. He is intentional about what and whom he invites to speak into his life. Connections with others and continuing education are sources of transformation for Thomas. “I do try to use my continuing ed for that purpose. For *freshness, newness*, people entering. You know, I always want to think I’m *open to new ways of doing ministry.*” (2L36p17) There is an open regard for how others are positively impacted by his ability to keep opening up to the bodily presence of others and to new information. In other words, there is awareness of how knowing (self and others) and knowledge affects the congregation. Thomas goes on to say,

I like to think that in me going out and bringing in *new* ideas and *freshness* into my own life, you know, I can share that with the congregation and they’re very willing to *move* in new ways and that’s, you know, that’s what keeps things *fresh* here, *fresh* for them and *fresh* for me. (2L40p17)

Movement as foundational to relational activities of forgiving and forgetting then has to do with being open, seeking out and inviting freshness and newness into his life and ministry, family and congregation.<sup>11</sup> This movement seems to be joy in action.

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<sup>11</sup>The focus on freshness and newness in both the home and congregational setting brought to mind the hymn *Morning has Broken*. As a child I sang it at church and pounded it out on the piano at home. The hymn evokes an intimate sense of God’s presence, power and activity in creation and invites a sense of Sabbath rest into each day. Now, as I write this, I find the words to the hymn *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee* sounding through me as I look out onto a leafy green day in early spring.

Elaborating on how he has changed over the years in terms of “how to *move* through conflict to resolution,” Thomas muses,

Yeah, I think early on it was more about wanting people to like me. Some of that might be at the base of *who I am, how I was* raised. And I didn’t always jump on things right away, and I’ve learned over the years that what was best for me as Thomas Weston is to have those conversations whatever immediately means, at the earliest convenience in time to have them. (2L7p5, 2L39-44p5)

Awareness of how time functions emotionally for him in engaging others in challenging conversation in the congregation as it relates to *moving on* describes another aspect to his sense of *who I am*. At the same time Thomas is aware of needing to lean into challenging conversations as soon as possible, he is also attuned to how other people need more time to process conversations and move through conflict. (2L1-7p5)

Overall the movement of forgiving, forgetting, and *moving on* suggests dynamic, even joyful, generativity to his sense of personhood, or *who I am*. Thinking about that sense of *who I am* in terms of accountability seems to be important to Thomas in an ongoing way. In his first call to a congregation he relied on a “ministerium colleague weekly group” where knowing and being known looked a little different. “It’s bouncing off ideas and praying and, you know, and then listening to concerns that are going on, you know, lifting each other up in prayer and holding each other close.” (2L28-30p6) Yet accountability is still a relational dynamic in that collegial community. He goes on to say, “I think those groups like that can hold you accountable, you know, and I think if I were single and didn’t have, you know, my wife, I think I would need, need such a group. She holds me pretty accountable to *who I is* (sic).” (2L30-32p6) Accountability suggests relational knowing and being known that is mutual and trustworthy, where seeing and being seen have to do with back and forth dialogue aimed around being *open* to oneself



and to others in a spirit of forgiving *movement* that enlarges and makes the relational space in and between people more generative. Currently Thomas relies not only on his wife but also on a couple of male parish associates to hold him accountable.

Accountability to the self also suggests there is a *core self* or, in other words, values and principles that inform the narrative around which one lives. Thomas gets in touch with his own core narrative through practices of *centering* from weekly mid-week worship at a neighborhood Catholic Church and from the practice of walking the labyrinth that is on the grounds of his congregation. In this regard, it seems that throughout his life the literal action of *movement* is important to Thomas, both in terms of formalized centered walking and just being out for a walk in neighborhoods around his home and congregation.

He draws attention to the fact that physical movement may help *move* emotion and in so doing provides clarity as to perception of self and others. Thomas states,

The labyrinth is a very helpful resource to go out and ... do a walk because ... a lot of times ... we can make [conflict] out to be bigger than it is ... and in a fight or anything, it's good to get away from it for a moment and to take a time out and ... understand, maybe ... help get a clear view of what is going on with that issue, what can be different, what we should do. (2L16-21p6)

The movement that orients around the core self might be a movement that destabilizes current understanding and experience of the self. That “clear view” or “what can be different” may be an entry, exploration into or enlarging of different dimensions of the self. Or it might be the jarring creation of a new fragment of the self.

In addition to checking in with himself and evaluating his perspective through the intentional practice of walking the labyrinth, Thomas makes it a regular practice to check in with people as they are drawn to the church throughout the week, meeting in

fellowship groups that form around practical activities. There is a sense of movement to these visits with others. In describing his interaction with a knitting group he notes,

I'll go in for five minutes and say hi and they'll ask me questions about people and you know, I'll leave and again ... if it can just be for me little short visits, little ins and outs, but touching base. It's going around the room chatting with people. (1L27-28p24)

He originally experienced that literal movement of accountability when he was out and about his small town as a child, visible to its residents and his parents. Thomas continues to move around in the larger community in a visible way, a practice that he began in his first call as he and his wife walked through and picked up trash in the urban neighborhoods of the city in which his congregation was situated.

In that particular city, Thomas lived in an integrated neighborhood adjacent to another neighborhood, home to some of his parishioners, where there was anti-immigration sentiment against Koreans. He joined the neighborhood watch association and took turns at doing night patrol each month. Thomas also organized and participated in drug marches on Saturday mornings to highlight the presence of drug homes in the area. These activities were matters of accountability, of making visible and putting pressure on the police to do "their job." (2Lp10)

### Church and Community

It was within this larger urban community context that Thomas tended to his first flock, an integrated congregation where "the church is half white and half African American." (2L2p9) This is the congregation that "*raised me into who I am so I give honor and praise to that congregation.*" (2L22p10) Seeing, naming, and accountability come into focus as dynamics in the pastoral formation of Thomas within the congregation

as he nurtured the gospel imperative of justice in his ministry. Thomas describes those initial ten years of “joy-filled ministry” with that urban congregation as “very transformational in my life as to African American and white and Koreans working together in ministry.” (3L6p18, 2L35p8) He cites one incident in which he spoke out at a large public community meeting for “the love of God for all people, treating the neighbor as the self” to a crowd opposed to Korean immigrants living in that neighborhood. (2L29p8)

Thomas faced down this mob and “the congregation heard what Thomas did for the sake of justice and it was a powerful thing for the congregation to know.” (2L40p9) He goes on to say, “It is when you do things for the sake of the gospel that people really get a sense of *where you are* and *what you’re about* so that was a transforming moment. But another would be doing drug marches in our neighborhood.” (2L43p9) Significantly, Thomas attributes personal transformation to people’s actions that are *witnessed*, which is to say, the exercise of personal agency that is seen and heard by others. Reflecting upon community advocacy for the common good, he notes, “I think it’s just one person at a time that we can affect and help change and give another view of what’s going on in the community.” (2L27p15) Relational presence may be transformative personally and communally.

Human action is mutual and reciprocal, responsive to what is heard and known, deeply connected to the larger neighborhood community context, and this process is clearly transformative for the pastor and presumably so for the congregation. Thomas admits,

It wasn’t *who I was* to begin with. I mean, I came in as a person who loved God, loved the gospel, loved people. But that’s, you know, when you come to a

community and you listen to what's going on and you listen to the needs, and you know, it was like, 'Ok. This is life. This is the gospel. This is justice for all concepts.' (2L18-21p10)

Thomas is *open* so people impacted his life and ministry. There seems to be an inner emphasis on the vulnerable interdependence of people that grounds his actions as pastoral leader such that he could change and grow.

Thomas is most grateful for the specific way in which this first call congregation formed him. As a young man of twenty-seven years old fresh from seminary following on the heels of a minister who had been installed there for twenty-seven years, Thomas notes, "they really *raised me up* to be able to see diversity, to love it. Peace and justice, you know, was a huge piece of me going in and a bigger piece coming out." (1L28p11) Transformation seems to be about being *open* to and leaning into, loving even, the diversity of people first so that then peace and justice flows from that listening and loving, that seeing and naming.

Transformation is by human influence and agency in all of its diversity.<sup>12</sup> There is no direct ascription of God's transcendent presence to the work of transformation even as there is no sense of God's immanent presence. Rather, these polar opposites are eclipsed

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<sup>12</sup>I'm becoming aware that this view of *transformation* might be a hallmark of white theology in the midst of my ongoing wrestling with how to think about the historical interplay of divine transcendence and immanence in relationships. The ability to name God's ongoing activity in creation and to exercise human agency in participating with what God is doing has been a missional influence reflective of the larger Neo-Protestant practical theological emphasis at Luther Seminary. Such awareness has been formative in my higher theological education. See chapter thirteen in Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*. While I claim the feminist theological importance of transformation in terms of liberating *praxis* I'm also aware of how, at the same time, I value the womanist stance and *unctuous* attitude of surviving. Korean practical theologian Heejong Kwon brings out the implications of an emphasis on transformation within *praxis* as articulated by Latin American theologians and in so doing, affirms and renders more complex the womanist stance. This area of noticing and questioning will continue to evolve as insights emerge from the interpretation of my research data in conversation with my ongoing reading and thinking. Of note is Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010). This book influences how I mull through the logic in Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God*.

by human presence that is formative, powerful even in its back and forth witness of one another. It seems that God's presence in the inter-relational space of church is incarnate in human bodies. Such an emphasis on human witness and work in response to the gospel is reflected in a framed poster in his office showing people of many hues gathered together. Titled with large lettering, *Colors of All God's People*, the smaller biblical subscript reads, "Peace to all God's people who are far and those who are near."<sup>13</sup> (2L30p8)

Thomas's capacity to be *open* to people engenders an approach stance of engagement to others and to issues of peace and justice. The gospel imperative makes necessary the grappling with material differences of people in their existential context. Thomas walks with a diversity of people, crossing boundaries between church and neighborhood, town and country, family and congregation. His second call to a larger downtown congregation in a Midwestern state was predicated upon his ability to engage with a diversity of people, and especially with the urban African American population. Reflecting upon that second call, Thomas noted, "They saw my gifts from the diversity in Baltimore and they thought this would be a good match." (1L38p11) He seems comfortable with navigating ambiguous inter-relational space characterized by fluidity and fragmentation, shifting edges and boundaries.

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<sup>13</sup>This poster evoked in me a mental image from the concluding scene of a Flannery O'Connor short story. Mrs. Turpin sees a multitude of persons, all of God's people as it were, streaming toward the sunset. I also think of a similar scene imagined by Leif Enger in his novel *Peace Like a River*. The biblical reference seems to be prophetic and apocalyptic emphasis on peace in the heavenly city of Jerusalem.

## Open

I wonder if it is these foundational experiences, diverse contexts, and important relationships that ground Thomas's more pointed remarks, which speak to an integrated view of him as a caring person, in any context, who happens to be of the clergy. There seems to be intentional commitment and openness to *being* simply human and, at the same time, an awareness of inhabiting a role as clergy in the church. There also seems to be a willingness to be an active participant in differing circles of community. He comments,

A lot of people don't think, I mean they're afraid of *relationships*. They're afraid of especially when you get around clergy, and I like to, you know, bust their bubble about clergy and *who I am*. So I think it's important for them to realize that we're everyday saint sinner folk and so I think, by being on level ground with people outside the church and for them to get to know *who I am* other than Reverend Thomas Weston. I'm Thomas Weston who likes to have fun and can cry and laugh with anybody I meet. (2L2-9p2)

Thomas' felt bodily sensations and expression of emotions in the context of all three interviews was clearly visible through his ready laughter and the welling up of tears in his eyes. In conversation it seems as though he can shift easily from one feeling-state to another while also naming what he is feeling and its significance. Perhaps some of that movement and openness to his interior emotional landscape has to do with an attitude of holding himself lightly, knowing there are many dimensions to himself. "And so again, some of that is not taking myself so seriously and life so seriously and I can. I am very, I can be very serious. I can be very theological. I, you know, can be all of those pieces but there needs to be some *joy*." (1L29-31p22)

The privileging of *joy* seems to enable the acceptance and expression of his own and others' emotions, attitudes and behaviors.<sup>14</sup> As previously noted, there seems to be a *lightness* about joy that allows for and accepts such movement, embracing even the radical action of forgiving and forgetting. Emotional connection to himself and to others inside and outside the church is important to Thomas. It is this emotional access and expression that allows for relational engagement in different contexts.

The fun loving side of Thomas literally comes across visually in terms of socks, hats, and costumes. Over the years he has received *crazy socks* as gifts from his mother-in-law. A hat with dreadlocks from his first call congregation was a beloved hat he wore for years at an annual youth event where, as a disc jockey, he was “the Rocking Reverend Thomas.” For many years in this urban congregation Thomas “went out to a lot of my families in the church on Christmas Day as Santa Claus.” (2L15p12) At the same time he also was Lucy the Bear at the neighborhood elementary school, making many appearances throughout the school year. As Thomas says, “so that’s a part of me. Costumes. I’m not afraid of costumes.... And again, it was the community piece where I, you know, just wanting to be a part of [it].” (2L20, 26p12) Costumes offer a different guise than the clergy collar in connecting to people and fostering community.

The costumes evoke, even as they express different aspects of the self in the experience of seeing and being seen. It suggests an inner ease of movement in differing relational contexts that are defined by the costume. Inhabiting a costume with conscious intentional awareness of community allows for freedom of movement and creates a relational space in which people can move in and out. Costumes also provide differing

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<sup>14</sup>In the moment of interviewing I was so excited when he talked of joy! All I could think of was “Yes! Joy is an emotion that helps us to integrate!”

vantage points and therefore, cultivate different emotions and subjectivities within the self and others. Thomas is more than a clergyman in his collar. There is an *excess* and complexity of identity that are revealed in his differing roles and costumes in various community contexts. From his perspective he says, “It’s being a good community person.” (2L41p12)

That fluid identity as a “good community person” with shifting roles complete with their own costumes came together to create a larger singular identity that made sense of Thomas’ activities and presence in that particular place. “By the time I left Baltimore in ten years, people kinda saw Thomas Weston as the unofficial mayor of the community of Shady Grove because I was out, out and about.” (2L28p12) The visible movement in and out of roles fostered a larger identity that was named and given by others. It is significant that the unofficial positions also conveyed a sense of power that was conferred by the people.

In talking more about power as it relates to positions, it becomes clear that for Thomas, positional power has to do with *movement* and *openness*. “Some people might think I wield power in those positions and maybe I do that. I don’t think I have, but it’s only a sense of leading and *moving* us, moving the agenda forward in some reasonable, you know, manner.” (2L6-8p14. See also 2L42p13.) He goes on to qualify the meaning of power as the ability “to *move* whatever body I’m a part of forward to some goal that we’re having together.” (2L24p14). Such movement is open, characterized by lightness and laughter, and the intention to not take himself so seriously. (2L33-36p13. See also 1L5-13p22) The emotional capacity to laugh and to let go leads Thomas to delegate responsibility “because that’s how everybody feels as if they’re doing something, and can



do something.” (2L44p13) Movement in its openness thus includes everyone and it is powered by the ability to have fun and to be joyful.

Thomas expands upon the meaning of fun as “having conversation that brings laughter and lightness to hearts, smiles and grins and tears.” (2L9-10p13) His ability to feel, express, and evoke emotions not only characterizes his leadership style, but also is part and parcel of *who he is*. As noted earlier he affirms, “I’m Thomas Weston who likes to have fun and can cry and laugh with anybody I meet.” (2L2-9p2. See also 1L5-8p22)

When I drew attention to his tears that surfaced in our interviews and asked about their meaning, his first response was “That’s *who I am*. That’s *who I am*.” (1L29,33p6) He then elaborated on emotions and *who I am* in terms of what it means relationally to him and to others.

Everybody knows I’m a weepy guy. A weepy guy. And it’s *who I am*. I can’t help it. It’s something, if something touches me it’s what they get. And they, lots of folks have said that’s what they love about Thomas Weston. And I’m sorry whether you like it or not that’s, and it comes from, I think, my deep connection to people and my love of them. I’m a good crier and a good laughter. Humor is important. (1L2-10p7).

People count on the constancy of Thomas’ ability to connect not only with other people and to love them, but in so doing, to also connect with himself and his emotions. He notes, “There is one family who, during their ride to church, they take bets on how many times Thomas will cry in his sermon.” (1L43-45p6)

Thomas can connect with his emotions in the present moment. There seems to be an inherent sense of *open* responsiveness that registers at a basic human level that in turn invites people not only into relationship, but invites them to connect with their own sense of self. While this ability to connect emotionally begins with the ability to connect

viscerally with one's body in the present moment of experience, it is also characteristic of *relationships* for Thomas.

Emotional presence in relationships is not disembodied for Thomas. As he himself admits, "I was *raised* with hugs," referring to his first call congregation. (1L35p15) Thomas goes on to say, "I gave everybody a hug, everybody who comes through the line. It's kind of the African American culture here anyway. It's who people are and what they do, and they raised me for ten years so that's *who I am* and what I do. *I'm a hugger.*" (1L39-41p15)

This incarnational emphasis of bodies open toward one another in his first call congregation grounds an attitude of open relationality that has been congruent for Thomas in his pastoral leadership and service to three churches. Not only does he embrace bodies, he is open to see and take in the spectacle of bodies marked by race, class, and gender as part of the deepening of his call to ministry.

In his second congregation he was called to open and widen the church's hospitality to the presence of African Americans in that downtown neighborhood. In his current congregation the church embraces openness as their identity as "Christ's body here in this little corner of the world and so what goes along with our church motto is '*open hearts, open doors, opening* our lives to God.'" (1L40-42p20)

### **Relationships: Connect, Conflict, Centering**

#### Introduction: An Excursus into Circles of Community

Seeking out a *fruitful and generative leader in the congregation* to interview, as noted previously, was a hard task, perhaps due to people thinking or imagining it meant a certain narrowly defined ideal, not only about pastoral role and activity but also about

church as congregational community. I draw attention to my own wondering in this regard as I set the scene for Thomas' experience of relationships precisely because it seems as if formative relationships and their dynamics are conditioned by his active engagement in other communities in addition to the congregation. In fact, it might be said that *community* is the overarching valued reality in which he understands and makes sense of *relationships* within the congregation. Certainly those other community contexts texture the fabric of Thomas' life and are an integral part of who he is.

Admittedly and at this point, exploring a general notion of community in the context of exploring the pastoral experience of *relationships* seems to muddy the waters precisely because the overall trajectory of this project is about the pastoral experience of community in the congregation. Yet such an exploration also testifies to the recursive nature of the very elements that speak from and to the pastoral experience of *community* and *relationships*.

By his own admission as Thomas moved from his first congregational call to his second call, his ability to move in and among different communities was attractive to the search committee. (1Lp11) Thus, becoming familiar with Thomas' participation in other chosen communities is the very ground from and in which to understand congregational *relationships of connection*, the experience of *conflict*, and activities of *centering*. In a general sense, community also furthers continued understanding of *who I am* in terms of *movement, open, and joy* even as it introduces the subtheme of relationships.

Underlining the importance of relationship, Thomas talks about his need for community saying, "So it's being a part of whatever *community*, you know, I plant myself." (2L40p14. See also 2L14-15, 24p16) Elsewhere he says, "I love being with

people.... I hold block parties three times a year as Block Captain and I bring out my DJ system and we party from five until ten.... Wherever I go to, I need *community*.” (2L10-12, 27p13) Thomas is planted currently within a number of communities. Elementary schools in his neighborhood and the neighborhood in which the church is located are recipients of his presence as an ongoing volunteer in the classroom. He is also President of the Lake Association in his neighborhood and is part of an ecumenical religious group in his town that sponsors an annual prayer breakfast in addition to being the co-chair of a Presbytery committee. Each Wednesday Thomas attends a neighbor Catholic Church for morning Mass. Every spring and fall he heads up to a monastic community for retreats even as he creates retreat opportunities within his congregation and Presbytery. When he is not plugging into established communities Thomas invests time and energy in people such that the experience of intentional community is created through situations of challenge and companionship.

For Thomas, the communal nature of relationships is not limited to the congregational setting of the church or even his church. Nor is the need for community limited to his own admittedly extraverted nature and high energy. (1L9-11, 34-36p4; 2L14-15p16) Rather, he recognizes and responds to others who are not a regular part of any congregational community. One such situation is the presence of death that prompts others to reach out for church community. Thomas presides at funerals of those who have no such community. Another situation is the challenge he poses for others to participate in the larger civic community for the common good. That could be the call for his neighbor to volunteer at the local elementary school. It might also be the call for his congregation to be open to folks who live in other neighborhoods and to “continue to be

with people who need us, and those who are poor, and those who are in need of what good we could give, *who we are.*” (2L2-3p22)

### Community and Relational Dynamics: Challenge and Honesty

Thomas moves with and to people, crossing community lines and blurring boundaries in his very person as he seeks to be with a plurality of people in many different ways. “I’m all about *relationships*,” says Thomas at one point. At another point he says, “I feel my ministry is all about *relationships*.” (1L31p5, 2L11p1) What does that mean for him? We have seen previously that relationships are integrally connected to *who I am*. As a pastor, Thomas notes, “it’s as much as we clergy can be about being. Being with people and in *relationship*, and listening and comforting, challenging, speaking, and the main thing is about being. B-e-i-n-g. Just to be.” (2L13-20p1) Thomas yearns after mutual knowing that matters. “My vision is that people would just *know* each other.” (His emphasis. 1L42p25) He goes on at length to describe what matters in that relational knowing of *just being*.

But again, it’s those opportunities to *be* really together, to really share, to understand where people are ... it’s the fellowship with one another that we just don’t get to do. So how can we do it better? And you know, that’s what I struggle with. If I say to Karin, ‘I know you and I want to know you better and how can I be there for you when you need me and when I?’ If we don’t know *who people are* it’s hard for us to do that. And we should be able to do that in the church, and much of this congregation are loving and caring, but we’re still not able to *be there* and that’s what irks me. (1L30fp25)

Knowing and being known are imagined as mutual, reciprocal processes in this idealized description of congregational community where the human capacity to really *be there* for one another is desired and lamented. This is the struggle: to be present to one another with love and care in a way that matters and is substantive to the people involved.

Knowing and being known presumes a certain kind of *vulnerable presence* that is curious, open, accepting, and loving. Such mutual knowledge also seems to suggest the capacity to resonate with others and attune to whatever it is that people are feeling, wanting, and needing.

Here and elsewhere Thomas expresses the desire for and lamentation of such fellowship or community. (1L40-44p11) Such struggle might also be considered an ongoing challenge for him. In (these) other words (that Thomas uses frequently), *being* present to one another is *relationship* and thus, is fellowship in the congregation. Of note and implicit in *being* and *relationship*, is the value of time and space in the process of knowing one another. A biblical image draws out the value of these implications and also perhaps describes that such struggle is the condition for the possibility of community.

Thomas notes “the Lord is my Shepherd” in Psalm Twenty-three as “a good image for me being with folk, with the sheep, willing to spend, willing to spend extra time if need be.”<sup>15</sup> (3L9p6) More specifically, the Shepherd is “there all the time for you, just *being*, walking beside you through the valley as I have the last couple of weeks through the highs and the lows, a *presence* with you wherever you go.” (3L6-8p6) The

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<sup>15</sup>In the moment of interviewing I was so surprised at this pastoral image! First, the biblical reference was not John’s Gospel but a Psalm that goes on to talk about evil and enemies, contrasting the specter of death with hospitality, perhaps even with reconciliation and forgiveness. Second, the liturgical use of Psalm 23 is most often funerals, thus providing this particular frame of reference from which to understand and interpret its meaning. Third, I thought of the prominent image of Shepherd in *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker. I didn’t grow up with this particular biblical image in the Presbyterian Church and encountered it first at Luther Seminary from my Lutheran peers. Admittedly I have a number of issues with this conceptual image of Shepherd and sheep. Implied in the image is the separate role and responsibility of the shepherd. Not only does it make clear a hierarchy of care but suggests there is an ontological difference in the pastor as a human being, something that separates the minister from the less than human sheep (and the goats). I wonder about this image in terms of the unconscious function for those in the helping profession. In this regard there is a presence of *excess* meaning that needs to be uncovered, probably in the arena of power and salvation.

pastoral capacity to move – physically, relationally and emotionally -- is inherent in this image, as is generous time and ongoing companionship for the sake of the flock.

The Shepherd accompanies others as they range through a landscape of broad places and narrow valleys. The Shepherd is on the move, actively seeking, looking and noticing, sensing and feeling, in touch with himself and others, aware of the larger diverse community and of God. Thomas is at pains to explain, “I want to point to God in Christ for people to follow so that Shepherd makes sense for me only up to that following piece because I want to point more away from me to Christ.” (2L42-45p3) He goes on to talk about sheep dogs and the congregational leadership role of elders and deacons “to also go out and encourage and visit and see and *be with* folk so that’s a nipping at the heels and that’s a *challenging* thing that I sometimes think needs to happen where the members of the church need to be *challenged*.” (2L3-8pp4) It seems that presence with others and challenge has to do with the horizon of Christ both in terms of Jesus as the risen Christ and in terms of the body of Christ as church.

In this regard then, Christ as both horizon and ground of the church contributes to a theological understanding of Thomas’ community engagement beyond the walls of the church. It seems that Jesus is not the Good Shepherd. Rather it is the presence and power of the risen Christ that Thomas connects with the Shepherd image in Psalm 23. Thus there is the suggestion of the divine Spirit at play in the relationship between Shepherd and flock that brings to mind all these notions in the prophet Ezekiel and in the biblical portrayal of David as the Shepherd King.

Thomas highlights the notion of challenging the community with the image of sheepdogs that accompany the shepherd and his flock. Challenge seems to be a relational

way of understanding intra-psychic and inter-relational movement that further makes sense of Thomas' understanding of his pastoral role in church. In that sense of challenge then, the Johannine Jesus who names himself as the Good Shepherd comes to the fore in terms of the challenge of his radical ministry. It is these cross currents just below the biblical image's surface that are at play in what is said and what is left unsaid about how the conceptual image of Shepherd functions for Thomas.<sup>16</sup> Challenge thus provides a communal contextual and theological sense of his experiences of *connecting*, *conflict*, and *centering*.

Challenge may even provide a shorthand definition of community, described as “whenever two or three are gathered there is conflict at some point.” (2L38p4) The gospel allusions to radical community and forgiveness advocated by Jesus in the midst of challenge are hard to miss. Thomas cites the “same gender marriage stuff” as a congregational example of differing opinions as a challenging time when the Session voted on that issue. (1L36p22) Thomas goes on to note,

If I don't *challenge* people or create some kind of thorns in their sides.... You know the cushions are pretty comfortable in the sanctuary but if it gets too comfortable it's not what we're about at the church because Jesus wasn't.... Comfort was a part of what he did but he stood things up. (2L10-14p5)

Deepening the importance of challenge as an intentional relational stance, Thomas also believes foundationally conflict “is more of a growing edge that has to happen in all relationships.... There will be conflict and so how do we deal with it? ...

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<sup>16</sup>I define the word *play* in this manner: play is the activity of using what is found and what is discovered in the environment with human imaginative energy that creates and opens up emotional and imaginative space in, among and between people. It is within this permeable intra-psychic and inter-relational space that such play allows for *something more* to transpire that is life-giving in its power, the energy of which is immanent and transcendent, a mixture of divine and human spirited energy. I'm indebted to Ann Belford Ulanov, W.D. Winnicott, Etienne Wenger and Mayra Rivera for the influence of their thoughts.



What are the tools that we can put together to learn to *move through* that so-called conflict to the other side?" (2L33, 36, 39p4) His words suggest conflict is constitutive of community, that growth has to do with engaging challenge and conflict, and that such movement is important to understanding relationships and community in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

Movement in conflict and challenge has to do with approaching others, not avoiding them because of rupture in relationships. The other side of conflict is peace, an emergent always changing reality because of misrecognition and misunderstanding in human interactions. Inherent in this movement toward others is the experience of openness and honesty in times of conflict and challenge. As a pastoral leader these relational attitudes are rooted in the experience of the pastor as *trustworthy*. Thomas reflects further on the voting issue of same gender marriage as an example. "I mean, I know you people and the people know me. ... I can 'get away' with a whole lot of stuff because they *trust* me. They know I'm not leading them off a cliff. They know I'm not leading them out of the denomination." (1L5-7p23) Mutual knowing that is open and honest is trustworthy and strong enough to ground shaky times of conflict and challenge.

Thomas is clear that in the experience of community "if we can't be *honest* with each we won't go far together." (3L32p10) He links honesty with challenge and being open. "If people here at [church] can't be *honest* with me and I with them, and *honesty* comes with *challenging* them, in loving them, in just being able to be, be *open* and that's *open* hearts, *open* minds, *open* lives to God is our motto here." (3L35-37p10) Mutual honesty is what nuances challenge, love, and an attitude of openness for all gatherings of people at church.

Reminiscent of his reflections on *who he is*, Thomas draws on the experience of congregational community for the junior and senior high aged youth at his church to describe honesty.

Because when you eat, laugh and cry together you know that people are being *honest* with themselves I think, and if they can cry and laugh together and see that vulnerability in each other ... from there they can then go on a mission trip together, and you know, and know each other more deeply ... they pray together ... just spending time together. (3L26-28p15)

Ordinary experiences of being together in tears and laughter at church on Sunday nights for youth group engender deeper communication and mutual knowing in the communion of prayer and in experiences beyond the bounds of church walls. The vulnerability of being honest is both personal and communal in its grounding of relationships. Thomas highlights the importance of honesty specifically and theologically in answer to a query about the experience of joy. *Joy-filled ministry* is, in fact honest relationships. (4L40-45)

But then again, when people aren't *honest* and forthright in, you know, *who they are* and *who we are* as a church.... Then it becomes, you become distrustful and resenting.... And again, it's that *honest* relationship that we're going back to, *honesty* and *who we are* as God's people. (3L2fp18)

Identity or *who we are* as a person and as one of God's people in the body of Christ seems to assume honesty. Honesty as a value grounds relationships and provides for the pastoral stance of approach and openness. As Thomas himself says, "So I try to let all the new folks know *who I am* and what I hope can continue to happen, you know, here at church as far as again, *honesty* and communication, and my door is always *open*. Come talk to me." (3L34fp20) If open communication is for the sake of honesty in community,

then what is it that allows for his ability to be open to others? It is the practical activity of *centering*.

Thomas talks frequently about his own need for *centering* in the first two interviews with the image and activity of *tune up* as helpful in relationships emerging in the third interview. His notion of *centering* is linked to his own experience of anxiety in the pastoral ministry whereas his comments about *tune up* emerge in conversation about conflict in relationships. These two themes are connected, even overlapping. In the discussion that follows, I will present first Thomas' experiences of *centering* and follow it with his experiences of *tune up*. Just as *honesty* and *challenge* made sense of his experience of *community* and *relationships*, so *centering* and *tune up* provide the experiential ground for making larger sense of the experiential knots of *connecting* and *conflict*.

### Centering and Tune Up

Thomas defines *centering* as “my walk with God,” noting that “for the last seven years I’ve been more *in tune* to my spiritual journey.”<sup>17</sup> (1L30,33p2) The language of his intentional awareness of God has to do with movement, suggesting relational growth with human and divine dimensions. While his assertion that “the piece I decided I needed was some time during the week for myself” (1L22p3) initially suggests some individual time out to do something not related intrinsically to ministry, this personal need is linked to and fleshed out in corporate relational practices in the Christian tradition. Individual commitment and practice are nested within the gathering embrace and challenge of

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<sup>17</sup>In the present interview moment the image arose within me of wandering Israelites led by God in a pillar of flame by night and a cloud by day. *Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah* is an important childhood hymn I know by memory that melodically describes this image.

community that resonate with his formative childhood experiences of relationships in his small town. There is a rhythm of movement to his spiritual journey even as there is needed rest and perspective.<sup>18</sup>

Every week Thomas attends Wednesday morning Mass at a near-by Catholic Church. In the spring and fall he has a personal three-day retreat at a Catholic monastery and a Presbyterian Church camp, respectively. Of note is his identified need to be a participant in a worshipping community on a regular basis, a place not only where Thomas is known and challenged by the proclaimed and preached Word but also where he is known by the priest and worshipping congregation and spiritually fed by the celebration of the Eucharist. Again, his need for relationships as integral to his stated sense of who he is comes through in his own words about the importance of centering activities.

They all know *who Thomas Weston is* and it's a great little *community* that I get to be a part of on Wednesdays and it does, it's that *centering* piece that gives me a chance to focus on what's important because I'm usually at high speed around here. (1L 9-11p4)

Slowing down, paying attention to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist in communal worship is restful for Thomas as an individual. In a spirit of openness he invites elders and congregational members from his congregation to join him for Wednesday Mass. And he is delighted when Catholic parishioners show up at his congregational Sunday services. There seems to be mutual regard and openness for these people to find (Sabbath) rest in worshipping together, across denominational lines of

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<sup>18</sup>The notion of *practice* in and of itself does not suggest growth in the same way as the notion of *praxis*. Refer back to my earlier distinctions of these terms in chapter one. Thomas' commitment to social justice in the context of his experiences in the formative urban congregation suggests that practice may be in service to the transformative work of liberating praxis.

separation, resonant with his commitment to participating in whatever community he plants himself within. There is also *something more* than people waiting for him there, who notice when he is absent. (3L3fp5) That something more is the presence of the Spirit in the experience of time and space with those who are gathered.

Thomas speaks with thanksgiving as he links the Spirit with “going to Mass and of re-centering” and claims that communal experience as *transformation* that then enables him to be present with and to people in a pastoral role with its attendant responsibilities. (3L12, 18p4) He characterizes the meaning of centering through worship in this way:

But so for me, a lot of times when I do settle down and do relax, and I think it happens to all of us, you know, when we do find that quiet time, the *Spirit* can speak to us when we’re not so busy with all those things. (3L38-41p4)

Individual devotions and reflection at home is also a time when Thomas senses the companionship of God’s Spirit active in his life. “So lot of times for me at night, you now, when I’m stressed out, you know, I can settle a bit and in my prayers there’s some clarity, and so I truly believe the *Spirit* is there.” (3L42-43p4) Creating intentional inner and outer space of rest through worship, individually and communally, so as to become more aware of God’s Spirit is the focus of centering. It seems to be a practice of enlarging one’s openness to self, others, and God that is dependent upon paying attention to the body, settling and slowing down, sensing and connecting with an interior space of rest that resides within oneself. The external containers of devotional prayers or weekday worship are the condition of possibility for the embodied brain to sense and relax into the inner awareness of the body. Both inner and outer sanctuaries of prayer are embodied places where the living God is encountered relationally. The fruits of centering seem to

be clarity and coming back to a proper focus of what is important, which is to say, gaining a new perspective or vantage point.

Another practice of centering is walking the labyrinth, built on church property a couple of years ago, fueled by the same impulses that propel Thomas to the restfulness of being a participant in worship. “That’s where I journey when I leave the office every once in a while. But I just go out and walk, walk the labyrinth.” (1L22p4) He confesses with a laugh, “Yeah, because I’m pretty high energy so for me to get out on the labyrinth and to slow myself down and to be able to focus and I’m walking in and letting things go.” (1L34-36p4) The shift from the temporal space of the office to an outside sacred walking path conditions his emotional body’s experience of time and space. From a posture of sitting to a place of activity that nurtures mindful and bodily awareness, physical motion is intimately connected with the emotional interplay of rest and movement for the sake of *letting things go*.

A third practice of centering is visiting congregational members. Thomas explains,

A lot of times also I’ll go out and visit a home bound member if I’m feeling stressed in some way.... But for me it’s I always get so much out of the visit ... and I think it’s just going and just knowing that I can be, be pastoral and can listen and be with them. (1L40fp4,5)

The relational focus of such visits as a centering practice becomes clearer as Thomas speaks about a recent visit in which he differentiates his experience from that of the congregational member. In some ways, his comments seem to typify the meaning of a positive relationship in the congregation and at the same time, yet in other ways, they may also be an expression of the meaning of church for him. He reflects that

For me it's allowing her to feel the church. It's allowing her to feel God's presence. Not that she doesn't, but that knowing, and I bring communion, so she is able to share the meal with me and become church. But for me, it's just going. It's allowing her to know that she's not forgotten. (1L28-33p5)

For Thomas then, centering has to do with bringing people back to themselves, to one another, and to God through the emotional activity of shared feeling in the ritual remembering that is communion. The ritual focus of the Lord's Supper becomes generous hospitality that is the church. The physical presence of feeling and remembering bodies gathered together, in other words, the body of Christ, is the relational connection that centers Thomas.

People center one another through their mutual presence and ability to be with one another in a variety of circumstances. Beyond the church, volunteering at local elementary schools is another relational setting that centers Thomas. "It brings *joy*, it brings life, it brings, you know, it *centers* me knowing that I can, I'm doing good." (2L30p16) Centering for him then is intentional relationality that defies boundaries of church in its seeking of joy, life and goodness for self and others even as such activity bodies forth the ministry imperatives of Jesus Christ. Centering seems to go beyond the personal needs of oneself to a larger sense of (inter)connection with the world.

A primary and positive relationship that centers Thomas is his marriage to Abigail. She is his rock. (3L18p18) The theological associations that come to mind with that solid image of constancy and faithfulness become clearer with his reflections. He states, "I'm very fortunate to be married to Abigail because she loves church." (3L44p8) Her active participation in the three congregations he has served has to do with that very love. Such love of church is a shared reality for them as a couple. Thomas emphasizes

how Abigail “loves, loves, loves my work, loves our work because it’s a joint piece that we are in this together but not in a way that she has to be at every event.”<sup>19</sup> (3L13-14p9)

In their marriage of 34 years, it is her solid, engaged and complementary presence in his life that allows him to be fruitful in ministry in that “journey of highs and lows ... what allows me to have, to be in community.” (1L41,43-44p1) By virtue of her being in the helping profession as a psychiatric nurse she understands and respects the many claims on his time from being with people to study time to evening meetings. Thomas further appreciates her professional work experiences as “she brings to the ministry some good background for me to go [to] if I have issues or concerns.” (1L5p2) The ongoing honest conversation at home is invaluable because

she also *centers* me on a regular basis of ‘Who is Thomas Weston?’ you know. ‘What’s going on in your life today? How can you be less anxious about this?’ and we have wonderful communication with each other. (1L508p2)

Significantly and at the same time, Thomas states, “My home life is a place that I can be at rest and at peace.” (1L1p2) This experience of home life is not static but is dynamic and life giving because of his relational commitment to “practicing what I preach” (3L34p9) in the way of open and honest communication with his wife. The congruency of who he is at home and in his pastoral work comes to the fore as he comments on how his pre-marital work with couples also prepares and enriches him to enact and embody his words in other relationships.

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<sup>19</sup>In the light of Easter lectionary texts of John’s Gospel and the Johannine pastoral letters, I wonder how their shared love of church is an implicit love of God in which both Thomas and Abigail abide and remain in relationship with God, the church body, and one another. Jesus’ image of the vine and branches is a pattern of vulnerable community open to interrelationship, mutuality, and indwelling. The vine cannot easily be distinguished from the branches so the image of interconnection is deeply intimate.



Thomas specifically views his pastoral activity of pre-marital counseling as a gift that enriches not only his marriage relationship but also his relationships within the congregation. The image he uses to discuss his pre-marital counseling with its emphasis on open and honest communication is *tune up*.

You gotta be honest with each other. You gotta share the deep crap in your lives and then, you know, it's ok to get a *tune up*, you know. We *tune up* our cars and we *tune up* our lawn mowers and snow blowers. But we get everything *tuned up*, but we don't get our relationships *tuned up*, our marriages *tuned up* ...and so it's the same thing with the church of being able to *tune up* our own lives and to be *open* with each other. (3L40-44p10, 1-2p11)

For Thomas, the meaning of tune up in light of his experience in community has to do with the activity of tune up, which is to say, in retreats. A retreat affords the space and time for his honest self-reflection. This initial retreat extends from his own life into the life of the congregation. Thomas participates in retreats with Session and in the congregational men and women's retreats. He is also the founder of clergy retreats in the Presbytery.

In either case, the pastoral focus is to get in touch with what's going on, to get "the pulse of community" and to know "where people are, what are the issues that might be coming up." (3L16,18p11) At the same time however, it is a time for parishioners to be in relationship with Thomas as the pastor with whom they "can have *open* conversation." (3L28p11) *Tuning up* seems to be a mutual two-fold activity of tuning in to oneself and tuning into others in self-reflexive listening that is open to charged issues. There is a certain resonance within, among, and between people when lives are pitched to a certain tone. In turn, the echo of that pitch may create, enlarge, and sustain an open, approachable attitude toward self and others. Retreats offer a rhythm that reminds people

of such connection, and how listening and speaking may be negotiated in ways that issue in creative expression.

The substance of tuning up occurs in ordinary relational activities of retreats: “praying and studying and laughing together.” (3L17p11) There is an orienting focus of which God is at the center. What is at stake in the activity of tuning up is the health of the relationships and the ability to approach one another, including one’s very self. Thomas defines and affirms retreats as

Any of those times that you can be together to do something other than just business. And it comes back to *relationships* you know. If you build *relationships* in the church then you’re going to have a stronger body. Sometimes maybe a more opinionated body. (3L21-24p11)

Retreats seem to be times for people to speak out openly and honestly from what they’re thinking and feeling, from the substance of what they’re tuning into in its interior and exterior dimensions, as individuals and as a gathered community. Retreats are not just for the human body (and soul) but also for the body of Christ. The strength that is gained relationally may have to do with the capacity and competency to approach others with an open attitude and lean into difference of opinion. Approaching and honoring difference of opinion as people listen to one another and speak authentically from for they are may be the condition for the possibility of creative life expression.

Thomas consciously engages in a variety of retreat situations for the sake of knowing himself and knowing others. God is the ground of that knowing and becoming wherein embodied alterity and difference are valued, seen, and heard in the open flow of conversation. The image of tune up suggests an intentional activity that is timely and ordered beyond the mechanics to a more musical image of tuning up as a choir where people are intrinsically valued as individuals rooted in communal relationships.

### Connecting and Conflict

Connections with people are *vital* for Thomas. He uses that word frequently to talk about the importance of relationships. Webster's Dictionary definition alerts us to the dimensions of this strong little word.<sup>20</sup> First, it is that which is "concerned with or necessary to maintain life" and in that regard, the second meaning highlights "vigor" or its animating force. The third meaning of vital is that it is "characteristic of life or living beings." The fourth meaning points to its essential or fundamental importance in terms of "tending to renew or refresh the living." All of these meanings are implicated in how Thomas values the intrinsic vitality of relationships in the congregation. In fact, part of the congregational mission statement notes the congregation as a worshiping body that is "growing with vision and *vitality* ... enjoying laughter and music and one another, a Christian place of belonging for all." (1L16p22)

Thomas makes clear that love is vital for his connections with people. "For me, it comes back to the love of what I do and the people I *connect* with and being able to share God's Word every week and being able to be the pastor to this congregation." (1L24-26p18. See also 1L19p8.) He goes on to say, "I mean pastoral care is just so *vital* for the congregation to know *who you are*, and especially new pastors coming in, it's so *vital* for them to see you do a funeral and how you can *be there* and just *love* the people and *walk* with them." (1L26-29p18. See also 1L40p18.) The church professes that pastors minister from who they are. It is an incarnate calling that values embodied love and relationships. Pastors' ministry of service is from their love of self, others and God. The witness of God's love is bodied forth in relationships of care that traverse the life journey of what it

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<sup>20</sup>Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "vital."

means to be human. To witness back and forth to one another is to see, greet, and touch base with one another. These are the foundational and ordinary activities that ground mutual love and care in the congregation. (1L25-29p24. See also 1L20p9f.)

Thomas highlights these relational connections by commenting on the *blooming* groups of junior and senior highs in his current congregation. These youth “are all welcomed and we know who’s coming in and who’s, you know, you know who’s missing. It’s a *community* and it is to *vital* to the life of High Point.” (3L42-43p15) Implicit in this notion of flourishing is a sense of freshness and newness that happens when teenagers gather together, not only for them but also for the church. This developing, connecting sense of growth constitutive of relationships creates a further sense of life for the larger body of Christ. “What they have found is *being together*, you know, is *vital ... being here* in the church, I mean, *being together* helps them the rest of the week and Elizabeth has been able to develop *relationships* with these kids so they want to come on Sundays.” (3L40-42p14) The church is a relational space where youth are drawn together, animated by a desire to be in the presence of one another. This seems to be a life-giving time in the moment and in the remainder of the weekdays that follow. Relationships matter in the growth and emotional development of teenagers.

Thomas comments on this youthful energy in terms of *excitement*.<sup>21</sup> He characterizes their time together as *worship*, in and through which they are building relationships that are “God-based and God-centered.” (3L18,21p15) He notes how he

saw tears and heard laughter going on which is, which I just think is so *vital ...* because when you eat, laugh and cry together you know that people are being

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<sup>21</sup>In the moment of interviewing, I wondered if excitement had to do with interpersonal energy or, in other words, the human experience of divine Spirit.

*honest* with themselves I think, and ... see that vulnerability in each other. (3L26-28p15)

This vulnerable witness back and forth to one another is honest testimony of life incarnate, an ability to be present to one's emotions and those of others, of crossing school boundaries and staying at the table together, feasting on the presence of one another. Such embodied life is communion.

The life-giving force of these specific relationships may have to do with Thomas' previously stated view that conflict, inherent in all relationships, is a growing edge that tends toward renewal. Another aspect of vitality may have to do with the situational fact that the youth groups represent many different school districts. (3L11p15. See also pages 21-24) Such diversity seems to draw the attention and presence of another generation to the liveliness of this emerging life among the youth precisely because difference is characteristic and renewing of all human life as it matures and becomes more complex.

These animated connections in and among the teenagers is formative in its draw of other people to wonder about what is happening at church. "And so what we're going to do is have some of the elders and deacons come on Sunday nights just to observe and just to come and be, to see the *excitement* of Sunday Nights." (3L44-45p15) Importantly, it is not just observing for the sake of observation, but also an opportunity for others to enter into that space of communion. "[T]hey can share that *excitement* with them, of the relationships that are being built on Sunday nights." (3L2-3p16) By participating in this time together there is the condition for the possibility of relationships and renewal then as well its continued generation in the larger church through testimony about that experience.

Thomas seems to model to the congregation such engaged and spirited participation by his commitment to building relationships with people of all ages. He includes children of all ages upfront in worship through the children's sermon. As a teaching elder he values those moments with "the little ones, the older ones. It's all of them learning here at church that we can do, we can do it together. We can *show who we are*. We can cry and laugh and work and play and sing and around the table, you know, donuts and coffee hour." (3L29-31p16) The vulnerability of witnessing to one another our identity in Christ is vital and lively, for the sake of greater, more abundant life for all people. There is the suggestion that the ordinary activities of crying and laughing, working and playing, singing and eating, have to do with sharing in spirited and life-giving energy that is authentic creative expression in and of itself while also calling forth more abundant life in other guises.

Recognizing who we are in Christ is a communal enterprise of the church that touches us as individuals. Such recognition sets us on a dynamic journey as people of God. Our identity in Christ is not a static affair nor is it merely individual. *Who we are* in Christ is both an individual and a communal witness. When misrecognition in the congregation happens, witnessing becomes a conflicted enterprise of perception and embodied relationality. In the life of the church then, conflict seems to strike at the heart of belonging and identity, and in one formative case for Thomas, the witness and testimony of linked lives as pastor and congregation. In his second congregational call, witnessing as the body of Christ meant different things for a small group of folks amidst the larger congregation and its senior pastor.

In broad strokes, the conflict that ended his second call as senior pastor was rooted in differing perceptions of congregational identity and his call to nurture the church toward a more inclusive congregational body reflective of the lower class African American people living in that downtown neighborhood. A small group of people did not perceive the church and its movement in the same way as did the call community and Thomas as the senior pastor. Race and class were at the center of the conflict for this large downtown upper middle class white congregation. After three years of ministry, this small group held secret meetings and Thomas was asked to leave.

Thomas characterized the situation as “them *really not wanting to be* who they had asked me to lead them and *help them be.*” (1L11-12p13) The conflict began as a rupture between congregational perception of *what is* and *what ought to be* as the body of Christ. In other words, the conflict was about the changing identity and witness of the church in response to its specific context. Reflecting on the formative aspects of this time, he highlighted a staff member’s inability to accept and communicate around theological differences of opinion in contrast to his ability to work with such differences. He noted

I’m pretty *open* with *who I am*. I give ‘a lot of line’ to people, you know, and it was my youth director who was at the center of secret meetings and some of it came about because she was a little more fundamental and couldn’t understand where I was on some of the more progressive issues. (1L7-11p14)

Knowing and being known across differences calls forth anxiety and, at the same time, makes clear one’s present ability to move around and work within that inner and outer energy of tension. Movement is important in the experience of anxiety because that felt experience might shut down people, closing them off to their very selves and to others. Moving around to face and open up to one another and one’s selves is important in the task of staying present to the emotional, bodily, and relational experience of

anxiety. Such movement presupposes a generous enough relational space whose openness allows for exploring, learning from, and reflecting upon the gut wisdom in its initial presentation as anxiety.<sup>22</sup>

However, “[d]oubting my gifts, *who I am*, who I was” was a process constellated within Thomas by Session asking him to leave the congregation based on those secret meetings. (1L45p12) As a pastor, his self-identification with diversity was mangled, swallowed whole by others even as he himself understood that “clergy get eaten up and spit out.” (1L37p13) Even if he had assimilated the love and nurture of his diverse first congregation in his early formation as a minister, it was hard for others in his second congregation to take in and digest the challenge of his preaching “peace and justice. I challenged the congregation. They always said they were willing to move in progressive ways, but it was Midwest progressive not East Coast progressive, the way that I was *raised* at Shady Grove Presbyterian Church.” (1L16-19p13)

The significance of his self-doubting hearkens back to his ministerial formation in his first call congregation where “they really *raised me up* to be able to see diversity, to love it, to peace and justice, you know, was a huge piece of me going in and a bigger piece coming out.” (1L28-30p11) Thomas characterized this time of doubting with words like *destroy*, *heartbreaking*, *devastating* because, a month after working out a severance package with the church, he was served with sexual misconduct papers.

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<sup>22</sup>I am intentional in my pairing of *gut* and *wisdom*, indebted to the polyvagal theory of Stephen Porges. I also cannot help but wonder what it was that so *hooked* that small group of congregational people that they could not engage in ongoing open conversation with the senior pastor and call committee about the issues that so fueled their private conversations. What were their conceptual and embedded unconscious images of race, color, and class? How did they imagine peace and justice? This situation exemplifies the importance of exploring the countertransferential field that is the congregation.



While the administrative commission's investigation of Presbytery saw no validity in the allegations of sexual misconduct, and it was seemingly unconnected to the discomfort of some folks welcoming lower class African American families into the congregation, at another level it seems to have been connected intimately to that culture and the present conflict. Thomas was very influenced by the African American culture of his first call congregation, describing how "I gave everybody a hug, everybody who comes through the line." (1L39p15) He goes on to say,

It's kind of the African American culture [at Shady Grove] anyway. It's *who people are* and what they do, and they *raised* me for ten years so it's *who I am* and what I do. I'm a hugger. In Indianapolis I hugged people and you know the Midwest. It's not a hugging place so that they, that was a piece of the charges too. (1L40-43p15)

The practice of hugging at the conclusion of worship services seems to flesh out and witness to Thomas's sense of openness and approachability to others. It is who he is. Witness is embodied love that touches and embraces one another in this congregation. In responding to his practice of hugging stated in the charges of sexual misconduct, the activity of witnessing becomes a cloud of witnesses from his present and former congregations, seminary and his small town, people who each wrote letters to testify to who Thomas Weston is. "Don't let Thomas stop hugging. That's *who he is*. That's okay. All the letters that came in support of my ministry." (1L 9-19p19. See also 1L6p16.) Who Thomas is in one context is received differently in another context.

It is testimony to his self-reflexive ability that Thomas took in the doubly charged witness of his supporters and detractors to modify his hugs from front to side ones so as to keep reaching out to touch and make connections within the body of Christ. He also speaks from that experience to other clergy personally even as it informs his work as co-

chair of the Committee on Ministry. (1L5-11p18) The continuity of who Thomas is across the differences and boundaries of contexts while at the same time being open to formative differences that continue to shape him speak to the dynamic process of becoming as a human being.

As a pastor today he continues to reflect on the operative reality of how perception equals reality in community. Thomas self-identification as *being there* for people in situations of need contradicts other perceptions of his pastoral availability in times of sickness. He admits, “it frustrates me when people think I’m too busy and don’t tell me they’re in the hospital.... That’s an image [of busyness] that some folks have of me and I’m trying to get rid of that.” (3L10-11,22-23p6) It is a complicated reality for him. In his ongoing reflection he notes,

a lot of that is because they know I’m the only pastor, and I have, you know, all the responsibility, but they, you know, also need to know that all that gets put aside when someone’s in the hospital. You know, that’s the *being* part, that’s the *Shepherd* part. (3L33-36p6)

Differing vantage points of perception in the congregation are the condition for possibility of conflict and at the same time condition individual identity and one’s experience of belonging. This pastoral terrain is lively with shifting edges of relational understanding around people’s feelings and needs that need to be negotiated honestly with care of self and other in mind.

It is against this background that Thomas reflects upon his experience of negative relationships in the congregation. Notably, he goes on to say that he leans into and approaches those very people from whom he suffers. “I overlove them, you know. I pull my love over them because, you know, if I turn them off, I’m sorry. They’re gonna get more, more love. [He sings] ‘More love to thee O God, More love to thee.’” (3L45-

46p19-1p20) This pastoral love has God as its horizon and operates on the horizontal level, person to person. Such love begs the question of its tone and intention, of its feeling and action for the other.

On the one hand, this love conjures an image of cramped relational space that may feel suffocating and death dealing to a person. On the other hand, another image also presents itself. John Calvin imagines God's (loving) goodness as an overflowing fountain of water that is life-giving to people, an image that suggests a generous space of refreshment that is delightful, perhaps joyful. The ambiguity of divine love mediated by human love is sharpened when it is the pastor who approaches people deliberately, especially in the face of those people who are at odds with them. What is the nature of pastoral power in these encounters? How might such love feel not loving to some people? These are only some of the questions that might be asked, practically and psychologically, grounded and deepened by theological commitments that may differ from person to person.<sup>23</sup>

The pastoral love of Thomas leans into pointed difference and accepts parishioner negativity with a spirit of lightness and timely inquiring after people's complaining and differences of opinion. (3L6-24p20) Thomas is clear about the necessity of approaching others for difficult conversations in a spirit of love. "I've learned over the years that what's best for me as Thomas Weston is to have those conversations whatever immediately means, at the earliest convenience in time to have them." (2L42-44p5)

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<sup>23</sup>People have conceptual and unconscious images of who God is and the nature of divine power. Mercy and judgment are part of God's righteousness understood in a variety of narratives throughout the Bible. Trust in the triune God extends these living concepts to the person of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace then become heightened realities for people of faith in terms of ordinary discourse and relationships.

Thomas seems to be aware of the importance of breathing space for others who may feel threatened by having to show up and face another person in the relational space of difficult conversations. He says,

“I think there’s different ways that other people deal with their own conflict and I have to be sensitive to how people do that. But for me, for me it has to be pretty immediate ... I struggle inwardly and it’s not that I want people to like me ... but it’s back to the piece that I need to find out from them where they are with what’s happening and how, how to move through conflict to resolution.” (2L1-7p5)

Love seems to be collaborative, willing to risk suffering and wait, to pause for reflection before engaging. Pastoral love seems to suggest the importance of the minister in taking the lead and guiding the way through such tricky human terrain.

Connection and conflict come together in these charged relationships because of Thomas’ commitment to move toward others. In this movement of approach he relies upon prayer and the presence of the Spirit. He comments that

Just because I don’t get along with somebody I’m not going to visit you because that’s, that’s not a Christ-like thing, I think. And I think after I go visit with them and have a prayer, I know in the past it’s always been very helpful for the relationship. (3L4-7p7. See also 3L44p7-2p8 and 1L39-40p18.)

Thomas is present to God’s Spirit, the other person, and himself in this charged atmosphere through the prayerful intention that “this is going to bring us closer together again so we can continue to do work in the Kingdom. So my goal is always to get people on the fringes to come back to the full knowledge of what we’re about.” (3L15-18p7) This intention is resonant with the poster that hangs prominently in his office with the biblical reminder of “peace to all God’s people who are far and those who are near.” (2L32p8) For Thomas, it seems that relational connection and conflict can coinhere and be contained in his own body and in the relational gap with a parishioner, maybe even

transformed, because of his trust in the presence of God's Spirit and in the intention of participating together in the reconciling work of God's kingdom.

The ability to hold the dynamic tension of opposites in relationships -- conflict and connection -- values the living questions of others and provides a generous spirited space in which there is timely, mutual and reciprocal challenge. Thomas describes that congregational setting.

And I say quite often that I'd rather a congregation full of 'doubting Thomases' rather than to people who are just agreeing to what's going on, and to have a congregation that is willing to question and to think and to challenge me is, I think, a sign of a healthy congregation. And that's that *opening* lives to God, *open* doors, *open* hearts. It's being *open* to the Spirit, for me to be *open* to the Spirit, to have people come in and say, 'What the hell were you saying on Sunday?' (1L22-27p21)

Back and forth dialogue across differing life experiences that inform diverse points of view is challenging yet generative activity. Questioning and thinking as individuals yet together in community opens up the hearts and minds of people to God and, it seems, to one another.

Thomas has a vision that informs this dynamic knowing of reaching out in community from the unique particularity of one's life as people come together through Bible study and on Sunday mornings. "I think as we get to know each other as a church body, we get to become closer to God and can feel. As if I feel God's presence much more when I'm with others." (1L18-20p26) Being enlivened by such feelings of differentiated closeness as the body of Christ has to do with "leaving as God's people to go out in the world to possibly be better Christian people or Christ-like in our walk." (1L39-41p26) Close connections within the congregation are for the sake of deepened relationships with one another and God. These relational connections carry over into

other times and gathering spaces. Such closeness “happens where you meet gathered around the *table* [in people’s homes] and laughing and talking and eating.... That’s what the men’s retreat is about, that’s what Deep Haven, the clergy retreat [is about]. It matters whenever we are deeper in relationship with one another and God. That’s the end.” (1L45-46p26-1-2p27) What is the *telos* of deeply human personal connection to others and to God?

The answer to this question has to do with the significance of *relationships* and *who we are* as God’s people lead us into table talk. *Table* is the final *in vivo* theme that emerges from Thomas’ experience of community in the congregation. This theme is explored in the following section.

### **Table: Communion, Eat Pray Laugh Cry**

#### Introduction

Tables are ordinary material objects around which the intention and activity of gathering become extraordinary places of gathering. Tables connect people. Tables connect ordinary meals with the bread of life and the cup of salvation. Kitchen and dining room tables, and communion tables are places that renew life and engender community, that recognize discord and repair in relationships. They are places where the condition for the possibility of comfort and conflict exist at one and the same time. It is interstitial space where friend and enemy sup together and are fed. The table is host to distinctive gathering practices and activities that are, at the same connected yet separate domains of eating and receiving, listening and responding. Ordinary gatherings at mealtimes evoke the liturgical practice of the Lord’s Supper. Communing around the Lord’s Table and praying evokes the common table activities of eating, laughing, and crying together.

One contextual experience invokes the other contextual experience. The substance of one experience brings forth the specter of the other experience. Tangible presence and ghostly absence are at play around the table, drawing upon the resonant attunement of explicit and implicit knowledge and formative processes of knowing. This is the gathering place for present recollection, past memory, and future expectation. Time and space are present here, nourished in the feeding of bodies hungry for bread and peace. This is the recursive experiential reality of gathering around tables. Thomas's comments on table experiences and imagery reflect this doubled nature that is seemingly inherent in any meaningful kind of table talk. Furthermore and in a corresponding way, this section of *in vivo* themes is the shortest section of reflection. Yet the preceding sections of *in vivo* themes and their quotations laid the table, so to speak, in that those very quotations presented some of the same material but with a differing emphasis upon *who I am* and *relationships*.<sup>24</sup> Thomas was, in fact, raised up around diverse tables. Now however, table talk highlights his leadership role and responsibilities in fostering hospitality and what it looks like in the congregation.

### Communion, Eat Pray Laugh Cry

Thomas makes clear the link between relational connections and being at the (communion) table together. "As the Shepherd I want to, again, feel that people are *connecting* with each other, *being fed* spiritually. I want to make sure everybody is named and *connected*." (1L27-29p23) He is at pains to let me know what that looks like in the

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<sup>24</sup>As I write this section, I'm aware of the sounding of a song within me, *The Open Invitation* by Bret Hesla, a congregational member. It is found in music songbooks *Worship in the Spirit of Jesus* (2004) and *No Matter Who* (2012). We sung it on Pentecost Sunday. Phrases of this liturgical song flow together: "The door is always open, the table's set and waiting. Everyone come. The Open Invitation stands. Grateful we stand at the table of peace, Spirit of Mercy revealed. Woven together, wealthy and poor, through one another we're healed. We're ordinary people. Ordinary bodies. An ordinary potluck."

congregation in terms of embodied *presence* and *movement* as the pastor, and in so doing, describes a fellowship dinner at church.

And it kinda goes to a lot of people here give me a hard time about not sitting down to a *meal* when we gather because I'm up always touching, you know, greeting people. I know a lot of pastors who, you know, for a *fellowship dinner* will say a prayer and sit down and sit there for the next forty-five minutes. *It's not me*. I am, if you want to say, I am working the room. I'm working the room, wanting everybody to be able to [connect]. I want to *connect* with everybody. (1L25-30p19. His emphasis. See also 1L35-42p19; 1L42-44p23; 1L36-45p24.)

This is Thomas' *modus operandi*: moving around and connecting with people, literally touching them as he sees and greets them. Such movement characterizes his activity during fellowship hour, clean up days at church, staff lunches, and meetings. He states clearly that his sense of personal connection with others is impacted by "all the *table* imageries in Scripture. They're people coming together to eat and we're good at that as Presbyterians or any church." (1L9-10p20) Personal connection has to do with the spiritual and ordinary activity of eating together. It is the interplay of singular bodies becoming a corporate body, each entity enlivened by eating together around different tables.<sup>25</sup>

Thomas goes on to comment, theologically and practically, about what happens at the communion table, hinting at ordinary tables.

I think, you know, Christ wants us to gather around the *table* and to, you know, to call each other by name at the *table* and to, you know, then sends us from the *table* and so how can we do that as a body? ... I mean, we gather around the *table* upstairs [in the sanctuary], but we don't know our names and we don't know who the visitors are, so for me, it's the *table*. (1L11-16p20)

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<sup>25</sup>In talking about visiting a homebound parishioner, Thomas notes, "I bring communion so she is able to share the meal with me and become church." (1L29-30)



Evocative of the Last Supper, Godly desire is at play in the notion that Christ wants us to gather together at the table in common knowledge of who we are as individual bodies and as a gathered body. Communion literally has to do with seeing who is present (and absent) and naming them for the sake of relational knowing. Human desire is also present in the lament of Thomas as he mourns the corporate reality of people not knowing one another's names. Clearly important for him is that gathering around the communion table fosters connection in, among, and between people. Such connection constitutes and creates knowing that is embodied relationality. There seems to be the suggestion of human and divine agency working together in the embodied gathering around the table.

Less clear is the intention and *telos* of the gathering unless one calls to mind the traditional words of communion with the invitation to break the bread and drink the cup in memory of Jesus. For Thomas, naming Jesus as the Christ also suggests the presence and power of the risen Christ in gathering people together to gather around the table and then sending people forth to continue Jesus' ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Implicit theologically then, is the knowing and being that flows from loving and forgiving at the *upstairs table*, meaning the *communion table* in the sanctuary. Present by biblical association with Jesus Christ and by Thomas' earlier emphasis of Shepherd is Psalm 23. A welcome table nourishes friends and enemies with the oil of gladness and the cup of joy. The Lord as Shepherd dogs the righteous in pursuit of their goodness and mercy. It is these intentions that characterize the tenor of the sheltering fold in the house of the Lord and presumably, are also the material substance of personal and communal actions on the right path. We might view these theological associations as tending the

notion that ordinary and communion tables form *who people are*. In other words, table talk and ritual is just as much about becoming as it is about knowing that has to do with doing (justice, loving mercy and walking humbly with God).

### Hospitality

Table talk and manners do not remain in that upper room of the church sanctuary or contained in the sheepfold but flow out into the community. In other words, Christ sends us out from the table into the world or, in the words of Thomas, “We want to take our *hospitality* and put it, go into the community and sometimes that’s going to look scary and to be the *stranger* out in the community.” (1L17-19p20) Hospitality becomes materially real and substantive for others as church people take their leave from Christ’s table to become the stranger that is both guest and host at other tables in the community. Such broad regard of hospitality in the larger community does indeed look scary to people who are more comfortable in remaining within familiar walls. Becoming the stranger in community positions knowing as *not-knowing* or knowing that is less secure and more tentative, dependent upon others.

Thomas continues to reflect on that movement of people around the table and in the world.

*So community*, how do we leave this *table* that we gather on Sundays and be Christ’s people in the world? And that’s always my challenge to the people, is to be Christ’s body in the world, to be *hospitable*. It is Romans 12 that marks the true Christianity, right? (1L1-4p21)

Thus far for Thomas then, the table imagery connotes New Testament hospitality practices grounded by pastoral imagery of the Hebrew Bible, as people who are and become more fully the body of Christ in the world, in and through ordinary activities of

eating, naming, and knowing. Not only is hospitality to the stranger emphasized, the passage from Romans makes clear how to live in the company of enemies and in the presence of evil by how one mindfully inhabits one's individual body "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)

The practical meaning of table hospitality in the world seems to be exemplified by the experience of children, junior, and senior high youth who cross school boundaries in forging relationships at church that are life sustaining and witnessing. Thomas notes,

So the 6<sup>th</sup> grader, the little ones, the older ones, it's all, all of them learning here at church that we can do, we can do it all together, we can show *who we are*. We can *cry* and *laugh* and *work* and *pray* and *sing* and around the *table*, you know, donuts and coffee hour. Whew. If we got rid of doughnuts and coffee hour, you know, nobody would show up at church. It's one lively, one lively *fellowship* hour between services. (3L27-32p16)

Hospitality is witness of the whole person born of generous relational space, which, in this case is in and among congregational members who gather at the communion table and around tables in fellowship hall in between worship services. It seems we show forth or *manifest who we are* when we gather together around food.<sup>26</sup> Hospitality welcomes the emotional expression of self and others as we live into our calling as a holy people of God. Thomas characterizes the meaning of gathering around the table in these words:

It's sitting around the *table* and eating, maybe that's, you know, perhaps a cup of coffee in our hands. It's the bread of life and the cup of salvation, you know. It's sitting around the *table* like Jesus did all the time, so it's, we have, tonight we're having a *potluck* so people will come and sit around and we'll have bible study after that, so it's food. (3L39-43p16)

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<sup>26</sup>Biblically I think of how God reveals who God is through the provision of food in the wilderness. This nurturing and sustaining aspect of being (created in the image and likeness of God) seems to be fleshed out in the desert code of hospitality. The widow, orphan, and stranger are the ones who are highlighted especially in this mandate. It seems that as humans who feed and nourish others, we are also and at the same time revealing ourselves not only as people of God but also as humans who are divine.

The kitchen, dining room, or fellowship hall table is just as important as the communion table in the sanctuary. One table setting informs and calls forth the other table setting. Food is vital. It seems to be material and spiritual in substance. The vitality of being together around the table laden with food has to do with how our presence with and to one another feeds us even as the potluck items also nourish us. We are bread for one another. We are that long cool drink of water for others. We feast on each other's words and wonderings about the biblical text. This is hospitality that sets the table with and for the sake of saving love in all relationships.

### Love and Diversity

The meaning of such relationships in community is exemplified in the gathering of youth on Sunday nights and experienced in the joy of honest relationships as noted in previous sections. For Thomas the influence of these relationships “boils down to loving one another ... in *relationships*, you know, you want everybody else to be kind to you, to love you, be generous to you and grateful, but then you need to be able to give that back to people too.” (3L41,44-46p22) That boiling down or concentration of love is, in other words, “the centering of love” that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. That’s kinda the image.” (3L39, 18-19p23) Mutual love is vital in these relationships and for the sake of other relationships. Recall what Thomas said to the youth about their congregational relationships with one another, cognizant that they come from differing schools and neighborhoods:

What you are experiencing here at High Point Community Church is a *vital* piece, an important piece that will help you the rest of your life. You need to continue to be together, to continue to pray together, continue to text each other, communicate, knowing full well that your time together here in this church will be something that will, you know, you might not, you might not think it at this point, but it will be a part of you ... You will remember this time together and the

*relationships* you are building here and that means caring for an person that goes to a different school. (3L4-11p15)

Caring for people means loving people beyond the shared commonality of time together at church but also in conscious and intentional awareness that life experience differs amongst one another. Mutual love does not mean only singular mutual experiences in common but also a plurality of diverse experiences unique to individuals. Love then, is centered in the reality of embodied diversity in today's world, beginning in ordinary school and youth group experiences. It is this basic diversity in school experiences for the church youth that, for Thomas, is a current foundational expression of the value of diversity, so formative for him in his first call congregation. It is what prompted him to send his boys to a public school where students came from all parts of the world. (3L33-43p21) It is manifest in his weekly participation at Mass and in his ecumenical work within the community.

Love as expressed and experienced in diverse relationships is an integral value for Thomas throughout his pastoral ministry. For him, the meaning of diversity is carried in the words and singing of the hymn "Here I am Lord," that evokes the memory of his first call congregation where, in his mind's eye, he sees "the variety of hands that is being laid on people. Whew. [Silence. Laughs.] Yep, that's why it brings tears to my eyes." (3L33-34p22) The final verse of the hymn in particular seems to speak to and from the larger *in vivo* theme of tables: "I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame. I will set a feast for them. My hand will save. Finest bread I will provide till their hearts be satisfied. I will give my life to them. Who will I send?" Past, present, and future seem to come together for Thomas in the liturgical experience of singing this hymn, expressing both love for and diversity of people even as it affirms his vocational sense of "being

given to the people in ministry.” (1L40p18) Human presence with and to one another around feasting and life-giving food is connected with the divine presence of a saving God. Human relationships of giving are linked with a sending God who provides abundantly for people.

### **Summary and Preview**

In this chapter I have presented the *in vivo* themes and their sub themes, noting that *who I am*, *relationships*, and *table* are intimately connected with one another. Going forward in my analysis then, I explore and analyze these *in vivo* themes from a cross-disciplinary perspective. The next chapters concern themselves with the researcher’s constructive interpretation of the analytical findings from theological and psychological perspectives. The nature of the discourse will be recursive, tending to the interplay of theology and psychology as it highlights the meaning of Thomas’ lived-through experience of *koinonia* in the congregation from these *in vivo* themes. Chapter Four begins with a general interpretive frame of desire that grounds and amplifies more specific theological and social scientific analysis of the narrative data. This focus is continued in Chapter Five. Looking ahead, Chapter Six concludes with tentative assertions and further questions to research.

CHAPTER FOUR  
EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE: THE FIELD OF INNER AND OUTER  
CONNECTIONS

*Our refusal to use our imagination costs us not only our imagination but reality.*  
--- Ann and Barry Ulanov

*Where otherwise words were, discoveries are flowing, unexpectedly liberated from the  
flesh of the fruit.*  
--- Rainer Maria Rilke

**Introduction**

Exploring the significance of the analytical findings is to first pause before we enter more deeply into the emerging landscape of this chapter, open not only to the vista in front of us but also to orient ourselves to how we might look at the *in vivo* themes generally. I propose the common ground of writer and readers at this point is an intentional stance of *wondering curiosity* as the gaze through which we see and feel, imagine and think, and so negotiate this terrain. We write and read through the remembering body and eyes softly open, calling to mind not just the narrative recently recounted in the previous chapter but also in touch, mindfully so, with the felt associations that gather ‘round and in us as we consider the thematic knots of one pastor’s experience of community within the congregation.

The Multiple Self and Interpretive Processes: An Invitation

As writer and readers, our individual intentional bodily awareness initially of what is happening within us generally, as we consider the narrative themes, provides

enfleshed social and spirited space, an *incarnational container* as it were, that grounds and holds the more detailed consideration and theoretical analysis of the narrative data in this and following chapters. In a sense, it is writing and reading *from the inside out*, and thus it is also an invitation to stay in the body, to abide in the flesh and so discover the bodily sensations that are emotions and feelings of what is happening in the moment.

Such inward self-awareness to the everyday tasks of reading and writing makes itself felt in bodily sensations, stirring up images that lend themselves to feelings and conceptual thoughts. Such an invitation to the reader into the *lived-through experience* of reading this written text is the beginning point of interpretation, consistent with the methodology of phenomenology and the cross-disciplinary perspective of relational integration, and resonant with the wisdom of biblical scholar J. Louis Martyn. He comments,

The use of both historical and psychological exegesis corresponds not only to the plurality of psychic levels within the reader, but also the plurality of levels within the author and the text: the process of composition and the process of reading. The author did not begin with the surface structure of the text, and the reader does not end with it.<sup>27</sup>

Martyn notes the plural character of the psyche or, in other words, the multiple self that engages and is engaged by interpretive processes of writing and reading. It is worth noting here that the subjectivities of the multiple self are formed in these quotidian interpretive tasks such that the initial invitation to the reader may be rendered more complex with the following questions. What are the felt bodily sensations and how might differing sensations give rise to a variety of images, feelings, and thoughts? What aspects

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<sup>27</sup>Martyn, Fortna, and Gaventa, *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, 367.



of the multiple self are formed and engaged in and through reading? How are these self-parts aware of one another? Why or why not? What individual and communal practices facilitate communication between these self-parts? These questions invite the reader's experience and initial exploration of countertransference even as the footnotes in the previous chapter witnessed to some aspects of the writer's experience of countertransference in the interview process.

As such, these questions acknowledge that there is a shared internal world among the written text, writer, and reader that plays with conscious and unconscious levels of lived-through experience and therefore meaning. Such communication is deep -- encompassing thoughts, feelings, images, fantasies, behaviors and as such, embraces unresolved issues, perceptions, projections, enactments and subjective experiences.<sup>28</sup> This communicative realm is the energetic field of countertransference. This then, is the context of wondering curiosity as it engages the *in vivo* themes of the previous chapter with its cross-disciplinary analysis in this and following chapters: it is the multiple self and its energies as it interacts with the written text bodied forth by the plural self of a particular writer. Writing and reading evoke the subjectivities of the self in its remembering and remembered dimensions as the interactive agency of an experiencing and observing self. In the words of psychoanalyst Stephen Mitchell,

People often experience themselves, at any given moment, as containing or being a 'self' that is complete in the present; a 'sense of self' often comes with a feeling

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<sup>28</sup>This assertion is not only a psychological stance, but is also grounded in *midrashic hospitality*, a theological notion of play with the biblical narrative that accepts and "convey[s] a plural, contextual, constructed, and dynamic vision of reality." See Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 2001), 4. See also Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2009). Therein she speaks of conscious and unconscious levels of communication that ruptures and repairs connection between God and self, the stranger within, and between the self and other through the iconic play of what is written and not written in the biblical text.

of substantiality, presence, integrity, and fullness. Yet selves change and transform continually over time; no version of self is fully present at any instant, and a single life is composed of many selves.<sup>29</sup>

Wondering curiosity is attuned to the present moment in the body, aware and resonant with what is happening internally and inter-relationally. Such awareness is mindful of how the past impinges on the present even as it evokes the future in the course of tending to ordinary tasks such as reading and writing. Therefore, this chapter and the following chapters are concerned with acknowledging and tracing the progression of insights that emerge from the body first as sensations, then as images, feelings, and thoughts. This bodily progression is the scaffolding through which theoretical lenses will be brought to bear upon the *in vivo* themes. Paying attention to the body matters so as to understand more robustly the intimate experience of *koinonia* and countertransference, rooted in the multiple self.<sup>30</sup>

The broad space of this chapter thus takes in a sweeping view of the relational landscape from a particular stance that privileges the body and its wisdom.

Fundamentally this general bodily stance acknowledges the linked activities of reading

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<sup>29</sup>Zornberg, *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus*, 5. In a related way, the significance of the awareness and formation of the subjective multiple self in and through the formative power of stories is underscored by the focus of pastoral theologian Edward P. Wimberly. See Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass: A Wiley Imprint, 1997). The significance of narrative as an integrative domain in the field of IPNB, especially in making sense of attachment patterns of relationship is well noted by Daniel Siegel. See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. See the following for the importance of narrative in sharing stories across generations. Louis J. Cozolino, *The Healthy Aging Brain: Sustaining Attachment, Attaining Wisdom*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008).

<sup>30</sup>My field notes trace daily the bodily sensations, images, emotions, feelings, and thoughts as I read and write. They also note the music, songs, photo images, memories, stories, films, and television shows that amplify or emerge around my embodied self-awareness of the day. The organizational frame of sensations, images, thoughts, and feelings (SIFT) is indebted to the field of neuroscience and in particular the work of Daniel Siegel with awareness as to how Antonio Damasio further makes a distinction between emotions and feelings.

and writing as intimately rooted in ontological and epistemological considerations, aware too that these commitments are also inherent in the *in vivo* themes. As has been stated in previous chapters, being and knowing are intrinsically related, and assume the formation of the multiple self.

We become mindful, from the inside out, in and through the emotional body that grounds our knowing that furthers our becoming. This is a provisional, contingent, and contextual process wherein our becoming contains our knowing. What is at stake in this recursive nature of the unfolding multiple self from within the emotional body is clearly stated in the words of writer Jonah Lehrer. In his commentary about the *emergent* nature of the self as revealed in the writings of author Virginia Woolf he emphasizes,

Modern neuroscience is now confirming the self Woolf believed in. We invent ourselves out of our own sensations. As Woolf anticipated, this process is controlled by the act of attention, which turns our sensory parts into a focused moment of consciousness. The fictional self -- a nebulous entity nobody can find -- is what binds these separate moments together.<sup>31</sup>

The emotional body is formed by sensory experiences, held together by the narrative self that is dependent upon intentional awareness for making meaning of lived-through experiences. The unity of the plural self is dependent upon the elaboration of focused attention or, in other words, narrative.

Our unique ongoing sensations and feelings that give rise to images and thoughts are made sense of through narrative or the stories we tell ourselves about what we are experiencing. We author and authorize our own life stories from a particular point of

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<sup>31</sup>Jonah Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 182-183.

view that emerges from the experience of our sensing, feeling body.<sup>32</sup> Coherence of narrative assumes a certain perspective or storyline. However, coherence does not mean a static perspective nor does it mean a singular trajectory. Coherence can be flexible and generous enough for narrative to be complex, even ambiguous. Just so, a certain perspective and narrative coherence interpretively frames this exploration of our complex personhood in its mindful attention about what emerged from the body of interview data as it interacted with the bodily presence of this writer. The general narrative point of view that emerged is the phenomenon of *desire*.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Wondering Curiosity: Desire as Interpretive Framework***

The complexity that is our emotional body may best be explored through the human experience of desire.<sup>34</sup> Desire celebrates embodied human nature. Mindful attention to one's emotional bodily responses as writer and readers puts us in the realm of feelings and needs, and thus of desire and imagination. As a narrative theme that interprets the sensing, feeling, and imaging body desire has mostly been understood in and through the domain of western Christian theology, influenced by Platonic thought that splits human nature into body and soul. Traditionally then, desire has been framed in negative emphases of "lack, deficiency, loss, transgression, and guilt" rather than

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<sup>32</sup>Insights from interpersonal neurobiology, analytical psychology and pastoral theology affirm the formative importance of narrative. See writings by Daniel J. Siegel, Edward P. Wimberly, David J. Wallin, Herbert Anderson, and Christie Cozad Neuger.

<sup>33</sup>F. LeRon Shults and Jan-Olav Henriksen, eds., *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), viii. See also the chapter therein by F. LeRon Shults and titled "De-Oedipalizing Theology: Desire, Difference, and Deleuze."

<sup>34</sup>Cooper-White draws upon the notion of desire in a slightly different way. In her relational understanding of God she posits and describes God as *incarnational desire*. See Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective*, 86-94.

exploring its “fullness, being, gift, creativity, and joy.”<sup>35</sup> Recent theologians however, are re-working the notion of desire, explaining

This celebration [of desire] is motivated in part from engagement with late modern philosophic developments (especially feminism and postcolonialism) and scientific discoveries (especially in neuroscience and philosophy). We are not saved from bodily experiences, but in and through them.<sup>36</sup>

Following up on this introductory statement in a collection of essays about desire, another theologian comments,

A common denominator between many of these theoretical movements, despite their very strong disagreements, is that desire is not incidental to human thought or action but a prominent feature of human existence as such. Take away desire and you take away what makes us into what we are.<sup>37</sup>

This group of theologians affirms desire as constitutive of human nature that is pre-subjective and thus, desire is understood as *given* with the body and the world. Notably, they view the bodily experience as privileged in such a way that desire is understood not as need or scarcity<sup>38</sup> but rather, that desire is a gift given prior to the constitution of personal subjectivity and therefore, the ability to self-reflect. At this point, it is helpful to unpack what is being asserted here as well as trace some of its implications precisely because this recently emerging theological perspective renders more complex

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<sup>35</sup>Shults and Henriksen, *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology*.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ola Sigurdson, “The Passion of Christ: On the Social Production of Desire,” in *Saving Desire: The Seduction of Christian Theology*, ed. F. LeRon Shults and Jan-Olav Henriksen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 33.

<sup>38</sup>“...we cannot and should not talk about this desire as resulting exclusively from either lack or need. Countering modern critics of religion, we can thus say that God is more than we need, because the relationship with God relates us to something that might be indicated as a surplus compared to the kind of reality that we can constitute for and by ourselves and that can be defined solely by our needs. Hence, God transcends both our needs and our potential for agency, but without necessarily negating them.” Henriksen, “Desire: Gift and Giving,” 15-16.

our consideration of desire from the perspective of needs and feelings. It thus provides for a more detailed understanding of subjectivity and thus, our understanding of relational dynamics and the multiple self.

Theologian Jan-Olav Henriksen speaks about this *givenness* of desire that in turn influences the emergence of our ability to relate to self and, as we continue to mature, conditions our responsiveness to the ongoing *gift* of desire as we make our way together in the world as God's beloved creatures.

Desire is integrated in my embodied direction toward the world and toward myself, a moment in my being-in-the-world. Desire emerges spontaneously in my experience of the world of/as the other and out of pre-thematic emotional being in the world. Desire is not primarily an element in consciousness, to be appropriated intellectually; rather, it exists in the world as the world is given with my body and its perception. This is the reason we say that it is the other who stirs my desire. Hence, it is not only the case that I desire; desire is also what happens to me.<sup>39</sup>

The given bodily state and expression of desire open us up to our self and to the world, connecting us to what is important in ongoing ways. Desire so defined is prior to any conscious control of wants and feelings, needs and wishes. It is a passive state of reception in the early stages of our human growth. As we mature, the unsatisfied nature of desire for what is good and pleasurable keeps us engaged as participants in the world.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 2. The inherent desire of the body may be likened to the enlivened body that is emphasized in the work of W.D Winnicott and furthered in the work of Ann Belford Ulanov. He speaks of *tissue aliveness* and she speaks of *enlivening* and *deadening emotions*. The outside and inner experience of desire seems congruent with or at least evocative of the transcendent and immanent experiences of God. See also the following particular chapter: Tara Brach, "Radical Acceptance of Desire: Awakening to the Source of Longing," in *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2003).

<sup>40</sup>This dynamic of desire is best expressed in a song we sing at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. Written by Bret Hesla and found in *Worship in the Spirit of Jesus* (2004), the lyrics are: "Give us our daily bread ... may we be satisfied; May we satisfied ... with only what we need; Never be satisfied ... if any be denied; Passing the gift along ... each adding as we can; Five thousand will be fed ... trusting there be enough." Liturgically the unsatisfied nature of desire that is provisionally and contingently met also calls to mind the Passover celebration with the song *Dayenu*.

In our continued human development, the acquisition of language allows us to relate further to the good through conscious reflection and engaged imagination with its representations. We might consider this restless lack of satisfaction as a dynamic of being created in the image and likeness of God, which is to say that honoring and inhabiting the call to be stewards in and for creation draws upon the intrinsic energy of desire.

Desire at this point functions dialectically in relation to subjectivity. Conscious reflection upon perceived objects and subjects of desire allows humans to open up or close down in relation to the world, conditioning our experience of subjectivity. In this sense we are active agents whose will and engaged participation in the world discloses the desires that shape our subjectivities. “By acting on desires, we become someone specific – both to ourselves and to others. Hence, if we do not relate to our desires in one way or another, we lose some of our chances for becoming a self for ourselves as well as for others.”<sup>41</sup>

We are also acted upon by desires external to us whose very transcendence is a reminder of the limits to human control and agency. Desires can disrupt and destabilize our sense of self and world, serving as a reminder that fundamentally desire “is far more than what is in our awareness of the present world; it is an openness to something new, something else, something that represents a surplus compared to what is presently

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<sup>41</sup>Henriksen, “Desire: Gift and Giving,” 10. The opening and closing dynamic of desires links with the experience of emotions as enlivening and deadening in the subjective formation of people. Elaborating upon the psychological mechanisms of this interplay, see the writings of W.D. Winnicott and Ann Belford Ulanov. Of particular interest is Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*. From a feminist perspective on subjectivity with regard to pastoral care implications, see Dunlap, “Discourse Theology and Pastoral Theology.” See also chapter six, *Prayer and Desire*, in Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

given.”<sup>42</sup> These relational dynamics of desire form and re-form our ordinary life experience of time and finitude. The future impinges on our present, the transcendent (infinite) other breaks into our finite creaturely world. Growth’s progression is interrupted and re-ordered by newness that is not a repetition of sameness. Alterity presents itself as an ever-emergent material difference of identity. Complexity inheres in the dynamics of desire. It is this ongoing dynamic of which we become aware -- in mindful reflection or in the ordinary back and forth conversation with others -- of our feelings and needs.

#### The Realm of Desire and Imagination: Feelings and Needs

Desire may be the gift and ground of our relational being. However, desire’s very *givenness* is stirred to new life and repeatedly, as we become aware of our feelings and needs. The interplay of our observing and experiencing self in mindfulness allows us to become aware of just how interconnected bodily sensations and feelings, images and thoughts are as they relate to resident needs within the multiple self. Observation about what is happening in the moment as it affects our well-being gives rise to awareness of

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<sup>42</sup>Henriksen, “Desire: Gift and Giving,” 16. Symbolic images re-present our desires. In the psychoanalytical tradition, the iconic play of given and found subjective and objective object-images creates and keeps opening the transitional space that is, for example, exemplified in ritual worship. In such emerging openness there is the condition for the possibility of transcendent newness. See Ann Belford Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). In the tradition of learning theories Etienne Wenger addresses liminal space created by engagement of newcomers and oldtimers around lived questions and reification processes, and James E. Loder speaks of orienting openness in his five-fold learning theory. See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See Loder, *The Transforming Moment*. For a mapping of dynamic learning theories that is sensitive to the dynamics of desire, see Meek, *Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology*. For a theology that explores the surplus of God’s desire in terms of divine weak power and human response of gratitude that continues to open up to this dance, see Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event*. See Appendix A for the poem *What We Want* by Linda Pastan. Cited in Geri Giebel Chavis and Lila Elizabeth Weisberger, eds., *The Healing Fountain: Poetry for Life’s Journey* (St. Cloud, MN: North Star Press of St. Cloud, Inc., 2003), 27-28.



our feelings. Feelings express a combination of emotional states and physical sensations that lead us to consider whether our needs are being met or not. From this perspective, human needs intrinsically are values and thus, desires that create our feelings.<sup>43</sup> So the recursive movement between feelings and needs within the emotional body seeds the imagination with felt dimensions of desire. Images may be considered an intimate link to the inchoate expressions of bodily sensations and feelings as they relate to needs or, in other words, subjects and objects of desire.

The sensate body with its feelings and emotional wisdom is an instinctive guide as we wonder imaginatively about and reach for satisfaction, fulfillment even, in the relational experience of tending to our needs. The stance of wondering curiosity then is grounded fundamentally in the experience of desire where bodily sensations and images, feelings and thought come together in our individual and communal incarnational reality. Desire with its longing is rooted in the functions of emotions in human life. Inquiring after desire is to trace the relational movement of its energy in its enlivening aspects. In the words of one neuroscientist, “Emotions have healing power because they are active regulators of vitality in movement and the primary meditators of social life. From infancy, emotions protect and sustain the mobile embodied spirit and oppose stress. And they do so in relationships between persons who share purposes and interests intimately.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Non-Violent Communication (NVC) traces awareness of needs as emergent from openness to feeling one’s feelings. Naming those feelings and identifying how those feelings connect to unmet needs becomes a way to ground requests for concrete actions for the sake of meeting needs and thus, enhancing well-being. See Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, 2nd ed. (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>44</sup>Colwyn Trevarthen, “The Functions of Emotion in Infancy: The Regulation and Communication of Rhythm, Sympathy, and Meaning in Human Development,” in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development, and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion

Desire is laden with emotion, objectively and subjectively moving us into lively engagement with that for which we long. I propose that desire enables us to think about the charged affect of emotions as that of yearning and longing, resident in and among people. Desire is a way to track relational energy that flows in and among people, to trace its intimate forms of love and hate in the interdependent connections that bind us to one another.<sup>45</sup>

Desire is energy that is generated, contained, and released within the body and within the space of relationships. There are objects and subjects of desire that inform our longing, that guide our dreaming and living, that continue to create the inner and outer space of desire. Desire is energy with which to play, and so it can be thwarted, tamped down and muted in its living power, becoming a mere flicker, a dying flame when relational patterns of attachment are less secure and stable. Desire can also blaze up, energizing bodies and relationships with its lively spirit in the presence of secure and trusting relationships.<sup>46</sup> Desire therefore, can be constructive and destructive in its power, enabling life and death, dependent upon one's personal response and responsibility to the anxiety that is stirred by desire.<sup>47</sup>

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Solomon, *The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology*, edited by PhD Allan N. Schore, Series Editor (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 55.

<sup>45</sup>For a psychological perspective see Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*. For a theological viewpoint see Greider, *Reckoning with Aggression: Theology, Violence, and Vitality*. For a narrative about the interconnections of love and hate as intrinsic to desire, see Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew. And the Heart of the Middle East* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2006).

<sup>46</sup>The interface of analytical psychology, object relations theory, and attachment theory come together at this point. Also important is the neuroscience use of attachment theory, especially in the integration of domains, mindsight, and the practice of mindfulness. See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*.

<sup>47</sup>Interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel J. Siegel speaks about the spiritual and physiological dimensions of the experience of anxiety through the related concepts of the *window of tolerance* and *planes of possibility*. He goes on to elucidate the power of *presence, attunement, resonance, trust* and *truth* in

The significance of this proposal of *desire* and *wondering curiosity* has to do with the method of relational integration of cross disciplinary dialogue as it provides the framework for interpretation of the narrative data that is the focus of the following chapters. Relational integration is hospitable to the liveliness of emotion that moves in and among the people who are passionate about their distinctive disciplines. Having earlier recognized the role of anxiety present in people who are passionate about differing bodies of theoretical material, it is important to consider the role of desire in relational conversation across disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, desire speaks from and to the lived-through experience of the countertransferential dynamics inherent in the method and methodology of phenomenology.

#### Desire and Emotional Body Wisdom

Human desire is directional in its energy, which is to say that there is a chosen preference among objects or subjects in a given context that evoke human yearning on its way to satisfied need. There is some emotional instinct that drives the body toward meeting its felt and experienced need. Foundationally, and for evolutionary survival, the instinctive drives of hunger and thirst of a baby were met within a maternal embrace that situated infant and mother face-to-face so as to deepen the bonds of attachment.

Moreover and in healthy maternal holding that is attentive and loving, the intimate skin-to-skin contact provides the infant with the liveliness of the mother's body that is the

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cultivating an open embodied mind. These concepts enliven not only his focus upon mindful awareness but invigorate the classics of meditation published in the 1980s. See Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Your Life to the Awareness of God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1987). Stephen Levine, *Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1982). Stephen Levine, *Healing into Life and Death* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1987). Contemporary to and resonant with Siegel's work is that of Tara Brach. See Tara Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha* (New York: Bantam Dell 2003).

condition for the possibility of the infant's experience of its own bodily aliveness and fosters its own innate aggressive energies of omnipotence.<sup>48</sup> The infant needs years of attuned and responsive care by a loving person, reliant upon the adult mind and embodied brain, because of its vulnerable dependence throughout its development. From this intimate beginning of mother and child, human desire instinctually drives toward the object or subject of desire with the goal of satisfying its needs, not only for the sake of human survival, but also for wholeness and human flourishing.<sup>49</sup>

In the course of personal human development our intrinsic human needs are not always met in a timely or marked way. We learn to suffer the disappointment of needs not satisfied now, but perhaps later, maybe only in part, or not at all. We learn that joy of satisfaction is matched with sorrow over lack of desired fulfillment. The emotions of joy and sorrow present in the experience of desire give way to the feeling of yearning in the relational play of what is given and what is found, what is present and what is absent as we move towards objects and subjects of desire.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Object relation and analytical psychology theorists as well as neuroscientists and a biblical theologian recognize the important of infant aggression and omnipotence in the relational development of human beings as foundational to the formation of other secure attachments and the ability to negotiate well these ambiguous but vital relationships. Such unsettled relationships are characterized by contingency, provisionality, and contextuality. See the writings of D.W. Winnicott, Louis Cozolino, Daniel J. Siegel, Antonio Damasio, David J. Wallin, Ann Belford Ulanov, and Walter Brueggemann.

<sup>49</sup>See Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*. See also Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*.

<sup>50</sup>See Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. These intra-psychic and inter-relational dynamics of sorrow and joy are given flesh and bone in Korean theology through the concepts of *han* and *jeong*. W. Anne Joh writes, "According to Spivak, in still other words that are yet pointers to *jeong*, the space between the self and other is where the *noncoercive rearrangement of desire* can take place. This noncoercive rearrangement of desires is a 'suspending of oneself into the text of the other,,, It is not the loss of will ... but a training from the distant other *without guarantees*.' For those who live through the practice and embodiment of *jeong*, they do so fully knowing there are no guarantees." See W. Anne Joh, "Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love," in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York, NY: Fordham

From the ever shifting self-states of feelings that signal needs there emerges longings that seek fulfillment in people, objects, and experiences. This yearning is intrapsychic and inter-relational and as such, can create a larger relational field that is alive with energy. This is an imaginative realm of possibility, a co-constructed relational *third space* that is transitional, that we feel in our own bodies and in the shared space among us. This transitional space of yearning is full of movement, positive and negative in its charged energy. Within such a relational space we can move around, pushed and pulled in different directions by this shared energy even as we are aware of our individual bodily stirrings, choosing how to respond. The space may be narrowed or enlarged, rigid or generous, dependent upon how the bodily sensations are imagined, conceptualized as feelings and thoughts, and extended into action and behavior. Many such intersubjective spaces carry us in our life journey, each spatial relationship creating different patterns of attachment that connect us to our ever emerging self, others, even to God.<sup>51</sup>

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University Press, 2011), 187. See also Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Poling and Kim, *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and Salim*. Womanist thought is also implicated in this play of lament and celebration. The following such work draws upon the thought of Poling and Kim. See Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: The Trinity from a Womanist Perspective*.

<sup>51</sup>The creation and negotiation of shared space fleshes out discourse theory in relation to human subjectivities. See Kwon, "Toward a Theological Anthropology of Resistance: Korean American Women's Ambivalent Subjectivity, "Third Space," and Religious Education." Sophia Park, "Pastoral Care for the 1.5 Generation: In-between Space as the "New" Cultural Space," in *Women out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010). From a psychoanalytical perspective see Ulanov, *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality*. Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*. The aforementioned books are indebted to the observations and insights of D.W. Winnicott. See Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*. Winnicott, Shepherd, and Davis, *D.W. Winnicott: Psycho-Analytic Explorations*. The *geopolitical hermeneutics* of postcolonial biblical theorists is intimately concerned with conceptualizing space in ways that connect with and even challenge other disciplines. Kwok Pui-lan asserts the necessity of diverse interpretive ways in terms of theorizing space as it relates to geography, naming "physical space, imaginary space, narration of space, representation of geography, and the intersection of space and time. The reading of space is further inflected through race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation." See Kwok Pui-lan, "Geopolitical Hermeneutics," in *Soundings in Cultural Criticism: Perspectives and Methods in*

As humans, we have a certain freedom to respond and make choices around objects and subjects of desire. Think Eve and the apple in the Garden of Eden. Think infant child as it begins to edge out beyond the parental embrace to play with a beloved toy. Recall the lover in the Song of Songs and the ritual framing of Shabbat prayers. Remember Jesus and the beachside breakfast of fish with his disciples that evoke institutional words of the Lord's Supper. Desire as an instinctive energy engages not only the individual body but also gathers and enlivens a corporate body to make sense of its immanent ecstatic sensations, to hold individual experience in tension with the transcendent dimensions of the Spirited energy, ultimately and even intimately, to make meaning and find purpose in life. This is so, even when desires are not life-giving but death-dealing or, when desires are thwarted and negated. Still the energy remains and demands attention.<sup>52</sup>

Nowhere is this insistent energy more clear than in dependencies denied and covered over in national discourse that operates within psychic and social spaces. Desires lie hidden yet are active in the ideology of hatred that flows between sites of sovereign control and sites of resistance. The ambivalent knowing of hatred may be considered a *return of the repressed* or the *uncanny feeling* on a large socio-economic and political

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*Culture, Power, and Identity in the New Testament*, ed. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Greg Carey (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 171.

<sup>52</sup>These assertions find resonance in conversation with others who think provocatively about love and bodies. "In addition to a theological construction of planetary love based in memory, lament, and refusal to fetishize the Other, do we need to assert a theological quality of love that also runs counter to all three, if only to remind ourselves of the reality of those desires that are indeed grounded in the eventful (and often forgetful) *presence and processes* of bodies? If not, what do we do with the actual desires that flow through and connect bodies against all propriety, including postcolonial and feminist proprieties?" See Laurel C. Schneider, "The Love We Cannot Want: A Response to Kwok Pui-Lan," in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2011), 50.

scale.<sup>53</sup> This larger psychic and social world influences our own bodily experience of self and other, directs our gaze, positions our desires, determines and negotiates boundaries of relationship. “The understanding of hatred as a site of power relations underscores interiority and exteriority, desires and fears, intimacy and anxiety, approaching and avoiding the friend and enemy and dependencies between victims and victimizers in an unequal way.”<sup>54</sup> This is the landscape that lies east of Eden and is seemingly the terrain of human hearts as well. We live divided lives. We experience vulnerability and violence in a postcolonial world where Empire dictates complex and mutable flows of power.

### Desire and the Bible

The Bible has something to say about human desire, which is divine, because the formation of ordinary human lives is intimately connected with God’s desires. So do the practices of worship speak -- where narrative interpretation and ritual are at play in communal liturgical spaces. Even our own lives speak volumes as we consider the places and stories, people and situations that contextualize, evoke, and comment upon the desires that we spiritedly pursue with a holy vengeance. Pastoral theologian Brita Gill-

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<sup>53</sup>For an American perspective on *uncanny feeling* that haunts and draws upon the legacy of slavery, see Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. See also Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: A Plume Book, 1987). Using the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to talk about the return of the repressed, see also Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*. Drawing upon the dictatorship in Argentina for the legacy of ghostly haunting, see Susana Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the "Dirty War"*, Palgrave Studies in Oral History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Towards understanding how these conceptual realities are enacted in liturgy see Dirk G. Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010). *Haunting* is resonant in political theologies of liberation and also in postcolonial studies. Both domains question and explore history and its narration. In so doing “[t]his cultural practice entails not merely a different reading or appropriation of history but an investigation of the very dynamics of remembrance: the possibilities and limits of a relation to the past and the responsibilities bestowed by an encounter with its ghosts.” See Mayra Rivera, “Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost,” in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2011), 119.

<sup>54</sup>Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*, 5.

Austern states, “Desire draws us into who we really are.”<sup>55</sup> She goes on to quote Sebastian Moore, “Real desire, what I really want and have always wanted, is to be more and more myself in the mystery which I am. . . . Desire is love trying to happen. It is the love that permeates all the universe, trying to happen in me.”<sup>56</sup> Biblical theologian Carey Ellen Walsh reminds us, “Desire is a liminal dance between the experienced and known out beyond the self’s boundary toward another. That is, it is as much a yearning for the other as it is a yearning to transcend oneself.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, desire has to do with personhood and its meaning, in its active furthering of the condition of possibility for transformation in the historical context of freedom. The Bible, when chosen as a companion in this endeavor, interprets us even as we interpret its texts.

As people of faith we are marked by biblical promises and hopes that are not yet consummated. In our waiting between what is and what ought to be we learn to live with the yearning of unfulfilled desire. And so theology, as a thoughtful history of biblical and communal interpretation over the centuries, is also marked by desire. In fact, systematic theologian Wendy Farley reminds us “that theology is not primarily texts but a kind of desire that employs thought as a religious practice.”<sup>58</sup> Desire then, is a thread we follow diligently in theological reflection and conversation. In so doing, the primacy of the body comes to the fore.

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<sup>55</sup>Brita L. Gill-Austern, “She Who Desires: The Transformative Power of Subjectivity in Women’s Psychological and Spiritual Experience,” in *Psyche and Spirit: Dialectics of Transformation*, ed. W.W. Meissner and Chris R. Schlauch (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003), 154.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>57</sup>Carey Ellen Walsh, *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 169.

<sup>58</sup>Wendy Farley, *The Wounding and Healing of Desire: Weaving Heaven and Earth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), xii.



In keeping with that view of theology and significant for my purposes is an innovative interpretation of the self-emptying of Christ (*kenosis*) in Philippians 2, read through longing desire. Such a reading privileges and describes thickly the intersecting realities of space and body, presence and absence, love and longing, joy and sorrow.<sup>59</sup> Biblical scholar David Fredrickson plays with an interpretive reading of bodily longing, thereby engaging dominant Protestant interpreters such as Karl Barth who view the Christ Hymn through readings of divine dominance and sovereignty, and thus the importance of responsive obedience in the mindful *attitude* of self-limitation. Significantly, desire or longing, roots moral agency in the suffering *body* whereas the moral agency of obedience assumes a *self* that can be controlled, meaning that there is enough social freedom of privilege to self-limit. It is from this mindful perspective that Frederickson's comments about the kenotic body are significant. He writes,

Moreover, since self-emptying as humble submission is more a state of mind and less an action, here again the incarnate Christ's body disappears from view just as in the case when *kenosis* starts from the position of the pre-incarnate Word. What we are left with is Jesus' exemplary attitude of self-abnegation and subservience,

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<sup>59</sup>Any biblical interpretation is a construal of history that implicates authority and memory in specific ways. In this regard Mayra Rivera warns us. "Remembrance is threatened by the tendency to objectify the past or construe history as a foundation of reified identities and hypercertainties." She further draws upon Spivak's notion of prayer in her injunction against re-presenting such authoritative certainty of the past. Spivak "proposes imagining the relation to the past as a 'ghostly agency of haunting.' She further invites us to 'pray to be haunted' by the others's 'slight ghosts'.... A prayer implies the possibility of a response from the Other – a response that is never within control of the one who prays. Thus, prayer is not a pure origin, but simultaneously a witness to having been called – haunted – and a expression of hope for something still to come." Fredrickson's interpretive reading of the Christ Hymn is in line with these emphases. He enacts haunting emphases, meaning in her words, that "[r]emaining faithful to 'dangerous memories' entails acknowledging their plurality and irreducible ambiguity. Theology must not obliterate uncertainties of the constructive theological processes – or its risks. Witness, we must ever remind ourselves is the result of being haunted by spirits, rather than possessing them." See Rivera, "Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost," 122-123, 133.

an ironic loss of physicality, since it is, after all, with the taking on of human flesh that Christ Jesus begins the story in the first place.<sup>60</sup>

Fredrickson's reading is self-conscious about the recursive nature of interpretation and its impact on readers: the manner in which the apostle Paul is viewed is the manner in which Christology is viewed and as such, the reverse is also true in its formative shaping of written material and thus, material bodies.

Fredrickson, through epistolary theory, illustrates that the letter bodies forth the fragile yet *complex presence* of Paul that is, at the same time, experienced as *grief stricken absence* by the Philippian community. Paul longs after Jesus Christ and the community of Philippi, separated by distance from both desired loves, even as the church in its communal love also experiences longing for the presence of Jesus Christ and Paul. The reader of the epistle is invited into that ambiguous relational space of longing desire and the hope of communion created by the passionate play of presence and absence, characteristic of human and divine love. This iconic play between desired and desiring loves, both human and divine, creates a generous space of hospitality that is beloved community.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See David E. Fredrickson, *Eros and the Christ: Longing and Envy in Paul's Christology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 64.

<sup>61</sup>My proposal also recognizes from the perspective of object relations theory that such iconic play opens up space for the transcendent to emerge. Furthermore and as understood by pastoral theologian Elaine L. Graham, this is the *disclosive* work of pastoral practice that opens up humans to the otherness and agency of the divine. Communities whose play shapes awareness of human finitude and limitations live in the resonant truth that "the Divine dimension of human experience and practice rests in alterity, provisionality and self-abandonment." See Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1996), 207. In light of iconic play that is revelatory, this question presents itself. A digression perhaps, but nonetheless appropriate in the affirmation of a responsive self-giving God who loves: are we humans the transitional objects of play with regard to God? Might not our communities created by communion be a substantially real object that point to the body of Christ -- a provisional presence, an ambiguous mixture of opposites -- that holds open a place for God's continued agency until "God is all in all"? How might this iconic play, multiplied throughout time

My proposal recognizes the reality that concretizing the objects of desire may limit the growth and emergence of personhood. Thus there is an inherent sense of absence and presence in the healthy maturation of desire as agency. In a related claim, the subjects of desire need to discern and grow in their ability to play with the subjective- and objective-objects of desire for the sake of enlarging and opening the inner imaginative space that nurtures fruitful relationship to the self and others, even to God.<sup>62</sup> Such imaginative play has to do with one's ability to be present to the anxiety of *not-knowing* and ambiguity, trusting that objective newness emerges from outside of oneself, in this generous space that fosters openness to self and to others.<sup>63</sup>

This desire assumes love, not fearful obedience; mutuality, not hierarchy; ecstasy, not obligation; self-giving, not moral performance. It also engenders faithfulness, joyful commitment, attention, and attentiveness. Desire further assumes a divine de-centering and re-centering of the self, an interior spaciousness that is met by an exterior welcome of generous hospitality by the transcendent God. There is room enough for others to indwell

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and space condition the alterity, provisionality, and self-abandonment of a God whose yearning desire seeks communion with beloved humanity?

<sup>62</sup>These claims relate to Christian Smith's claims of three different realities: dependent subjective, dependent objective, and independent objective realities. See Smith, *What Is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up*.

<sup>63</sup>The importance of desire and the Christ Hymn in relation to the iconic play of objective and subjective objects is extended by a reference noted by Marie T. Hoffman in her book, quoting Loewald on internalization. He writes: "The death of a love object, or the more or less permanent separation from a love object, is the occasion for mourning and internalization. The unconscious and conscious experiences of threats to one's existence as an individual, heightened by the increasing awareness of one's own death, is, I believe, intimately connected with the phenomenon of internalization. It seems significant that with the advent of Christianity, initiating the greatest intensification of internalization in Western civilization, the death of God as incarnated in Christ moves into the center of religious experiences. Christ is not only the ultimate love object which the believer loses as an external object and regains by identification with Him as an ego ideal, He is, in His passion and sacrificial death, the exemplification of complete internalization and sublimation of all earthly relationships and needs." Marie T. Hoffman, *Toward Mutual Recognition: Relational Psychoanalysis and the Christian Narrative*, Relational Perspective Book Series 48, edited by Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011), 181.

and inform the self, without domination or assimilation.<sup>64</sup> Love and forgiveness, faithfulness and long-suffering bodily desire are acknowledged at the center of human response to divine love and regard. *Kenosis* then, assumes importance if understood from longing desire.

The Christ Hymn may be understood as an invitation and intensification of divine and human longing for communion that is rooted in bodily manifestations of desire; that takes seriously the becoming of intersubjective selves “through equal, mutual, and desiring relationships with other selves;” that knows the suffering pain of absence in relational separation and distance; that values the felt gut wisdom of emotions; that construes the manner of church leadership as a longing for Christ and community, experienced as communion both human and divine; finally, that views the faithfulness of justice as love.<sup>65</sup> All of these affirmations emerge from acknowledgement of a body that suffers physically from the longing desire for the beloved and beloved community.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>See also Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996). The fourfold movement of embrace and the renewed covenant are other spatial containers created by and for relationship that is both vertical and horizontal, which further assume alterity as constitutive of identity. This emphasis can be put into practice that supports praxis. People can become aware of and strengthen their own (relational) agency toward embrace (of others) by mindfulness meditation. This is just one suggestion. Another practice or two is suggested by the research findings from interviews with Thomas. He worships and prays consistently with a differing faith tradition; he walks the labyrinth whenever he needs clarity and a shift in mental perspective; and he ends his days with nightly devotions that are a time of self-examination and reflection. Common to prayer and meditation is intentional awareness. The religious significance of attention has been ignored in terms of how this domain has inquired after imaginative processes. See in particular Carol Zaleski, “Attending to Attention,” in *Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee, Wayne Proudfoot, and Albert Blackwell (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

<sup>65</sup>Fredrickson, *Eros and the Christ: Longing and Envy in Paul's Christology*, 38.

<sup>66</sup>The ability to be aware of and to feel bodily states and emotions is *interoception* in the parlance of interpersonal neurobiology. The aforementioned affirmations that emerge from desire are significant in their dimension of bodily sensation and feeling. The challenge is to inhabit the body in its feeling self-awareness, particularly the felt manifestations of desire. See chapter two in Fogel, *Body Sense: The Science and Practice of Embodied Self-Awareness*.

Traditionally the Christ Hymn has been drawn upon to further individual spiritual growth. Innovating a differing interpretation of relationality rooted in physical experiences of longing desire moves the Christian narrative to appreciate the insights of relational psychoanalysis and interpersonal neurobiology. Furthermore, this interpretation is passionate about longing and divinity as it re-works notions of power and dominance and thus highlights the relational emphasis and exploration inherent in postcolonial theory.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, its reading is in service to human community in naming anew the nature of divine power and the nature of love as integral to the formation of human society.

Desire is seemingly mutual. We possess even as we are possessed. Finite bodies house the infinite because of the divine embracing love of the human. Desire becomes mutual, a dance of call and response in the life of discipleship. The insistent claim of desire encompasses body and Spirit, evoking questions that circle around immanent and transcendent power. How do we contain, even provisionally within our fragile self, the presence of God in our lives? How do we house and hold the livingness of God within the space of our bodies? How does our incarnation of Spirit form and inform our relationships with others? How do we allow the Spirit-ed bodies of others to form and inform our bodily spirit as we make our way as sojourners in this world? These questions speak from and to the heart of what it means to be a disciple even as they assume and

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<sup>67</sup>“The self-emptying imperative is morally acceptable only if its is delivered to those persons who have selves to limit. The point is this: it is immoral for the elite to celebrate Christ’s self-limitation as if the call for reduction of the self applied equally to everyone. *Kenosis* of this kind appeases the bad conscience of the powerful (to the extent that we have one) through compensation in a fantasy world in which gods descend to earth for awhile before they return to their former glory. Yet it does nothing for non-elites except to encourage their resignation to low status and exclusion from power.” Fredrickson, *Eros and the Christ: Longing and Envy in Paul’s Christology*, 64.

refer back to psychological and thus, energetic understandings of desire for the sake of greater aliveness.<sup>68</sup> Such questions remind us that the pastoral call is but a nuanced call of discipleship wherein the minister is unique only in that the ordained role fills a certain office limited by particular accountability and responsibility. And it is at this juncture that the lived-through experience of desire reminds us of its fluid and fiery power, especially for ministers in a congregational setting of fellowship that is both human and divine.

Desire as constitutive reality marks community, bodies formed and informed by interpretive history, in its marking of individual bodies. The experienced energy of desire is intense, intentional, and intimate.<sup>69</sup> The charged nature of desire, positive and negative, is revealed in the many attachment patterns and it also conditions our external

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<sup>68</sup>The notion of *call* (of discipleship) is congruent with trinitarian ideas of relational space as well as the eschatological emphasis of God coming from the future to meet humans now. *Call* comes from over the shoulder and surprises. It is first an external objective reality. It can become a subjective haunting or *uncanny feeling* that fractures the present, that stretches identity into seams and slippages of encounter with the other. It may be envisioned as the transcendent function at work. It may be viewed as an imperative for stewardship of the *livingness* of self and other. It is also implicated in the formation of the multiple self as a primary discourse among a multitude of other discourses. This year of heightened awareness to racial inequality only heightens these questions of call and discipleship as people grapple with the positive and negative aspects of desire in relation to distinct visionary perspectives of what ought to be. The witness of discipleship involves a certain haunting in ambiguous relational space in time and history. Spirit and love are integral realities of being witnesses. To ground this conversation from a postcolonial perspective see the following two essays. Rivera, “Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost.” See also Joh, “Love’s Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak’s Notes toward Planetary Love.”

<sup>69</sup>See introduction in Shults, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*.

relationships in its communicative power.<sup>70</sup> Postcolonial theory attests to the communicative power of desire in marking bodies.<sup>71</sup> So does analytical psychology.<sup>72</sup>

### Desire as Broad Interpretive Key

Desire as a conceptual reality embraces related and important concepts -- witness and testimony, recognition and misrecognition – already alluded to in the previous chapter that highlight specific themes descriptive of the particular nature of community in the congregation as experienced by one pastor.<sup>73</sup> Desire provides grounding for these concepts even as they nuance and render more complex the reality of desire in its interpretive significance as we move forward into analysis of community that assumes the foundation and formation of the self as multiple. The conceptual reality of desire

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<sup>70</sup>See Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*. Cozolino, *The Healthy Aging Brain: Sustaining Attachment, Attaining Wisdom*. Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy: Healing the Social Brain*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010). Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion Solomon, eds., *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development, and Clinical Practice*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, edited by PhD Allan N. Schore, Series Editor (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009).

<sup>71</sup>See Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*; Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Second ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005). Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*. Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Pui-lan, “Geopolitical Hermeneutics.” Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004). Joy and Duggan, *Decolonizing the Body of Christ: Theology and Theory after Empire?*

<sup>72</sup>See Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*. Ann and Barry Ulanov, *Cinderella and Her Sisters: The Envied and the Envy* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983); Jon Sletvold, *The Embodied Analyst: From Freud and Reich to Relationality*, Relational Perspective Book Series 61, edited by Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2014); Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity*; Karen B. Walant, *Creating the Capacity for Attachment: Treating Addictions and the Alienated Self* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995). Ann Belford Ulanov, *Religion and the Spiritual in Carl Jung* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999). Karen J. Maroda, *Seduction, Surrender, and Transformation: Emotional Engagement in the Analytic Process*, Relational Perspectives Book Series, edited by Lewis Aron Stephen A. Mitchell (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1999).

<sup>73</sup>See Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). Sharp, *Misunderstanding Stories: Toward a Postcolonial Pastoral Theology*.

continues and elaborates the recursive threads of previous chapters, arising, as it does, from the narrative inquiry, namely, the pastoral leader's internal experience of community lived in the congregation and understood theologically as *koinonia* and psychologically as countertransference.

Desire as a concept arose from my own experience of sitting with the narrative material, feeling and seeing what emerged, while at the same time, also engaged in the conceptual work of thinking about images and associations as they related to biblical theology, interpersonal neurobiology, postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories. The idea that desire may be an important foundational concept to ground the aforementioned interpretive theories thus emerged in the flow between *bottom up* and *top down processing*.<sup>74</sup> The gaze of wondering curiosity, akin to contemplation or mindfulness, opened up inner space in which random associations circled around the emotional body in relationship. In the interior chaos and openness of the practice of mindfulness, the idea of desire emerged from without as an idea new to me.<sup>75</sup>

I was struck in the moment by how the interview process and the wellspring that funded the flow of conversation between two relative strangers in the interviews was, in some way, the common human desire to know and to be known, to hear and be heard, which is to say, the pleasure of fruitful conversation and company. Desire is part of the

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<sup>74</sup>Eric Bergmann et al., "Neuroscience and Spirituality," in *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood*, ed. J. Wentzel van Huyssteen and Erik P. Wiebe (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 92-94.

<sup>75</sup>On the importance of chaos and randomness as it relates to freedom and growth in human development from a neuroscience perspective resonant with *midrashic hospitality* see chapter two in Lehrer, *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*, 46-47. He writes, "The best metaphor for our DNA is literature. Like all classic literary texts, our genome is defined not by the certainty of its meaning, but by its linguistic instability, its ability to encourage a multiplicity of interpretations. What makes a novel or poem immortal is its innate complexity, the way every reader discovers in the same words a different story."



subjective experience of communication in the multiple discourses that (in)form our lives.

In a way analogous to anxiety, desire is implicated in the human experience, deeply felt in the body and in the space between people. The formative power of desire is complex, usually not probed or laid bare in its force behind human action and agency, often unexamined in its drive toward the self, others, even God. Within the emotional body desire is noun and verb, site and action of human yearning for something more.<sup>76</sup>

As I continued to play with the idea of desire I was further opened up to new questions of consideration. I noted that the action and agency of desire in relation to the emergence of new ideas and questions charged with energy may be similar to the intense energy or affect of countertransference, possibly even the Spirited presence of God in *koinonia*. Questions of the lived experience of transcendent and immanent Spirit arose that reworked binary notions of human body and Spirit. Curiosity about power and human agency, identity and authority, looked different when viewed from the perspective of desire. So did the idea and historical experience of freedom. Imagination about how to understand and speak about God's presence in human lives was similarly enlarged and cherished, particularly in terms of learning theories. Desire presented itself as a

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<sup>76</sup>Desire is grounded in the (emotional) body from which emerges wisdom. "Besides oral culture as a source and a form of expression of the wisdom of our people and cultures, there is another sphere that has been excluded as a source of wisdom: *the body*. Our body is a privileged site of wisdom; it contains a great wisdom that is longing to be revealed. The recovery of the body as a source of wisdom is one of the great challenges that awaits us in our theological work. The body has its own wisdom; it reveals to us the truths of our lives and our history. It has recorded in it our stories of struggle, resistance, and liberation. In the production of intercultural feminist wisdom, the body cannot be reduced to a simple topic of study and reflection. Rather, the body must be a central theme inasmuch as it is a source, a mediator, and a channel of all our vital experiences and all processes of knowledge." See Maria Pilar Aquini and Maria Jose Rosado-Nunes, ed. *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Expressions for a Just World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 37. This notion of the body as the source and production of wisdom is explored in an anthology of different writing genres that circles around the relationships between the physical body, the spirit and spirituality, and social justice activism. See Facio and Lara, *Fleshing the Spirit: Spirituality and Activism in Chicana, Latina, and Indigenous Women's Lives*.

conceptual reality that crosses theoretical boundaries, at home in theological and social scientific discourses.

### Summary and Preview

#### Desire in Being and Knowing

Desire is implicated in activities of human knowing and being, seeing and being seen, feeling and *feeling felt* as we make sense and meaning of life.<sup>77</sup> Desire makes sense of the emotional material body in its suffering of joy and sorrow, and in so doing, desire describes a number of aspects integral to the formation of the multiple self in community. It highlights attachment and object relation theories that undergird interpersonal neurobiology and analytical psychology in its understanding of the multiple self. In its formative work the concept of desire also makes sense of my earlier stated commitment of privileging the suffering body as understood by female theologians and postcolonial theorists. The following propositions describe the broad relational landscape in which desire is active as it relates to the narrative data described in the previous chapter.

First, desire describes the relational space that is subjective in its intra- and inter-psyche dimensions. Second, desire grounds the aliveness of the body in relational contact with other bodies as significant in the growth of human beings beyond that of the primary parent-infant relationship. Third, desire is aware of the interplay of bodily presence and absence, and how that conditions the self and its experience of relational space. Fourth, desire sees the significance of difference or alterity in formation of the self and relationships. Fifth, desire makes sense of back-and-forth dialogue that is timely,

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<sup>77</sup>See Daniel Siegel's writings for his innovation of this phrase as it relates to the embodied brain and relationships.

contextual, and marked communication. Sixth, desire privileges the three tenses of time and the corresponding role of memory and anticipation. Seventh, desire deepens the charged interplay of images and feelings in the creation of shifting mental states and brings to life the importance of narrative coherence. Eighth, desire takes seriously the presence of uncanny haunting and the remembering body. Ninth, desire privileges differentiation and anticipates domains of integration for the maturing emotional, relational, and spiritual health of a person.

The conceptual significance of desire as it amplifies and deepens the aforementioned propositions has to do with understanding desire as it relates to the formation of human subjectivities, freedom and transformation, understood from interpersonal neurobiological and psychoanalytical perspectives, further amplified by biblical theology and postcolonial understandings. Thus, the claim that desire is theoretically significant lies in the hope that this particular concept opens up and renders more complex the research query into countertransference and *koinonia* from the internal perspective of the pastor's lived-experience of community in the congregation.

Desire is theoretically significant in its ability to be at home in a variety of disciplinary fields of understanding, including theology. Desire is an important concept that links humans with one another and with God and, as an interpretive frame for the narrative data, opens up other ways of dwelling in biblical texts, most notably that of the Twenty Third Psalm and the associated Shepherd imagery in prophetic texts and the Gospel of John. At the same time, desire more fundamentally helps us understand the formative knowing that shapes the personal life of discipleship and spirituality with its intensity, intentionality, and intimacy. Desire thus furthers understanding of creation,

covenant, and *koinonia* as vulnerable spaces in relationship with God, self and others in the sacred journey of becoming ever more the people that God calls us to be.<sup>78</sup> In this regard, F. LeRon Shults and Steven J. Sandage note, “A sufficiently complex form of relational *intensity* is necessary for human life, and consciousness requires some form of *intentionality* in relation to another. Human personhood emerges as this intentional intensity takes form as a longing for *intimacy* in relation to a personal other.”<sup>79</sup>

In a related way, Hebrew scholar Carey Ellen Walsh states, “Desire is an impulse and emotion for more in life at any given moment. God is a belief that there is something more to life. Can’t these be the same?”<sup>80</sup> Her question implies a number of general observations that relate to the trajectory of the biblical story and the narrative data.

First, that desire has to do not only with pleasure, but that there are yearning choices to be made amidst the demands, deprivations, and despair of life so as to experience intentionally the pleasures of life as people of faith. The gift and grace of God is the creative ground of this experienced sense of surplus or *excess* in life’s pleasure.<sup>81</sup> Second, desire is relational in its felt movement. In the Hebrew Bible these vital desires circle around the hope for a plentiful harvest, the fruitfulness of abundant relationships, and a yearning toward God’s generous yet elusive presence.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>See Moltmann on discipleship and life in the Spirit. See also Brueggemann on the unsettled nature of God and humanity in covenantal relationship.

<sup>79</sup>Shults, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*, 30.

<sup>80</sup>Walsh, *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs*, 11.

<sup>81</sup>Surplus has to do with the “... *impossible*, i.e., that which does not seem possible when seen from the present conditions of life.... The desire for something is not the same, that is not a repetition, a continuance for what now maintains us in our given identities is what is expressed in such desire.” See Henriksen, “Desire: Gift and Giving,” 17.

<sup>82</sup>Walsh, *Exquisite Desire: Religion, the Erotic, and the Song of Songs*, 19.

The entangled covenant relationship of God and the Hebrew people is a mutual testament to desire, a witness to the ongoing sojourn in a harsh desert land environment that highlights pleasure and hardship and in so doing, lays bare the vulnerable insistent yearning for presence in the experience of absence. Faith, understood as covenant relationship between God and humanity, is an ongoing story of desire told and written, marked and remarked on human bodies, an experiential journey of immanent and transcendent power. The marking of desire is Spirited, animating flesh and bones that form new attachments to God and others. This biblical trajectory is intensified in the gospel and epistle writings of the newer testament with the story of Jesus as the incarnate Word who desired right relations and justice-love for all people, supported and challenged to do so in solidarity with community and friendship.<sup>83</sup>

#### Desire and *In Vivo* Themes: Complex Movement of Embodied Spirits

Just so, the narrative data reveal that the pastoral choices tend toward *joy* and *table hospitality*, indicative of what Thomas Weston desired and yearned after in the experience of *koinonia* within the congregation. Second, the drive for something more is descriptive of the yearning that is God. God just might be the Spirited presence and energy of life abundant, experienced both as an immanent and a transcendent force or power. For Thomas it is *connections*, presence, b-e-i-n-g that is vital, *open* and *moving* to God, self, and others. Desire is thus implicated in the *centering* and *conflicting* aspects of these *relationships* as it relates to *challenge* and *honesty*, *diversity* and *love* seeking after

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<sup>83</sup>Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian*, 185-186.

the experience of *communion*. These *in vivo* themes can be broadly understood through the concept of desire.

For a moment it may be helpful to linger here, recalling personal experiences of desire. Desire as aliveness seems to tend to and respond to the *excess* of what is communicated inter- and intra- relationally. Desire is energy that animates the body, palpable and pulsing in and between people. Desire's insistent presence makes itself known from the interplay of bodies, present and absent. Its liveliness sweeps us back and forth through time, playing with memory and present moment in time even as it yearns after the future. Oftentimes desire stirs us awake, enlivening our sense of self, others, and God through images. We become aware of what is, what is happening within us and between us because of desire. We also become aware of what is not, and in the gap between what is and what ought to be there is loss and lament, and we grieve the many guises of deadness that touch us. Desire, I suggest, has largesse generous enough to embrace both aliveness and death, individually and communally.

Desire is communicated beyond the personal level but makes its presence felt in the socio-emotional context of history and society, particularly around bodies marked by race, class, and gender. The power of desire cuts both ways, encompassing death and life and understood theologically, for the sake of greater, more abundant life. Indeed, a familiar biblical mandate enjoins people to choose between life or death, blessing or curse. "I put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live" is the injunction uttered by Moses to the people as they are about to enter the Promised Land.<sup>84</sup> Jesus makes such a claim on his disciples in the

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<sup>84</sup>Deuteronomy 30:19. See also Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

parable of the sheep and goats, as does the apostle Paul in his descriptions of what it means to live life responsively in the Spirit of new creation. And as Christians we confess the lordship of the Risen Christ active in the realms of the living and the dead.

Life and death are the existential realities that condition the lived-experience of people in all times and places, and as such, describe the milieu in which we live and the orienting choices we make. Life and death thus create ambiguous relational fields through which we must navigate, discerning those stark claims on our lives through the emotions of joy and sorrow as we seek to understand human experience through the energy, objects, and subjects of desire.<sup>85</sup>

In the following chapter I turn to explore the experience of desire in the sensate body through the reality of emotion. In so doing, this exploration relies upon interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) to make sense of the significance of the feeling, emotional body as described by the *in vivo* themes of *who I am*.<sup>86</sup> At the same time

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<sup>85</sup>The importance of sorrow and joy in the daily round of life is understood from a neuroscience perspective of feelings in conversation with Spinoza in a book that embraces *yearning* for clarity about meaning as “a deep trait of the human mind.” See page 269 in Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*.

<sup>86</sup>The major interpersonal neurobiology theorists have been noted previously. Their work intersects with trauma theorists and psychoanalysts who work with the sensate emotional body. A foundational figure in this area is Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, edited by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). See also Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. These books were foundational for later publications in trauma theory. See the following works: Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Foundational psychoanalysts tuned into the suffering body include the following: Alice Miller, *The Body Never Lies: The Lingering Effects of Cruel Parenting*, trans. Andrew Jenkins (New York, NY: W.W.Norton and Company, Inc., 2005). Orbach, “What Can We Learn from the Therapist’s Body? ” Biblical scholars and theologians also address the trauma of the body, both individual and collective. See the following authors: O’Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*. Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology*. Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006). Significant too is the following work of sociologists and historians: Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the “Dirty War”*. In the arena of learning and education the

however, theology continues as a significant thread in the following interdisciplinary dialogue with the theoretical lens of IPNB, the conversation recursive in nature as theology returns to detail, illumine, and enlarge understanding of *in vivo* themes and theoretical lenses.

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following authors who take seriously the impact of trauma: hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*. See the essay by Shoshanna Felman in Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*.



CHAPTER FIVE  
EMBODIED CONVERSATION: INTERPERSONAL NEUROBIOLOGY AND  
THEOLOGY

*Think of the brain as an intricate landscape of canyons, arroyos, inlets, bays, tunnels, and escarpments surrounding a buried sea horse. With the neurons that relay information scattered throughout – scientists call this the ‘neurons forest.’*  
--- Rebecca Solnit

**Introduction**

The Sensate Emotional Body: Interpersonal Neurobiology

The wonder of the (inter)personal human body that senses, feels, and knows emotion is a mystery of which we can speak in differing modes of thoughtful exploration. Desire is one such mode. Interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB) is another mode of thought. I will draw upon it as a robust way to ground understanding of the multiple self, and in so doing, to make sense further of desire as well as foundationally root the *in vivo* themes of *movement, open, and joy* that describe *who I am*. Furthermore, IPNB is helpful in enlarging the nuanced understanding of practical theologian Emmanuel Lartey’s observation that “Every human person is in some respects (a) like all others (b) like some others (c) like no other.”<sup>1</sup> IPNB provides a relational neuroscience framework that helps

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<sup>1</sup>Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 34, 171.

us understand the ongoing emergent complexity of difference within and between people amidst shared developmental realities of human personhood for the sake of flourishing for all people. In this regard, IPNB makes sense of postcolonial theory's emphasis on hybrid identity, and in so doing provides another perspective by which to understand the multiple self and importance of the suffering body, understood through womanist and feminist Korean theologians.<sup>2</sup>

### **An Excursus: Emergent Complexity of Difference in IPNB and Spirituality**

From a practical theological perspective, I draw upon IPNB from within a commitment to a theology of creation by which human beings may be understood as living and growing, moving and being within a larger *web of being* that “emphasizes the mutual interconnectedness of creation, and uses the metaphor of web to describe creation.”<sup>3</sup> “Mutual interconnectedness of creation” does not necessarily mean “mutual equality” in creation. I draw upon the metaphor *web of life* in all of its interconnections at this point in wonder and anticipation of how the value of emergent difference in IPNB might render more complex the conceptual realities of power and agency, both human and divine, inviting the reader to hold this question lightly and with an open curious perspective, because we will return later to such wonderings, as it is intrinsic to relational emphases of the feeling emotional body, desire, the multiple self, and the *in vivo* themes.

Furthermore, such creation emphasis of interconnectedness is consonant with covenantal understandings of the Hebrew Bible in the Presbyterian Church and the

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<sup>2</sup>Postcolonial theory renders more complex the notion of subjectivities in the formation of personhood.

<sup>3</sup>Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 24.

spirituality of African Americans, both formative realities that shaped the pastoral experience of *koinonia* for Thomas Weston.<sup>4</sup> Recall that integral to *who I am* is the relational experience of being *raised up* by family, church, and community. In particular, his first call to an integrated congregation in Baltimore where African Americans and whites worshipped together, coupled with his ability to *move* and be *open*, to *connect* and be *challenged* and *centered* by *diversity*, allowed him to imbibe and celebrate an enlarged spirituality of *hospitality* and *honesty* around many different *tables*, and to do so in the face of *conflict* and with *joy* of *communion*.<sup>5</sup> We might make initial meaning of Thomas' experience from an African American perspective of spirituality that also serves to orient us to unique and resonant emphases in IPNB.

Womanist theologian Diana L. Hayes is attentive to a variety of male and female black theologians who highlight themes common to the African American experience of spirituality. The spiritual bent toward wholeness arises from historically rooted resistance and the ongoing struggle for survival that values the unity of body and soul through fostering human connections to God and to one another. Hayes, in quoting Kelly Brown Douglas, notes how the body occupies a privileged center in authentic spirituality such that

the state of one's soul – and/or one's immediate relationship to divinity should be empirically evident through some form of bodily expression.... That the body was considered a means by which 'divinity' could manifest itself implied that the body

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<sup>4</sup>I think of creation interconnectedness as an emphasis in particular of the writings by Walter Bruggemann and Jurgen Moltmann.

<sup>5</sup>For perspective on the historical black church experience of contemplation and joy that intersects well with certain IPNB emphases of integration see Barbara A. Homes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004).

had sacral value. In other words, the body was a potential vehicle for divine witness.<sup>6</sup>

Just as the body and soul are inseparable and valued, so too are the sacred and secular. Life itself is sacred. “The holy was a constant presence in their lives, and all of life was sacred, from womb to tomb, before and beyond, weaving a web of connections that encompassed both the living and the dead.”<sup>7</sup> Hayes goes on to comment, “It was the ‘we’ of family and friends -- real and fictive kin who played substantial roles in their lives and in the lives of their descendants – that subsumed the ‘I.’”<sup>8</sup> This web of life emphasizes communal identity that transforms usual notions of understandings of personal identity and ways of inhabiting time. What is at stake here is community understanding that time is seemingly a ceaseless flow where boundaries between life and death are blurred, where the individual ‘I’ is situated within a web of formative relations that encompasses past, present, and future bodies in historical time.<sup>9</sup> The impact of (spiritual) life so understood may be felt best by this statement:

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<sup>6</sup>Diana L. Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 45, 158.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 139. It is important to note that amidst the variety of practices of African religion, the experience of time, as repetitive and cyclical in its embrace of the living and dead and yet unborn, is a common theme that unites the diversity of tribes. It seems however, that African American spirituality embraces an eschatological perspective of time because, with its emphasis on liberation and struggle, there is acknowledgement of “what is” and “what ought to be.”

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>We might think of memory and ghostly hauntings in terms of the experience of time, relationships, and agency. Helpful is explanatory endnote 77 on page 363-364 from Rivera, “Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost.” “Reading process theology through the African sensibilities of womanist theologies, Monica Coleman develops a metaphysical framework for the possibility of ancestral immortality and memory. In process metaphysics, each entity becomes, at each moment, in relation to past becomings, embracing or rejecting of elements of the past. The past leaves its traces on the new – even if the past is negatively incorporated. Process theology further asserts that as entities pass away, their objective existence is immortalized in God. ‘When a human being dies,’ Coleman suggests, ‘she becomes an ancestor. Inside the being of God, this ancestor has actuality....[T]he ancestor can be said to *commune* with other ancestors’ (*Making a Way Out of No Way*, 117). As past experiences

African American women's spirituality is deeply rooted in a community of the born, the yet to be born, and those who have already passed over. This community forms a great cloud of witnesses who help to shape and form all of the people into the human beings God intended them to be. Life outside the community was inconceivable; life over against the community was suicidal. The community from smallest to oldest elder, was the life blood of each and every individual within it, regardless of age, gender, or ranking, and each person owed a responsibility to others within that community to enable both the community and individuals to survive and to thrive.<sup>10</sup>

The shelter of community is for the sake of vivified life beyond mere survival.

Just so, the relational emphases of IPNB are generational and communal, with people past, present, and future shaping individual personhood beyond survival to a vital meaningful life that is deeply interconnected. As we move forward, I invite the reader to wonder about how the *web of life* with its interconnectedness is resonant with the process and *telos* of IPNB, specifically with regard to its view of spirituality and the self.

### Integration and Differentiation

As a way into the foundational concepts of IPNB I begin with its contribution to understanding spirituality because that larger awareness is attentive to the body and goes beyond bodily limitations to a sense of broad interconnectedness with life that verges on the soul with its Spirited life. In fact, “[s]pirituality can be viewed as an attempt to expand that sense of identity beyond just the physical aspect of our bodily selves.”<sup>11</sup>

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become part of Godself, they also become part of the present through God's relation to it, to the extent that the present opens itself to it. In this view, the ancestors' activity becomes part of divine agency to which the present can relate. Through ritual practices persons may 'position themselves to hear the voices of particular ancestors. In this reading of ancestral agency, the divine is an agent of memory where nothing is lost (119).”

<sup>10</sup>Hayes, *Forged in the Fiery Furnace: African American Spirituality*, 142.

<sup>11</sup>Bergmann et al., “Neuroscience and Spirituality,” 84.

IPNB seeks to explain both the subjective mental reality of spirituality that is also a material physical experience in the body.

IPNB is attentive to the spatial material plane of reality and its *energy* flow, and at the same time, attentive to the experiential mental realm of spirituality and its subjective flow of *information*. The physical and mental aspects of human fleshly reality are viewed as “mutually developing phenomena that exist because they arise together.... as conscious states that are biological processes with a subjective ontology.”<sup>12</sup> Time grounds these interconnected yet separate domains in people even as

[c]hanges in one domain are correlated temporarily with changes in the other. Energy, a physical property, and information, a mental property, flow together in patterns to shape both spatial and experiential emergence simultaneously. We can define these patterns of energy and information flow as emerging from regulatory processes that bridge the spatial and experiential sides of human reality.<sup>13</sup>

*Integration* is the term used to describe the process and patterns of material and mental activity in these domains of reality and thus integration is “defined as the linkage of differentiated elements. Through integration, the correlated interweaving of the material and mental sides of reality results in harmonious functioning.”<sup>14</sup>

Of note is that IPNB seeks to articulate the *knowing* that happens in each domain, the material and the mental. It is concerned with a lack of integration in the material realm, characterizing that reality as rigid self-states due to inflexible neural firing

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 87. This exploration of the “subjective open plane of experience” is resonant with recent emphases of relational psychoanalysis as noted by Pamela Cooper White, who states that this discipline “has turned away from an exclusively vertical conception of consciousness and unconscious, in favor of a more spatially dispersed model of the mind, where conscious and unconscious coexist more fluidly, on multiple planes or axes.” See Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 103.

<sup>14</sup>Bergmann et al., “Neuroscience and Spirituality.”

patterns. In the subjective mental realm, such a lack of integration is characterized as chaos and experienced as incoherent and non-cohesive thoughts and emotions.<sup>15</sup>

Significant for our purposes is that the *telos* of IPNB is integration, viewed as the natural state of the human mind and defined as a harmonious state of being.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, one can discern more clearly the value of complexity inherent in the ongoing creation of personhood throughout one's life and indeed, integration is indebted to complexity theory with its focus on emergent processes of dynamic systems. The interaction of different elements in a complex system assumes *openness* to influences outside the system. Indeed, openness defines the dynamism of “*emergent processes* that arise from the interactions of elements in the system.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Theological and Postcolonial Perspectives on Difference in Complex Emergence**

Analogously and in theological terms we might poetically state this emergent dynamism of complex systems as tender regard for the unique mystery of each human being created in the image and likeness of God, and the call to be fruitful in our relationships with one another, all creatures, and with creation itself. Implicit in the charge to be good stewards in the first creation story of Genesis is the notion of harmonious participation in ongoing creation. There is an inherent dynamism and open sense of emergence in this charge to live relationally with one another and within God's created world for the sake of fruitfulness, or intentional harmony. Also implicit is the value of engaged relational difference in ongoing creation, highlighted especially in the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>See the Epilogue: A Framework for Cultivating Integration in Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 379-387.

<sup>17</sup>Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, 16-2.

second story with creation of woman from the rib of man. Jewish midrash highlights the importance of Adam's restless experience of singular aloneness such that "his humanity requires the 'sensual music' of horizontal relationship, the fusing and parting, the changing reflections of face meeting face." The Hebrew word of "fitting helper" conveys the idea of confrontation, or "help against him," thus deepening the idea of naked and bodily vulnerability to dynamic difference as constitutive of relationships beyond that of gendered human identities.<sup>18</sup>

In a related way that extends our understanding of relational difference, womanist ethics are also *confrontive*, keying off the Hebraic meaning of confrontation as "facing together." Emilie M. Townes goes on to articulate a vision of equality amidst difference, affirming

There must be mutual respect for the dignity of others, a willingness to engage in dialogue, and an awareness and acceptance of diversity. If one thrives in a power dynamic that places one over and against the other rather than with, all prophetic voice is lost. We must learn to trust and respect the gifts God has given us and speak the truth and act through our faith.<sup>19</sup>

From feminist and womanist perspectives, we are reminded of contingent, particular, and contextual realities that mark human bodies in gendered and classed, racial and ethnic ways. Korean theologians remind us that such historical freedom impinges on

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<sup>18</sup>Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 14-17.

<sup>19</sup>Emilie M. Townes, "Ethics as an Art of Doing the Work Our Souls Must Have," in *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches*, ed. Christie Cozad Neuger (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 154-5.



and renders more complex our human agency, especially with regard to the reciprocal impact of relationships in our development as individuals and as people of God.<sup>20</sup>

This interplay of sociopolitical, cultural, and economic forces is the shifting ground in which people are rooted, the changing landscape in which people experience the influence of many relationships throughout their lifespan. So while there is yearning for equality that harkens back to paradise garden, the prophetic voice of many bodies also testify that relationships are unequal, marked by more than binary hierarchies of power, and the terrain, both external and internal, is fractured, crisscrossed with many borders. Inherent in this reality of transnational migration that has characterized human history and marked personal stories is the fact of *movement*.

### Movement and the Multiple Self

This *in vivo* theme of movement is integral to the formation of the multiple self (and also to the illusory concept of the core self) and raises the issue of agency and power with a view toward liberation.<sup>21</sup> What is at stake in noting the reality of movement is well said by Jane Flax:

Only multiple subjects can invent ways to struggle against domination that will not merely recreate it.... we encounter many difficulties when subjectivity

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<sup>20</sup>Kwon, "Toward a Theological Anthropology of Resistance: Korean American Women's Ambivalent Subjectivity, "Third Space," and Religious Education." See also Joh, "Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love."

<sup>21</sup>The narrative data of Thomas Weston revealed that in its integrative aspect, *movement* is foundation to the dynamic of *joy* that creates and keeps *opening* up identity (*who I am*) in practices of *centering*, in *diverse* circles of community that have to do with *table hospitality*. Movement is also implicated in *conflict* and *connecting* with the attendant questions of approach or avoidance. Movement further might describe *forgiving*, *freshness*, *newness*, and *joy* as different modes of learning and knowing or, being.

becomes subject to one normative standard, solidifies into rigid structures, or lacks capacity to flow readily between different aspects of itself.<sup>22</sup>

Movement that flows has to do with freedom, human and divine, in the historical exigencies of desire, conflict, and union. Such movement is not linear in its progression but flows where there is space, whether it is gaps or fissures, seeking to widen the space into a more into a roomy hospitality that welcomes multiple subjectivities.

Indeed, borderlands, crossroads, and *fronteras* are the spatial metaphor of identity in postcolonial thought, describing the in-between spaces or *interstices of subjectivity* wrought by the flow of refugees, migrants, and exiles interacting, identifying and differentiating with one another and the dominant culture in cities.<sup>23</sup> Borderlands is one way to describe the notion of *hybrid identity* that is produced by Empire and the dynamic of abjection. Following feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva,

Abjection could be loosely defined as an operation of the psyche through which the identity of the individual or collective is shaped by exclusion or expulsion of that which threatens the borders of that particular individual subject or collective.<sup>24</sup>

Hybrid identity, produced by abjection with practices of exclusion and subordination, is descriptive of the geo-political situation where power flows in many directions, open and ambiguous. “The power of hybridity is in the emergence of the subjugated knowledge to enter into dominant discourse and thereby shift the basis of its authority. Consequently, hybridity and mimicry are inseparable.”<sup>25</sup> If mimicry has to do

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<sup>22</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 87.

<sup>23</sup>Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, 11.

<sup>24</sup>Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*, xiv.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 54.

with both resemblance and menace, then the in-between spaces of identity are negotiated in contexts of ambivalence and powered by mimicry whose effectiveness “must continually produce its ‘slippages,’ its ‘excess,’ and its ‘difference.’”<sup>26</sup> The experience of the hybrid person then is “partial presence,” constructed by the negotiations of difference where identity becomes “an energy field of different forces.”<sup>27</sup>

The interstitial subjectivity of hybrid identity is a product of and mirrors the external *interstitial third space* whose landscape redefines notions of center and margins and consequently, the notion of *boundaries*.<sup>28</sup> Korean American theologian Jung Young Lee comments,

There are multiple centers and margins. Furthermore, there are centers within margins and margins within centers ... marginality is more than a boundary itself; ‘it is many boundaries encompassing two or multiple worlds.’ ... Neither world is dependent upon the other for its existence, but each is relative to the other’s understanding. Here we are able to make connection with the notion of interstitial space. Marginality is best understood as a nexus, the matrix where two or more worlds are interconnected yet none is central.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 59. For more information on energetic force fields, see chapter two in Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology Is Transforming Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2010).

<sup>28</sup>The notion of boundaries is significant in postcolonial theory, especially from a biblical theological perspective. See Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *Bible, Borders, Belonging(S)*, Semeia Studies, edited by Gerald O. West (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014). See also D.N. Premnath, ed. *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007). For an excellent summation that traces particular theorists’ influence on specific biblical scholars see Pui-lan, “Geopolitical Hermeneutics.” For a powerful testimony of hybrid identity see Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet, Revised Edition* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2000). For a practical leadership perspective on boundaries that addresses poverty in terms of healthcare access and policy in the southern United States see Gary Gunderson, *Boundary Leaders: Leadership Skills for People of Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004).

<sup>29</sup>Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*, 64. Jung Yung Lee’s assertions also connect with a social learning theorist. See Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*.

If marginality is construed as a nexus that might be understood as liminal boundary space in the world, then that charged space might also be understood as the inner space of the marginalized body. Inner differences within hybrid identity are subjectively formed from the ebb and flow, the overlap and fracture of external boundaries. The marked body that sees and is seen is *testimony* to movement between and among centers and margins. This external movement is matched with interior oscillation between the observing and interpreting self within the calm pool of reflexive sensing, observing, and feeling.<sup>30</sup>

### Jesus Christ: Hybrid Identity and Interstitial Space

We might consider Jesus Christ as an exemplar of hybrid identity and the cross as an example of interstitial space. Indeed the differing images of Jesus in the gospels might be described as plural and hybrid in nature, arising from the ancient multicultural world of the Roman Empire. *Who I am* is more than a stated *in vivo* theme.<sup>31</sup> It is also the question that is asked repeatedly of every disciple who follows Jesus as the Christ and invites us to consider the following from the perspective of our own contexts:

The space between Jesus and Christ is unsettling and fluid, resisting easy categorization and closure. It is the ‘contact zone’ or ‘borderland’ between the human and the divine, the one and the many, the historical and the cosmological, the Jewish and the Hellenistic, the prophetic and the sacramental, the God of the conquerors and the God of the meek and lowly.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Evocative of Frantz Fanon, M. Shawn Copeland is articulate about how the body is our perspective in the world: seeing, being seen, and being conscious of being seen. In light of black bodies and how their presence is *overdetermined* and carries the *excess* of stereotypes she asks, “How does it feel to be a problem?” See Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, 16.

<sup>31</sup>YHWH, I am who I am becoming. See Exodus 3:14.

<sup>32</sup>Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 171.

The integrity of embodied interstitial space is indebted to the fluid nature of ambiguity that resists narrowed closure in preference to the roominess of generous space in its interior and exterior dimensions. We might call this movement toward openness a generous *hospitality* that welcomes *newness* and *freshness* of insight, meaning, and possibility for all peoples. Hospitality certainly has interior dimensions that gather us together around the Lord's Supper that then lead us out into the world, scattered to become bread for others by our very presence that is marked by so many things, including the love of God that makes all things new.

Jesus' marked body as a colonized and occupied refugee was open and hospitable to other bodies, also marked by colonization and oppression. His body mingled and flowed with theirs, open to, touching, and being touched by people left destitute by grinding poverty. He welcomed these people to the table and in so doing extended the notion of hospitality. Jesus' eating and drinking with sinners "invites all who would follow him to abandon loyalties of class and station, family and kin, culture and nation in order to form God's people anew and, thus, to contest empire."<sup>33</sup> It is this ethic of hospitality so characteristic of the kingdom of God and at cross-purposes to Empire that ultimately led Jesus to his death.

Jesus' body -- dead, risen, and alive -- marks interstitial space, as does the cross. In the gospel of Luke, Jesus' crucifixion is between two criminals. This activity and these men mark this space as an "in-between space," where death and life flow. In conversation

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<sup>33</sup>Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, 62. For a compelling and challenging postcolonial interpretation of hospitality from the liturgical perspective of the Lord's Supper see Carvalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality*. See also Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor*.

with Jesus, one thief chooses death in his closed attitude toward Jesus whereas the other thief chooses life because of his open query to Jesus. Sophia Park observes,

... Jesus is portrayed as the in-between space and as a juncture where two criminals can cross over and attain, through connection, salvation. Yet one criminal is willing to connect with Jesus and the other refuses to be connected with Jesus. As a result the two had opposite outcomes: one, new life, and the other, destruction.<sup>34</sup>

This gospel narrative portrays movement and choice in border crossings as characteristic of interstitial space. It also reflects a theological stance that takes the body and relationships seriously. This gospel text further moves us generally to consider the challenge of how hybrid identity conditions notions of hospitality as it exemplifies what relational theology might be, as posited in the words of Pamela Cooper-White. She suggests that

A multiple, relational theology, it seems to me, is hospitable to an embodied conception of mind and self that gives room enough for the human person to encompass a wide capacity for relationality, both with other people and with and among inner selves that inhabit all the time and spatial dimensions of one's own lived life ... Furthermore, these are not fixed positions, but are in continual flux as we move in and out of different internal and external states of pressure, desire, conflict, and union.<sup>35</sup>

It is this spirit of roomy wide welcome that embraces difference and is, consequently, so important to emerging new life.

Integral to these theological emphases is the value of complexity and difference at play in human beings and relationships in changing global world landscapes. These

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<sup>34</sup>Park, "Pastoral Care for the 1.5 Generation: In-between Space as the "New" Cultural Space," 236. Another interstitial space of crosses defined by Empire that yet witness against it is portrayed in the story of Rizpah in the Book of Kings. See Allan Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).

<sup>35</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 95-96.

comments serve to foreground the *in vivo* themes of *diversity*, of the *connecting*, *conflicting* and *centering* aspects of *relationships* even as it yearns after a different material reality of other themes such as *hospitality* and *communion* around *tables* where *love* is present amidst *eating praying laughing crying*. This brief theological excursus points toward the usefulness of IPNB in helping us understand the material and relational ongoing engagement of these values – complexity and difference -- in the continued intentional growth and development of persons and in so doing, continues to extend ideas and evoke questions about the multiple self, countertransference, and *koinonia*.

### **Integration and Differentiation Defined**

The significance of IPNB's appreciation for particularity of difference in terms of *differentiation* is integral to the lifelong mechanisms, process, and intention of integration. Differentiation is how parts of a system become specialized in growth and development. Their linkage – or *integration* -- is the connection of separate areas for the sharing and flow of energy and information. Such connectivity tends to and supports the emergence of complexity and health of the system. What is at stake here is the *coherence* of a harmonious life, meaning that across time and space a person is *open* to the influence of, and indeed, “incorporate[s] the impact of varying elements from outside themselves” into their embodied relational lives, such that people continue to grow and develop maximum complexity and in doing, lean into more optimal health.<sup>36</sup>

Foundationally speaking then, integration is the linkage of differentiated elements in a system for the sake of a more flexible, adaptive, coherent, energized and stable

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<sup>36</sup>Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, 16-5. Negotiating hybrid identity is resonant with this IPNB proposition.

system as it develops toward greater complexity and maturity.<sup>37</sup> Integration is concerned with the dynamic well-being or ongoing harmony of a developing organism or system. Integration describes what harmony looks like in terms of three interconnected areas of growth and mutual influence: neural integration of the brain, receptive coherence of the mind, and empathetic relationships.<sup>38</sup>

Just as desire is a noun and a verb, so it is with reference to the concept of integration. As noun it refers to structural dimensions and as verb, it refers to a process, dependent upon the conceptual idea of the *triangle of well-being*.<sup>39</sup> And similarly to desire, energy and emotion are integral to the reality of integration as understood through the triangle of well-being, a metaphor descriptive of the flow of energy and information among the brain, mind, and relationships. Brain, mind, and relationships might each be considered systems from the perspective of complexity theory. Energy is subjectively felt as a feeling of vitality as it moves in and across time, allowing motion to happen. Emotion is energetic, meaning that there is movement, not only in moving people toward or away from others, but also of information, because emotion is the central organizing process within the embodied brain.<sup>40</sup>

At this point it may be helpful to describe further the perspective of the triangle of well-being so as to understand the significance of the interconnectedness of its three

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 16-7.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 16-1 through 16-8.

<sup>39</sup>Daniel J. Siegel, *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2017), 3-4.

<sup>40</sup>Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, edited by PhD Allan N. Schore, Series Editor and MD Daniel J. Siegel, Founding Editor, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010), 128.



dimensions of the one reality, which is to say, the flow of energy and information within a body that has intra-psychic and inter-relational dimensions that are both material and spatial. A thick description of the triangle of well-being will provide an IPNB foundation for further understanding of the multiple self, desire, difference, and the *in vivo* themes.

### Triangle of Well-Being

Energy has different forms, and within the nervous system it is an electrochemical flow.<sup>41</sup> Information is thus understood as “patterns of meaning and ‘stand for’ or symbolize something other than the energy itself” that further gives rise to “processing in cascades of associations and linked meanings that emerge over time.”<sup>42</sup> The brain is conceived of as the mechanical *shaping* of the flow of energy and information through the extended nervous system distributed throughout the entire body. Thus, the embodied brain is the objective physical experience of neuronal firing across synapses. The mind is understood as relational and embodied processes that *regulate* the flow of material energy and mental information within bodies and between people. As such, the regulating mind is the subjective mental and internal side of reality that exists in time but not in the physical plane of reality. Relationships are defined as the *sharing* pattern of interaction between two or more people that involves the flow of energy and information.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, A1-30.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, A38-39.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-2. Philosopher Kelly Oliver comments, “All human relationships are the result of the flow and circulation of energy --- thermal energy, chemical energy, electrical energy, and social energy. Social energy includes affective energy, which can move between people. In our relationships, we constantly negotiate affective energy transfers ... so too can we train ourselves to be more attuned to affective energy in our relationships.” See Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 14.

What is important about relationships, mind, and body is their bi-directional interface in the process of integration. The mechanisms, process, and intention of integration is *self-regulation*, having to do with monitoring and modifying activities of the mind that emerge from the relational and embodied flow of energy and information. In other words, “[t]he mind is not separate from our bodies or from our relationships – it both arises from them and it regulates them.”<sup>44</sup> The mind is created by the brain and relationships. Thus, key to self-regulation is the mental ability and capacity to *monitor* and *modify* our behavior that in turn influences our embodied brain and relationships.

The mind’s regulation of the flow of energy and information in bodies and in relationships is rooted in subjective mental experience that is always emerging and thus, continuously self-organizing through thinking, feeling, and remembering. These mental activities coalesce around values and beliefs, attitudes and intentions, dreams and perceptions, intuition and images.<sup>45</sup> It is precisely in this mental context that *differentiation* assumes significance, because the mental capacity to focus attention (thus extending intention and awareness) enables the process of *linkage* in integration. Key to the emerging and thus, transformational aspect of intentional attention is the embodied brain’s ability to modify its neural firing that in turn re-wires neural patterns.<sup>46</sup> Integration relies on stimulating the activation and growth of neurons such that the brain itself becomes integrated, the mind becomes more coherent, and relationships tend

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<sup>44</sup>Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook*, 1-6.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 1-5, 1-6.

<sup>46</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 173. Using the mind to rewire the brain allows a self-state to become a long lasting trait is the significance of neuroplasticity and can occur not just through synaptogenesis, but also through neurogenesis and myelinogenesis. The intentional attention has to do with practicing of skills of awareness. See chapter twelve in Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*.

toward empathy. This process unfolds in a variety of *domains*, each of which fleshes out the energetic and informational flow among embodied brain, relationships, and the mind. It is to these nine domains of integration that we now turn, relying on the work of interpersonal neurobiologist Daniel J. Siegel for this framework of understanding, especially as he addresses what it means for the mind to engage other minds in the further creation of itself and the ongoing development of the brain in the context of relationships.

### Domains of Integration

Foundational to the work of integration is the stimulation and activation of neurons that thereby enables their growth.<sup>47</sup> Such dynamism towards neural integration is rooted in the functions of the prefrontal middle cortex region of the brain (PFMC), which include body regulation, attuned communication, emotional balance, response flexibility, empathy, self-knowing awareness, fear modulation, intuition, and morality.<sup>48</sup> Significant to understanding the nine domains of integration is the functional importance of this region of the brain as it is affected by *mindfulness* skills and practices of intra- and inter-relationship as understood by individual attachment patterns that then suggest intentional *modifying* skills and practices as it relates to specific domains. What enables relational choice and thus change that leads to individual integration is rooted in the reality that “neurons that fire together, wire together.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 173.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 26. See also the glossary in Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*.

<sup>49</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 48-49.

This condition for the possibility of change or, in other words, brain plasticity therefore grounds the skills and practices of mindfulness and modification for the sake of integration not only in the embodied brain, but also in the mind and in relationships, to include relationship to one's self and to the transcendent. Thus, there are two distinct but interconnected ways to work practically within each domain that tend to relational *intentionality* and *intensity*, recalling this earlier emphasis from a theological perspective, but understood now from an interpersonal neurobiological perspective that also assumes a sense of *intimacy*.<sup>50</sup>

Generally at this point, the reader may recall in the narrative of Thomas Weston that there are examples of *mindful* and *modifying* behavior, practices if you will, that he has assumed consciously in the exercise of pastoral leadership. Walking the labyrinth was an intentional choice that tends deliberately to awareness of self in relation to God and his parishioners. (1L21fp4)

Remember too that Thomas emphasized the relational importance of his wife, naming her as a rock, a person who “centers me so I can come to church or go out and be the pastor that I can be.” (1L8p2) Colleagues also serve in that role for him when they gather together in conscious conversation. The church community is the larger intersubjective space that supports his intentional spiritual practices, knowledgeable about his routine because he invites others to cultivate their devotional life with him in the worship of Mass at a neighboring parish church. (1L27fp3) Commenting on that weekly ritual, Thomas speaks of intentional awareness in these words: “It’s that *centering* piece that gives me a chance to focus on what’s important.” (1L9p4) Another intentional

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<sup>50</sup>Shults, *Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology*. Note the linking of intentionality, intensity, and intimacy is from a Spirited perspective, following the work of James E. Loder.

practice of centering that relies on the presence of other people is his visits with homebound people. (1L39fp4)

In these individual and communal practices Thomas uses the focus of intentional awareness to become less narrow and constricted in his experience of anxiety that is engendered by the exigencies of parish life or, in other words, he seeks to be more flexible, open, accepting, and loving in response to another's presenting needs and expressed feelings.<sup>51</sup> At this point it is interesting to note these practices foundationally assume the significant presence of the body. A body that moves and feels itself moving along a disciplined path allows Thomas to move through differing states of emotion as he walks the labyrinth. His body joined with others as the body of Christ in mid-week worship is the experiencing of Sabbath rest, the calm repose of his experiencing and interpreting self. Attention to the body in these practices may move back and forth along a continuum of felt and sensate awareness, from the immanent experience of a suffering body to a body that is ecstatic, outside itself in transcendent celebration of feeling and knowing the liveliness of loving and being loved.<sup>52</sup>

While the aforementioned practices seem to be more sublime in the context of traditional spirituality, Thomas is also intentional in cultivating more mundane practices of walking that are relational and contextual. His notion of "walking with God" extends to walking with and for others in practical ways that are attentive to issues of social

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<sup>51</sup>Curious, open, accepting and loving (COAL) are the words to describe being coherent and cohesive, the experience of integration, and the experience of truth. See Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 244-246.

<sup>52</sup>The body's experience of intentional rest in practices of mindful awareness calls to mind the image of the Sabbath. Important in this regard are the emphases of Jurgen Moltmann and Abraham Heschel. Time and space and bodily lives assume significance practically and relationally in the prayerful space of the Sabbath. See especially Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951).

justice. (1L30p2) Walking incarnates commitments. Walking enlarges his social space and includes creation. Indeed, it is awareness of particular communities and their needs that orient him to be out and about in walking: the Saturday morning drug marches in his urban neighborhood; the nightly walks of picking up trash; walking around the lake, greeting people and working together to protect the fragile shoreline. (2L45fp9, 1L31fp9, 2L29fp14)

Thomas' centering experiences situated in the relational body are helpful to keep in mind as we consider monitoring and modifying practices within each domain of integration. Also pertinent to the unfolding discussion is the foundational assumption of personhood as multiple, recalling the notion of hybrid identity as we anticipate how the idea of the multiple self renders more complex the work of integration even as it also allows for more specific and clear intervening practices.<sup>53</sup> To understand more clearly the movement of integration in all the domains it is necessary to address upfront a primary paradox of human experience that, while lived, is not necessarily at the forefront of our consciousness although it is accessible to our conscious experience in modifying and monitoring practices. We turn now to exploring the idea of the core self and the experience of multiple self-states.

#### Paradox: The Illusion of the Core Self and Multiple Self-States

This existential human paradox will be rendered more complex by the following descriptions even as it refers back to the significance of *intentional awareness* of mindful

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<sup>53</sup>For a psychoanalytic perspective attentive to patterns of attachment as it relates to intervening practices of monitoring and modifying see Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*. See also the exercises in Elizabeth O'Connor, *Our Many Selves: A Handbook for Self-Discovery* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971).

and modifying practices that work together toward integration. Know too, that this paradox anticipates the last domain of integration and the *telos* of integration in the discipline of IPNB. Recalling the introductory words about the multiple self, IPNB understands the core *I* of the self as an intention and direction in life that makes sense of differing mental states of the mind across time and space, accessed through the coherent narratives of autobiography as well as through the direct experience of the present moment revealed in mindfulness meditation. *Coherence* and *cohesiveness* both are thus constitutive of our experience of the *in vivo* theme of *who I am*.

The experience of the core narrative self has to do with *top down processing* whereas the experience of the essential self in meditative practices has to do with *bottom up processing*. These two processes of the brain's prefrontal middle cortex processes (PFMC) have to do with ways of knowing and being that are formative but also differing ways of experiencing historical time and space. On the one hand, invariant representations of conceptual thoughts provide perceptual models that enable quick thinking and, on the other hand, direct awareness of sensory experience allows for clear feelings of livingness.<sup>54</sup>

The ability to move easily in and through emotions of changing mental states is one way in which emotion functions positively as a central organizing process within the embodied brain. In an integral way therefore, the emotional patterns of attachment matter in the development of the brain, highlighting the importance of relationships as enhancing or inhibiting the drive for coherent understanding of the self and thus,

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<sup>54</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 105-6. For the importance of such vital "livingness" see the writings of D. W. Winnicott that is further extended by the psychoanalytical emphases of Ann Belford Ulanov. See especially Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*.

integration. Positive and negative relationships matter, materially so, and are formative in our subjective and real experiences of ourselves, others, and God.<sup>55</sup> Siegel reminds us that

Studies of attachment have revealed that the patterning or organization of attachment relationships during infancy is associated with characteristic processes of emotional regulation, social relatedness, access to autobiographical memory, and the development of self-reflection and narrative.<sup>56</sup>

The vital need for connection between parent and child is just the beginning of marked, timely, and contingent collaborative communication wherein one mind influences another's mind. Thus, "the developing mind uses an attachment figure's states of mind to help organize the functioning of its own states."<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, it is these individual attachment patterns with primary caregivers that become significant "internal working models" or *mental representations* of implicit memory that uses the past to shape present responses and anticipate future action.<sup>58</sup> It is from within the organizing patterns of attachments that we experience the paradox of the core self and multiple self-states.

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<sup>55</sup>Relational theorists view dissociation not as pathological fragmentation but as the primary model of the mind with multiple levels of consciousness and unconsciousness, and important to mental functioning, is imagination that the mind is "more of a set of surfaces or representations with boundaries of varying permeability." Philip Bromberg states clearly "There is now abundant evidence that the psyche does not start as an integrated whole, but is nonunitary in origin – a mental structure that begins and continues as a multiplicity of self-states that maturationally attain a feeling of coherence which overrides the awareness of discontinuity. This leads to the experience of a cohesive sense of personal identity and the *necessary illusion of being 'one self.'*" See pages 78-80 in Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*.

<sup>56</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 91. The work of Mary Ainsworth through the "Infants' Strange Situation" identified patterns of attachment as secure, avoidant, resistant or ambivalent, and disorganized/disoriented that became the basis of adult attachment research by Mary Main and her associates in "Adult Attachment Interviews." See pages 97-111.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 95, 116.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 96, 104.



Integration has to do with bringing attention and intention to these organizing patterns of adaptation -- monitoring them so as to modify behavior, mental representations, and communication – for the sake of cultivating and strengthening (inner) secure attachment that is stable yet energized in its engagement of self and others. Intentional awareness is a dance between what is happening in the interior of one’s body, what is happening inter-subjectively in external relationships, and what is happening in other people. One can do integrative work alone or in the company of others. Either through self-attunement or attunement through relationships, one can practice skills of reflection, play with representations, and practice mindfulness meditation in the integrative work of making more secure one’s internal sense of the emotional bodily self as it extends relationally into the world.<sup>59</sup> It is this inner security that provides *stability enough* that enables us to negotiate unsettled relationships and changing socio-political and geographic landscapes as world citizens.

#### Ipseity: B-e-i-n-g and I Am

The direct in-the-moment experience of mindfulness meditation is an experience of the self that has to do with open and emergent awareness that is self-conscious of awareness as it unfolds, beyond the constraints of personal identity that is narratively

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<sup>59</sup>It is at this point that the issue of emotional bodily self and the experience of security become more complex in relation to the life experience of black women. The triple oppression of race, class, and gender render less secure or, in other words, more violent, their experience in the world. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison speaks from and to that experience, as does M. Shawn Copeland in *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being*. The black male experience is addressed most recently by Ta-Nehisi Coates as he reflects on how to “live free in this black body.” He writes, “But all our phrasing – race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy – serves to obscure the fact that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscles, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth.” See Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York, NY: Spiegel and Grau, 2015), 12, 10. Black lives reveal the mental representations that historically order the linked lives of black people and people “who believe themselves to be white,” the linked lives of oppressed and oppressor.

constructed. Such mindful experience of a *core self* amidst sensory streams of awareness is defined as *ipseity* in which the expanded definition notes the following:

Ipseity is the minimal subjective sense of ‘I-ness’ in experience, and, as such, it is constitutive of a ‘minimal’ or ‘core’ self. By contrast, a narrative or autobiographical self (Legrand, in press) encompasses categorical or moral judgment, emotions, anticipation of the future, and recollections of the past. This explicit sense of narrative or autobiographical self is often characterized as occurring in correlation with an explicit content, or object, of experience. It also appears to be dependent in some fashion on ipseity, inasmuch as the narrative self is in part based upon that minimal subjective sense of ‘I-ness.’<sup>60</sup>

Ipseity foundationally encompasses the necessary illusion of the core self and multiple self and, thus is the last domain and thus, the *telos* of integration.

It is helpful for the reader to be aware of this human paradox – to hold it lightly and with wondering curiosity -- in the following discussion of all nine domains of integration, especially with reference to Thomas Weston’s lived-through and narrated experience of *koinonia* in the congregation that gave rise to the *in vivo* themes. Wonder about ipseity, the *telos* of the process and practices of integration in light of his yearning for connection to self, others, and God. In his own words Thomas says, “I feel my ministry is about ... is all about relationship.... It’s as much as we clergy can be about being, being with people and in relationship and listening and comforting, challenging, speaking... and the main thing is about being ... B-e-i-n-g. Just to be.” (2L11, 19-20)

This priority of b-e-i-n-g may be envisioned as the ipseitous self is important, as the narrative self often is prioritized as the core self in theological understanding of personhood and is often viewed as the vehicle of change in narrative therapy. In the experience of being, the ipseitous and narrative selves are both important, separate yet

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<sup>60</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 99-100. See also the classic book by O'Connor, *Our Many Selves: A Handbook for Self-Discovery*.

connected. Each sense of self can be accessed, experienced, and monitored through specific practices that also open and strengthen one's whole being.<sup>61</sup>

The importance of ipseity shines through in the metaphor of the multiple self -- *braided selves* -- that seeks to convey also the illusion of singular coherence through the image of the *braid*. The braid itself is composed of strands that when woven together, offer heft and weight to this patterned cord. The braid is imagined as strong and flexible because its weaving is three-dimensional, "whose very coherence and binding power is made up of our multiple subjective experiences and states of being-in-relation."<sup>62</sup> In more detail then, imagine that

... this braid can flex and move with everything that changes within and without and yet is strong enough to provide a subjective sense of form that constitutes a subjectivity, a contingent and provisional 'I' that coheres even as it moves and shape-shifts across time and space.<sup>63</sup>

In developing this image of coherence further, pastoral theologian Pamela Cooper-White identifies four strands that together may be said to *contain* an overarching sense of self. These strands are one's body, relationships, spirituality, and embodied ethical practices and, as we will see, are affirmed by the integrative emphases of interpersonal neurobiology that tend toward coherence.<sup>64</sup> These strands that flesh out the felt sense of self have also emerged in the narrative data of *in vivo* themes.

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<sup>61</sup>David J. Wallin does an excellent job of differentiating the narrative and ipseitous self as he works with the patterns of attachment, noting when there is need for iconic play as part of the re-framing process of narrative or when practices of meditation are best for needed release and letting go to the deeper wellspring of the self. See Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy*.

<sup>62</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 215.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 214. See chapter nine in Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*. There he makes clear the difference of cohesion and coherence that enriches Cooper-White's use of those terms in the metaphor of braided self.

*Body*, first experienced as infants by the skin boundary of touch that helps us identify what is *me* and *not-me*, is responsive in its many experiences where we know ourselves as “this living, pulsing breathing animal-being of skin and bones.”<sup>65</sup>

*Relationships* name and mirror back to us who we are. Our ongoing sense of self is dependent upon others. Evocative of IPNB emphases, “[r]elational analyst Donnel Stern has chose the term *witness* to highlight the importance of mutual recognition, as ‘partners in thought,’ in the formative of selves from infancy onward.”<sup>66</sup> *Spirituality* encompasses the multivalent truths and experiences of relational values and ideals, highlighting the ongoing nature of inner collaborative negotiation of relational values and ideals.<sup>67</sup>

*Embodied ethical practices* make clear that our subjective agency is fleshed out and *marks* not only us but also others. “We have impact for both good and for ill, and the tracings we leave behind are maps by which others may come to know something about us, quite apart from our own subjective sense of identity and purpose.”<sup>68</sup>

The tension of paradox that is the play of the multiple self and the core self is illumined further by IPNB with its emphasis on coherence. Body, relationships,

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<sup>65</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 216. The many relational experiences of the body are explored through the visual landscapes of the medieval triptych *The Garden of Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch, and further extended by reflections of Terry Tempest Williams in her book *Leap*.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 216-217. For other perspectives on *witness* and *recognition* in a multicultural world, the following texts are important. From a philosophic engagement of Hegelian notions of identity and subjectivity, Kelly Oliver engages texts and survivors’ accounts of the Holocaust and slavery to argue for testimony to pathos that is “beyond recognition.” See Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. For an interdisciplinary perspective see Hoffman, *Toward Mutual Recognition: Relational Psychoanalysis and the Christian Narrative*.

<sup>67</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 217-218. For a classic text that explores the multiple self through the engagement of individual and group spiritual exercises see O’Connor, *Our Many Selves: A Handbook for Self-Discovery*.

<sup>68</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons*, 219.

spirituality, and embodied ethical practices are also conceptual realities in that interdisciplinary field. Note the earlier discussion on hybrid identity throws into relief the postcolonial understanding of the multiple self, highlights the role of narrative in the formation of the core self, and prompts awareness of the privileged interpretive perspective of IPNB in its illumination of the multiple self.

### **Domain One: Integration of Consciousness**

The goal of integrated consciousness is increased open and receptive awareness across all mental states, deepened through one's ability to direct attention and intention. Integrating consciousness is the challenge of shifting easily from state to state in a cohesive way of consolidated identity that is strong and stable and, with practice, a mindful state can become a mindful trait of personality. Attention itself is what activates the growth of neurons in the prefrontal middle cortex. Attention is foundational for *presence, attunement, and resonance* with others, predicated on the ability to pay attention to oneself.<sup>69</sup>

### **Presence: Intentional Awareness**

Presence is a subjective experience of “open and flexible movement through time” because of an objective *approach* state of neural firing and movement toward difficult situations instead of reactivity characterized by flight or fight responses “where

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<sup>69</sup>See specifically the first three chapters in *The Mindful Therapist*. Presence and its cultivation as clinicians is the overall project of the book as it delineates the internal world of the therapist, subjectively and objectively understood from the perspective of IPNB. Such a focus takes seriously studies that enumerate the healing which takes place in relational connection or, in other words, in presence. With this focus then, Siegel's book extends the importance of healing presence as understood theologically and pastorally in Purves, *The Search for Compassion: Spirituality and Ministry*.

narrowed attention fills us with biased probabilities or fixed activations.”<sup>70</sup> Presence calls for a secure or stable enough sense of self to be open to unfolding possibilities and thus “requires a tolerance for both uncertainty and vulnerability.”<sup>71</sup> Why this open presence is significant is that “...being receptive makes us available to shift into an open internal place and enable unpredictable states to be created so that we may resonate with others.”<sup>72</sup> Presence therefore, is dependent upon staying with bodily sensations in the present moment that then grounds inner movement that ranges across past, present, and future moments. The ability to navigate these three tenses of time and thus, multiple mental states, requires a dynamic and generous range of emotional capacity to be open to a variety of bodily sensations, images, feelings, and thoughts that are evoked in relational situations of conversation and behavior.

At this point, one is reminded of the pastoral experience of *relationships*: that *connection*, *conflict*, and *centering* coinhere in the lived-through experience of pastoral ministry, requiring pastoral presence of vulnerable openness to self and other.

Significantly, these *in vivo* themes do not merely describe the external experience of community for the pastoral leader that calls for such resilient open presence. These themes may also, in some ways, describe the vulnerable uncertain aspects of interior presence to which one is open and aware in the practice of mindfulness.

Presence then, as a learned ability that can be modified at the neural level of the brain and at the subjective level of reality is cultivated by *intentional awareness*, meaning

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<sup>70</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 16,22.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 13.

that awareness of awareness or meta-cognition, and attention to intention allows a person to draw upon the left-brain to *approach* instead of withdraw from situations.<sup>73</sup> Mindful practice allows us to receive what rises up from within. It is inner hospitality to the multiplicity of mental states. In that sense mindfulness enables the becoming of one's self as an inner good friend of secure attachment that allows for an attitude of approach and leans toward *ipseity*, or "our essential way of being beneath the layers of thought and reaction, identity and adaptation."<sup>74</sup> The significance of mindful practice has to do with accessing and living from the presence of *ipseity*, meaning that "... our *ipseitous self* retains a sense of agency and is open to experiencing the full range of awareness extending from bodily sensation to a non-dualistic sense of the world where the boundaries of the body no longer define where 'self' begins and ends."<sup>75</sup>

Our ipseitous self describes and is, in fact and flesh, an *open* self who seeks to be and become more open. We might think of mindful awareness as the practice of giving ourselves over to the inner spaciousness of our own observing, objective, and open self. To look within oneself and *observe* is to sustain attention with distance enough to see one's own mental activity with kind regard. To be *objective* is to note the difference between one's act of attention and the object of attention, and as such, objectivity is an act of witness. To be *open* is to let things be in the process of noticing without

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>74</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 99. See also the emphases of Tara Brach in her approach to mindfulness meditation from a Buddhist perspective.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 100. This understanding of *ipseity* grounds the beginning and the end of integration. The intentional awareness of one's breath as one practice in integrating consciousness becomes the "breathing across" the other domains of integration or *transpirational* integration. See Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 386.

judgment.<sup>76</sup> Observation, objectivity, and openness are the skills of mindful awareness that are foundational for presence. We draw on those skills in the practices of becoming aware of our breath or in walking meditation.

The learned ability to be present in mindful ways may be further cultivated by experiences of coming together, gathering around tables, and participating in the ritual of *communion*. These ordinary and ritual ways of being together become shared, communal ways of being vulnerable and open to one another. In other words, the subjective experience of these activities cultivates and extends the ability to *approach* or lean into one's self and one another. In particular, John Calvin who also commends further spiritual reflection after taking in the elements advocates a seemingly mindful approach to the reception of communion.<sup>77</sup> The biblical admonition to "stir up the Spirit" seems to evoke an image of receptive *movement* that is at once personal in its active agency and yet *open* to the transcendent presence of the living God. This stirring suggests inner awareness that is contained bodily while at the same time, this same stirring seems to open up further this vulnerable heart-space that is the body. In this open and opening way, the stirring awareness of (spirited) presence veers into the largesse of *hospitality*, both human and divine.

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks, 2011), 94-98. The emphases of observation, objectivity, and openness are reflected in earlier writings about meditation as well as current authors who write from a Buddhist perspective of mindfulness. See Levine, *Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying*. Levine, *Healing into Life and Death*. Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha*.

<sup>77</sup> See chapter XIV, sections 9 and 10, in John T. McNeill, ed. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. two, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1284-1285. In a way that intersects with Calvin's notion of the Spirit, are Moltmann's reflections on openness in prayer that speak to and from human awareness, agency, and honesty. These emphases nuance *in vivo* themes of *open*, *movement*, and *centering*. See Jurgen Moltmann, "Praying with Open Eyes," in *Passion for God: Theology in Two Voices*, ed. Jurgen Moltmann and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, trans. Margaret Kohl (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).



Thomas notes that the Spirit seems to be present to him during those moments of *centering* and *re-centering* in his experience of Mass as a gathered community and also in his evening time of prayer. Such divine presence allows him to gain proper perspective on his pastoral relationships and responsibilities. (3L10fp4)

The open receptivity of hospitality in the ritual of communion is extended by its table talk, meaning the poetic invitation to the table where God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ. I propose that in the prayer of great thanksgiving we hear as well as in lyric hymns we sing, the poetry of spoken and sung words gives us direct access to that bare awareness of the *ipseituous self*. In this regard I rely upon the insights of neurobiologist Daniel Siegel to uphold those claims as he muses on the power of words as both freeing and entrapping. He distinguishes between their power of distancing as symbols that provide perspective that we can share with others and also their power to conceptually constrain and restrict us.<sup>78</sup> However in his view, the words of poetry function differently than symbolic representational language.

In poetry words are fluid, slippery with ambiguous meaning, not tied down to invariant representations of *something else*. Rather, poetic words put us directly in touch with sensate experience if we are open and intentional in our reception of their message.<sup>79</sup> Siegel proposes that poems do so by prompting receptivity through four streams of awareness:

Poems evoke a *sensory* immediacy that is at the ground of mindful awareness. Poems enable us to *observe* with clarity as they show, but do not tell. The imagery and sensations of poetry seem to put old conceptualization on hold—and can even

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<sup>78</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 160.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 162. See Appendix A for poems that speak from and to concepts and *in vivo* themes.

burst our cognitive contraptions at their roots as they create new *conceptual* frameworks of experience. And poems give birth to a new way of *knowing*.<sup>80</sup>

Why this might be so relies on several perspectives, spiritual and neurobiological.

One is the intention of open receptivity on a subjective experiential and objective neurological level, further reinforced by Christian yearning for the presence of the beloved divine. Such longing desire in and for communion with the divine may be an experience of kenotic *desire* wherein one is emptied into an open mental and feeling state of being. Secondly, liturgical ritual creates a liminal space where subjective time is enlarged and deepened into an experience of *kairos*. Thirdly, mindful awareness of bodily senses in the direct lived-through experience of communion may diminish constraints of ingrained mental and feeling states, and so make us feel more alive.<sup>81</sup> Why direct presence and experience of the self is important has to do with the *playfulness* of being that is intrinsically related to (re)creation.<sup>82</sup>

### Elements of Presence: Attunement and Body

The interactive element of presence is attunement. Intentional awareness is extended to the clear perception of self and others, *relying on the wisdom of the body for clarity and connection*. Differentiating between our perception of the other and being aware of shifts in one's own internal world is the dance of attunement as perceptual

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>82</sup>Jurgen Moltmann helps us understand theologically the play within (re)creation from the three perspectives of time and in light of Sabbath and discipleship. In this regard, the work of Abraham Heschel is also important as he informs the thought of Moltmann. Each theologian makes contributions to a relational focus of theology that includes creation and thus, covenant in their claims about the significance of play that is presence. A related claim (to explore at a later date) is the intrinsic connection of play to desire. See Moltmann, *Theology of Play*. See also Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*.

awareness moves between self and other. Interpersonal attunement has to do with attachment processes and mirror neurons, requiring a person to become aware of bodily sensations and using *gut* level perceptions to imagine what might be happening in the other person. Thus, interpersonal attunement also encompasses intrapersonal attunement because we first need to tune into what is happening within our own bodily states. Recognition and misrecognition happen with regular frequency in interpersonal relations so the ability to stay with one's gut wisdom is crucial. Attunement relies on open regard for and the capacity to tap into the resident sensations and feelings of one's body. The body is central in the task of attunement. At this point recall Thomas' comment, "everybody knows I'm a weepy guy." (1L2p7)

How we focus on one's selves and, at the same time, take in the signals we receive from others is attunement. Allowing our selves to touch and be touched by people begins with an open body, aware of self and others. Thomas goes on to say, "A weepy guy. That's who I am and I can't help it... if something touches me it's what they get." (1L6fp7. See also 3L24fp19.) Thomas values this emotional engagement in its inter- and intra-psychic reality as *vital* to congregational life. In speaking of the youth group he comments on the vitality when they gather together weekly as *being honest*. He notes, "Because when you eat, laugh and cry together you know people are being honest with themselves I think, and if they can cry and laugh together and see that vulnerability in each other ... because from there they can go on a mission trip together and ... know each other more deeply." (3L26fp15) Attunement is vital to the individual body in its enlivening connections to self and to others, formative in bringing people together as a larger body or community. It seems honest experience of bodily wisdom in terms of

feeling sensations and emotions is openness-in-the-moment that characterizes attunement.

This honest capacity to feel one's feelings and bodily sensations is vital to moving through one's changing mental states in the robust experience of the multiple self. Such attunement is what lends life to gathered bodies of people, perhaps even causes people to gather together so as to experience the joy that inheres in such hospitality. I wonder if attunement may be considered a bodily form of witness or dare I say, *koinonia*. Thomas comments on how all the children experience and so learn emotional engagement of presence or attunement at church. He notes,

It's relationship building with the little ones, so it's the 6<sup>th</sup> grader, the little ones, the ones, its all of them learning at church that we can do, we do it all together. *We can show who we are. We can cry and laugh and work and pray and sing.* (3L26fp16)

As we will see below it is the witness or the showing that, in the parlance of IPNB, has to do with the tapping into our bodily emotional wisdom and thus the mirror neuron system that allows us to connect with the emotional states of others.<sup>83</sup>

The monitoring task of attunement is rooted in the body, noticing in the moment what is happening from the inside out, which is literally the meaning of *interoception*. Siegel notes that “[a]s we use our cortical awareness to focus a spotlight of attention on this internal world of our bodily states, we draw upon the sensations of our muscles, the signals from our heart and intestines, the overall feelings inside of ourselves.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*, 201-202.

<sup>84</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 44.

It is in the body that we register and feel those interpersonal moments of alignment and misalignment, and so a monitoring task of attunement is to journal about those feelings that arise in situations when the “tuning in” to others is mis-attunement. Because the body is dynamic in its changing bodily states, there is an ebb and flow of feelings even as there is the need to stay with and tend to our internal body with intentional focus. This intentional awareness of changing bodily states, each state with its attendant feelings, might be considered an incarnal experience of the multiple self.

The dance of attunement relies on the body’s experience of attachment that, on the one hand, conditions our expectations and, on the other hand, because of mirror neurons, moves us toward discernment in the moment about what is happening within ourselves and within others. Attunement is the dance between memory and anticipation, highlighting the connection between “neurons that fire together, wire together” as the associational basis of memory and the brain’s ability to anticipate “sensory implications of motor action” based on intention that “creates continuity beyond the present moment.”<sup>85</sup>

#### Elements of Presence: Resonance and Community

Resonance has to do with an internal sense of belonging, a sense of release into larger communion. It is the experience of *joining*, as in the experiencing and observing aspects of oneself coming together or in the experiencing of opening oneself to another person such that “each attunes to the other, and both are changed as they take in the internal state of one another into themselves.”<sup>86</sup> Siegel calls this experience of attunement

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<sup>85</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 174, 177.

<sup>86</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 54.

*feeling felt* where two people become a *we* by virtue of the expressed curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love of another, whether that *other* is internal or external. It is in this state of mindful awareness that (resonant) change happens.<sup>87</sup>

One might say that the experience of resonance is community: the internal community that resides within us in the plural self that is seen and enlivened by the presence of other plural selves whom we see and in our gaze come to life such that energy flows in and among and between us. This energetic field is resonance. Moreover, resonance can be described as a feeling of mutual belonging in community, of being held in its open secure presence. Of necessity then and seemingly constitutive of the ability to be open, is the attendant capacity to be honest and in so being, the importance of flexibility emerges as important to resonance.

In the words of Thomas, “if people here at Valley can’t be honest with me and I with them, and honesty comes in challenging them, in loving them, in just being able to be open. And that’s open hearts, open mind. *Open lives to God* is our motto here.” (3L34fp10) For him, openness has to do with honesty that is vital to community. *Open honest expression* in hearts, minds, and lives is the condition of possibility for resonance that joins people together in ordinary ways. Thomas, in talking about the community that is the youth group, notes that such vulnerability is “when you eat, laugh, and cry together you know that people are being honest with themselves.” (3L26fp15) The range of experienced and expressed emotion is the dance of resonant community. (3Lp11)

Siegel’s comments are similar, yet more explicit in that such a community is the condition for the possibility of transformative change. He writes,

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 55. COAL is Siegel’s acronym for the mindful state characterized by curiosity, openness, acceptance and love.

This joining is an intimate communion of the essence of who we are as individuals yet truly interconnected with one another. It is hard to put into words, but resonance reveals the deep reality that we are a part of a larger whole, that we need one another, and, in some ways, that *we are created by the ongoing dance within, between, and among us.*<sup>88</sup>

Such communion calls for vulnerable presence to self and to others. We can feel such resonant communion, objectively and subjectively. There is the aligning of nervous systems, the synching of our electromagnetic energies that we feel most often in the rhythm of our breathing together. There is also the witness of changed body or face that declares itself changed by the resonant presence of the other.<sup>89</sup> Thomas' ordination and installation as minister in the urban church of Baltimore might be considered a resonant moment among community. He notes that occasion as "joy of acceptance, I mean that's belonging, you know." (3L38p17) Such resonance continues in his memory each time there is communal singing in worship of the hymn "Here I am Lord." Over time his initial resonant memory is broadened and deepened in meaning, assuming a larger significance of diversity for him. (3L28p22)

It must be noted that resonance is predicated on openness or a wide window of tolerance to the other. Such wide welcome of resonant attunement is therefore based on secure enough attachment patterns. Then the work of integration has to do with monitoring and modifying what it is about past relationships as they impinge upon the present and condition our future. Thus attachment patterns, the interplay of implicit and explicit memory, and our narrative history come into focus in the Adult Attachment

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 56. Emphasis mine.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 57. In this regard, Moltmann's view of glory and discipleship as it relates to the gaze of God in facing human beings comes to mind as does Heschel's view of Sabbath rest.

Interview, the touchstone of making conscious sense of our ability to be resonant in a flexible way with self and other. The integrative work of constructing a coherent narrative or, in other words, the ability to keep re-authoring our life story in its own unfolding, relies upon the dynamic that memory retrieval modifies memory and its encoding and storage.<sup>90</sup>

### Pastoral Presence: Presence, Attunement, and Resonance

These comments about presence, attunement, and resonance call to mind a sense of pastoral presence, generally describing the contours of what that subjective experience may look like objectively from an IPNB perspective. In fact, Thomas talks about the joy and challenge of presence with those folks who are hard to be with and yet, at the same time he *approaches* them. He does not avoid them. Thomas states,

Just because I don't get along with somebody I'm not going to visit you because that's, that's not a Christ-like thing, I think. And I think after I go visit with them and have a prayer, I know in the past, it's been very helpful for the relationships. (3L5-7p7)

Presence that is approachable, that leans into open receptivity of the other while at the same time aware of one's internal self, is at the heart of pastoral ministry. Attuned and resonant presence is connection with one's self and with the other at the same time.

Such presence is not afraid of relationships. Thomas notes, "It's about being positive and inviting. A lot of people ... are afraid of relationships.... And I like to, you know, always bust their bubble about clergy and *who I am*.... I'm Thomas Weston who likes to have fun and can cry and laugh with anybody that I meet." (2L3fp2)

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 71-72.



Oftentimes the compassion of Jesus is invoked as an image of and way to be present to others.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Thomas draws upon the Shepherd image of Jesus as his guiding image of pastoral presence that walks with others through the highs and the lows of life. Womanist literature reflects this companionable presence of Jesus as one who, in the words of the familiar hymn, “walks with me.”<sup>92</sup>

In a related way and from the perspective of IPNB, “the fundamental way that we sense and shape energy and information flow in our lives” has to do with presence “with others and with ourselves – [that] promotes empathy and self-compassion.”<sup>93</sup> Integration of the domain of consciousness has to do fundamentally with strengthening and extending such presence, and in the cultivation of its practices, tends to the reality that this journey has a textured landscape of highs and lows, dependent upon one’s ability to approach oneself and become intimately familiar with one’s characteristic experience of anxiety. It is a journey of *tuning* into one’s self, witnessing to the presence of one’s *true self* as it were, so as to become one’s own best friend. (3Lp11)

The challenge of this work has to do with the window of tolerance, unique to each mental state and initially wrought by attachment patterns.<sup>94</sup> It is possible however, to strengthen one’s ability to approach and *stay with* situations that evoke anxiety, even to expand that inner sense of expansive openness to others. In ministry, the ability to work

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<sup>91</sup>Purves, *The Search for Compassion: Spirituality and Ministry*.

<sup>92</sup>Shepherd imagery is important here but will be more fully explicated in latter portions of this thesis. For womanist literature see Jacquelyn Grant, “The Sin of Servanthood: And the Deliverance of Discipleship,” in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes, The Bishop Henry Mcneal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion, edited by James H. Cone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

<sup>93</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, xii.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 50-53.

with and go beyond anxiety is integral to walking with others in their needs. Thomas states, “I think anxiety is a big piece of ministry and how to be less anxious in one’s life I think is vital.” (1L13p2) It is in this context that practices of *centering* are important for him, professionally and personally. Thomas becomes his own centering resource in his devotional prayer time at night and in his weekly attendance of Mass at St. Joe’s, as he draws upon the presence of others to work with and change his internal experience of anxiety. Thomas remarks that such times have to do with transformation and the presence of the Spirit. (3L12,38fp4) His intentional practices of spirituality seem to flesh out the words of the hymn so meaningful to him. “Here I am, Lord” emphasizes the human response to God’s presence, which is to say, committing oneself to following and being in close contact with God.

Mindfulness is literally the ability to stay in one’s own bodily skin while tuning into one’s self, aware of the following dimensions: input from the first five senses; of the body’s internal state; of mental activity; and of relationships. Mindfulness is thus being present to our very self. Beyond awareness of focused attention in any of these areas, we can cultivate awareness of the resting place within our mind. This is the center from which we are aware that we are indeed aware, and as such, creating and enlarging this *inner well of awareness* serves to strengthen and stabilize one’s consciousness. Breath awareness, body scans, and walking meditations are practices that deepen and expand this inner well.<sup>95</sup>

In regard to the attitude of these practices and in light of how Thomas names his experience of *centering* as his “walk with God,” the notion of God-images as companion

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<sup>95</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 70-76.

in our inmost aloneness is helpful in this particular domain.<sup>96</sup> If integrated conscious awareness is, in part, not only the ability to comfort, challenge, and companion oneself toward living from one's *true(est) self* due to experienced belief in the living God, then it is important to heed the words of Winnicott as cited by Ana-Maria Rizzuto:

I am postulating that in the healthy (mature, that is, in respect of the development of object-relating) person there is a need for something that corresponds to the state of the split person in whom one part of the split communicates silently with subjective objects. There is room for the idea that significant relating and communicating is silent.<sup>97</sup>

The import of Winnicott's words in relation to the integration of consciousness has to do with this description of the reality of the interplay of the experiencing and observing selves that metaphorically reside in the inner well of conscious awareness. Siegel affirms this trajectory of thought as he notes,

Within self-reflection and internal attunement, we come to resonate with our own state of being. Before long, the influence of the clear and open receptivity to direct experience creates internal resonance, an entrainment of lived and

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<sup>96</sup>The experience of God that is made sense of through God-images tends primarily to the transcendent aspect of God although there is an immanent reality to that as well. At the same time however, the immanent reality is present, especially through this wife whom he names twice as his *rock*, that then renders the transcendent and thus Godly dimension, immediately present. This more immanent dimension will be addressed more fully in a differing domain. It is important to note here that transcendent and immanent dimensions of God are connected and implicated in human experience. One might understand this by reflecting on how one can see the presence of Jesus in our brothers and sisters in Christ, thus experiencing the presence of God among us more immanently in a feeling subjective sense while also knowing that the objective reality of our friends is also transcendent because they are *other* than us. See interview (1L30p2) for the words of Thomas.

<sup>97</sup>Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 205. Her wisdom calls to mind the inner witness that plays out in the tension of paradox in the experiencing and observing self or the dialogue between the addressing and responding aspects of the self. "From his work with Holocaust survivors, and being a survivor himself, Dori Laub concludes that psychic survival depends on an addressable other, what he calls an inner 'witness.' It is the possibility of address that sustains psychic life and the subject's sense of its subjective agency. If the possibility of address is annihilated, then subjectivity is also annihilated. To conceive of oneself as a subject is to have ability to address oneself to another, real or imaginary, actual or potential." See Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 17.

observing states with each other.... Our observing self needs to be open to our 'self-as-living.'<sup>98</sup>

I propose that the intentional focus of attention that is mindfulness may be this interior play suggested by Winnicott that strengthens the self-part that is observing and the self-part that is experiencing, and in so doing, strengthens and opens up this relationality within the self that is then extended into hospitable relation to external others.

Just so, external objects to include the subjective presence of other people, also befriend us in such a way that their very presence attunes us not only to ourselves but allows us to be present to them. Such is the experience of theologian Jurgen Moltmann who, in the wake of World War II, experienced a chapel on the top of a broad hill as the sheltering presence of God within the confines of a prisoner of war camp in Scotland. Moltmann felt its healing significance through the words of Psalm 30.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Thomas experiences his wife as a *rock*, solid and dependable, a sheltering presence even, in the context of his pastoral ministry. In both situations, presence is saturated with *excess*, whereby the objective presence and its meaning is redolent with much more than the obvious, more open to what is intimately yet transcendently present from the future and hence, *vital* with *freshness*, with *newness* that is thus strengthening and stabilizing.

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<sup>98</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 206.

<sup>99</sup>Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, 33. He draws upon the words of poet Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das Stundenbuch*: "I circle 'round God, the age-old tower" and goes on to note in a letter to his family, "I end most days in a curious way. In our camp there is a hill covered with huge old trees. It is really the centre of camp life, for there is a little chapel on it where we meet for evening prayers, so as to end the day with a hymn and collect our thoughts for new life ... Perhaps we ought to see this whole imprisonment as a great church-going."

Touchstones are important -- internalized and/or externalized objects -- landmarks in the journey of life's becoming more true(ly) present and therefore, truly one's very self. Thomas' longing need to walk the labyrinth or seek out a homebound parishioner to visit mark the fact that mindful awareness is relational companionship, energized and strengthened by being in touch or in communion with self-parts or the external other.

At this point it is important to note that integration, not just in the domain of consciousness, but throughout all domains, is intrinsically about *movement toward* that uncovers, creates, and enlarges openness, intra- and inter- relationally. Movement is relational spaciousness within oneself that communicates its largess to others and in so doing, invites a welcoming sense of intimacy and intentionality to others. I propose that such movement has, as its intention, a sense of connection or communion, if you will, as its ground of being, and it is that intentionality that approaches the natural distance between others as bridge to cross rather than a gap or void into which one falls.

### **Domain Two: Bilateral Integration**

The right and left parts of the brain need to work well in their own respective uniqueness as well as collaboratively. The right-brain develops early and is the realm of emotional processing that is receptive and intuitive; draws upon holistic thought and metaphor that embraces the both/and perspective; is open to bodily sense and emotion; and draws upon autobiographical memory. The left-brain develops later and is considered more logical, linear and rational in its processing where words are important, both in written and spoken language, where literal thinking reigns and an either/or stance dominates.<sup>100</sup> The right and left hemispheres of the brain may not communicate with ease

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<sup>100</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 61.

to one another, and thus, that is the focus of horizontal integration of the brain, especially in attentive cultivation of autobiographical narrative.

Becoming aware of our childhood patterns of dependence in attachment relationships may be, at the same time, a rising awareness of a certain reliance on one side of the brain or other. Adaptive patterns of attachment can create dominance in one hemisphere while neglecting the other.<sup>101</sup> In the most extreme situation then, the adaptive life experience might be an emotional flooding or emotional desert. Being overwhelmed emotionally floods us with chaos and fear. Being parched emotionally tends toward rigid reactivity that is more literal and fundamental in perspective, missing the emotional relational spirit of the right-brain.<sup>102</sup> Right and left hemispheres are each needed as we process both implicit and explicit memory, as we make coherent sense of our life story, as we shift one from self-state to another.

The linking of both realms is integral to creative textured complex processing. Drawing on both sides of the brain in specific ways strengthens their cross connective fibers thereby enhancing integration, thus enhancing perceiving and communicating. We use the right-brain in sensing and acknowledging our feelings, attuning to emotional needs. We use the left-brain with logical explanations and ordered planning so as to re-frame stories that make sense of bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions.<sup>103</sup>

Significantly, bilateral horizontal integration of the brain relies upon *interoception*, or awareness of what is happening internally in our body, as does paying

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<sup>101</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 301.

<sup>102</sup>Daniel J. M.D. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D., *The Whole Brain-Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2011), 18, 20.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

attention to imagery and feelings. Honoring our incarnal bodies and their inchoate wisdom matters and is drawn out through body scans, reflection, and journal writing that tends to feelings and mindful awareness to nonverbal experiences.<sup>104</sup>

Thomas notes that “it’s probably a gift that God has given me to tear up at a moment’s notice,” referring to his ability to tap into and express his emotions of joy and sorrow through tears. (3L25p19) He goes on say, “I don’t hold that back, that sharing of mine and you know, I feel it in my voice and in laughter.” (3L27p19)<sup>105</sup> Thomas makes sense of his bodily emotion interpersonally as he makes “some time during the week for myself” by attending Mass at a nearby Catholic parish. “I sit in silence and they serve me communion.” (1L23,26p3) His more solitary discipline is walking the labyrinth on the church grounds so as “to slow myself down and to be able to focus.” (1L35p4) Thomas seems to be aware of his bodily wisdom through physical motion and people. In the context of the Roman rite of liturgy there is physical movement of prayer that while done personally, there is the larger context of the immediate gathered community as well as that community of saints which is evoked through narrative imagery of tradition and prayer, songs, and ritual. In centering through labyrinth walking it is a solo endeavor of being in touch with emotion through motion. Either way, Thomas is engaged in the integrative activity of meaning making.

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<sup>104</sup>See chapter six in Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*.

<sup>105</sup>Thomas seems to express the limbic language of *primary emotions*. “If we focus only on the easily named and universally recognized emotions – such as anger, fear, disgust, excitement, happiness, or shame – we can miss the real richness of our minds: the realm of what I call ‘primary emotion.’ Primary emotion is the subtle music of the mind, the ebb and flow of energy and information that we sense during the moment-to-moment shifts in our internal state throughout the day.... How often do you experience clear, unambiguous anger or fear? For most, it is rare. Yet your inner world is filled with subtly textured, constantly changing states – what I am calling ‘primary emotions’ – that continually color your subjective sense of being alive.” See *ibid.*, 128-129.

### **Domain Three: Vertical Integration**

The enskulled brain is embodied throughout the body in the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Balanced emotional response is what is critical here, so having the ability to feel, make sense of and draw upon the gut level wisdom of the body involves moderating or even over-riding the fight/flight/flee responses of the more primitive part of the brain, the amygdala. It is a process of connecting the body and mind; it is feeling the somatic sensations and allowing them to move from the brainstem to the limbic area to the prefrontal middle cortex (PFMC).<sup>106</sup> What is at stake here in this domain is the ability to be present with full awareness of our feelings and thus, also feel our way into the interior world of others and so be able to connect empathetically with them.

Significantly, we are called to be at home in our bodies. Inhabiting our bodies and staying within our own skin can be a hard task of making friends with the felt anxiety of emotions and feelings that were once banished for the sake of survival. Yet we need the flow of subcortical energy and information so as to live a rich textured life of meaning. Meaning has to do with the limbic language of our primary emotions that is “the subtle music of the mind, the ebb and flow of energy and information that we sense during the moment-to-moment shifts in our internal state throughout the day.”<sup>107</sup> Emotions provide the subjective feel or sense of being alive. Hence, the meaning of our own subjective life has to do objectively with the capacity to feel bodily sensations and emotions, beginning with the appraisal of situational safety that is further assessed with input from the PFMC.

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<sup>106</sup>See chapter thirteen in Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*.

<sup>107</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 128.



And thus the work of integration in this domain is to stimulate the activation and growth of neuronal input from the laminal and limbic areas to the cortex area and strengthen the ability of the PFMC to receive and work broadly with this data.<sup>108</sup>

In other words, the work of integration in this domain is to widen our *window of tolerance* in terms of mindful awareness of our shifting bodily states. Note that we have multiple windows of tolerance and each one is broad or narrow with regard to certain emotional states and how we defend against certain feelings with a learned reaction. Our comfort level with certain memories and issues, emotions and bodily sensations is intrinsically linked with multiple windows of tolerance.<sup>109</sup> It is at this level of feeling emotions in and through changing body states that we experience the multiple self.

Work of personal change in widening these many windows of tolerance sometimes needs the initial trusting presence of another body to secure and hold the pain and vulnerability of being in touch with what was sealed off and dead. It is hard work to come alive to once dead parts of the body self. Awakening to the emotional body encompasses lament and grief over missing parts of the self and cut off relationships.<sup>110</sup> Tending to the body and its need, materially and imaginatively, for a *safe place* in association with mindfulness of bodily sensations raises questions about the church. Is the body of Christ a *safe enough* place for people to get in touch with the wisdom of their

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<sup>108</sup>See chapter thirteen in Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*.

<sup>109</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 137.

<sup>110</sup>It is akin to the work of the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep to bring back into the fold. Or it is the experience of the leper who seeks out Jesus so as to be restored to his own body as well as the larger communal body.

body and emotions? How can liturgy allow for intentional connection to bodily sensations and emotions so as to enlarge our window of tolerance in different self-states?

Thomas is a visible witness of emotional expression in the congregation. He notes, “everybody knows I’m a weepy guy” and goes on to say that “it comes from, I think, my deep *connection* to people and my love of them. I’m a good crier and a good laugher.” (1L2fpp7; 1L5fp22) Thomas also refers to the importance of people outside the church knowing him as clergy who is just like them as “normal everyday saint sinner folk” and that “by being on level ground with people outside the church and for them to get to know *who I am* other than Rev. Thomas Weston. I’m Thomas Weston who likes to have fun and can cry and laugh with anybody that I meet.” (2L6fp2) Emotional range and the ability to be in touch with it in the presence of others in a variety of settings is foundational to our own vitality and sense of connection to our bodily self.

As a congregational leader Thomas considers emotions as constitutive of community. In talking about a session meeting he comments, “if there’s not laughter, you know, then it wasn’t *community*. It wasn’t a time together to laugh and cry.” (3L24fp17) Of all the emotions he highlights, *joy* is integral. “There’s gotta be joy. ‘I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.’ ... Joy to me is very important.... For me, it’s a feeling of lightness, of freshness, of newness.... There are a variety of things that can bring joy.” (3L17fp17) Thomas further speaks of trustworthy relationships and in that context notes “Joy is important though and, you know, in all my relationships, all the committees I’m on there’s gotta be that freshness and newness.” (3L38fp18) Not only does Thomas feel

bodily joy in his goose-bumps and tears, he does so in the midst of the communal body of whoever is gathered.<sup>111</sup>

As was noted in an earlier chapter, the wideness of *hospitality* and the experience of *communion* have to do with the body in terms of *eat pray laugh cry* even as it extends to principles and values of *diversity* and *love*. As a leader it seems Thomas has wide windows of tolerance that inform his commitments to *challenge* and *honesty* in relationships so that *centering* has to do with *tune up* and *connecting* embraces *conflict*. It is in embodied relational practice that these themes are enacted that thereby keep widening the window of tolerance for a broad range of emotions.

The aforementioned questions and the *in vivo* themes in the narrative data highlight the emotional meaning of our narratives and thus, it is in the body that we begin to connect with felt emotion. Body-scan meditations, color exercises that evoke, help us recognize and move through different feeling states, and conscious work with dreams allow the body to draw upon wisdom of felt emotions.<sup>112</sup>

#### **Domain Four: Integration of Memory**

Memories matter. The past shapes our present and future. So do associations and expectations. Memory conditions our experience of all three tenses of time. To live freely and with grace is to be able to move across all three tenses of time with ease. In this way

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<sup>111</sup>For recent perspectives on joy see Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp, eds., *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015). For neurobiological insights into joy see Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*.

<sup>112</sup>See chapter seven in Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*. For more information on emotions and the remembering body see Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. The earlier classic resource is Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. Also writing on the body within the realm of trauma literature but with current awareness of neuroscience is Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. For IPNB perspectives on working consciously with the body see Fogel, *Body Sense: The Science and Practice of Embodied Self-Awareness*.

memory gives us an intimate and coherent sense of self-identity and knowledge as well as open and energized connection to others. The integrative work in this domain has to do with brain plasticity and linking up of implicit and explicit memory encoding, storage, and retrieval processes in the brain. Significantly then, acknowledging the implications of implicit memory and working with explicit memory processes allows for leaning into and making coherent meaning of our life story instead of experiencing rigid states of avoidance or being overwhelmed by intrusive states of emotional chaos.

The integrative work in this domain has to do with the reality that “neurons that fire together, wire together.”<sup>113</sup> This neuron pathway thus creates associations in the brain, linking together aspects of the present moment with past experiences. The brain acts as an anticipation machine that prepares itself for the future based on the past. Encoded patterns of memory bias our ongoing perceptions and change the ways we relate to the world. In other words, “memory, then, is a process that is based on altering the probabilities of neuronal firing. ‘Retrieval’ is the activation of that potential neural net profile, which resembles – but is not identical with – the profile activated in the past.”<sup>114</sup> Memory is dynamic.

Memory is constructed through representations that are cross modal and rely on all the senses, dependent upon the mental state in which they were constructed. Memory retrieval is a memory modifier so that there are no *true* memories, but rather, ongoing elaborations of events.<sup>115</sup> The constructed mental models involve the implicit memory

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<sup>113</sup> Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 148.

<sup>114</sup> Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 48.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-52.

which is present from the early days of life, continues to mature and, throughout life, harnesses the brain's capacity to generalize from repeated events and experiences, thus allowing us to respond more quickly to present situations or, in effect to learn from past experiences. Siegel notes, "Prior experiences shape our anticipatory models, and thus the term 'prospective memory' has been used to describe how the mind attempts to 'remember the future,' based on what has occurred in the past."<sup>116</sup> This dynamic speaks to the formation and power of invariant representations and also the need to learn how to hold those lightly in the practice of mindful awareness that open us up to the interconnected reality of our particular self.<sup>117</sup>

#### Implicit Memory and Countertransference

This priming ability of implicit memory points to how memories are encoded without our conscious awareness and thus, how the emergence of these encodings does not have the *feel* of the past. Significant for our understanding of countertransference and thus, the multiple self and *koinonia*, are the developmental implications of implicit memory. Reactivated but not consciously remembered learning situations constitutive of implicit memory in the context of repeated experiences of relational patterns of attachment become states of mind and thus the condition for the possibility of becoming individual traits. Furthermore, "[b]eing with a particular person can activate distinct mental models that affect our perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and beliefs in response to this other person.... These models can shift rapidly outside of awareness, sometimes

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>117</sup>Bergmann et al., "Neuroscience and Spirituality."

creating abrupt transitions in states of mind and interactions with others.”<sup>118</sup> In a word, this relational dynamic is *(counter)transference*. We are most often aware of it through the experience of charged emotions, positive and negative, in response to a particular other. Implicit memory processes continue as an active process, conditioning our encounters as social creatures who inhabit many social milieus. The dynamics of implicit memory then, allow us to understand the formation not only of countertransference but also of *hybrid identity* or, in other words, the multiple self.

Our personal inner terrain is crowded with formative relationships that live outside of conscious awareness. Implicit memory processes mark our body and thus, our behavior. The past intrudes into the present without our conscious knowledge, forming us and re-forming us. That is their resonant power that attunes our presence in marked ways with particular people or situations or in more general ways of relationality. Siegel notes “[o]ur nonconscious mental models may be revealed as narrative themes.”<sup>119</sup>

Recall how Thomas talked about how he was *raised up* in terms of his first call congregation as well as his family of origin. These primary relationships, professional and personal, were formative in his pastoral style of embodied and emotional engagement with others. The sexual misconduct charges prompted Thomas to think more consciously about his tendency toward certain behaviors and reactions – like hugs -- that were derivative from his past.

Another behavior formed from his past is Thomas’ ability to *approach* others, even in the face of disagreement and possible conflict. This capacity to approach others is

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<sup>118</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 55-56.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

further associated with a constellation of behaviors that are thematic in his life: forgiving and *moving on*, being *open* and *connecting*, centering and *tuning up*, being *hospitable* to and *communing* with others around *tables* with a wealth of emotions present, to include *joy*. Thus, we might dare to say his countertransferential field is grounded in secure relational attachment patterns. And while he might be able to narrate the meaning and significance of those relationships through explicit memory and story, it is also important to remember that the underlying implicit memory processes remain outside the pale of consciousness.<sup>120</sup>

#### Explicit Memory: Narrative and Time

Thomas can gain access to the meaning and significance of these thematic capabilities and competencies through the processes of explicit memory. These memory processes emerge around the second year of life, depend upon conscious awareness and the hippocampal for encoding and initial retrieval, rely upon cortical consolidation for permanent memory, and characteristically feel as if something from the past is being brought forward into present awareness because of the recall of time and space.<sup>121</sup>

Explicit memory is both factual and episodic, meaning that there are propositional representations that are either true or false and thus orient us to the world in addition to autobiographical conscious awareness that is subjective self-knowing. Reliant upon

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<sup>120</sup>However much consciousness is enlarged and accessed, as human beings we can never fully access the always-emerging totality of conscious awareness. Rather, we can bring intentional and focused awareness to differing aspects of ourselves. Siegel talks about the differing spokes from the hub of awareness as his primary metaphor in this regard. Ulanov highlights this reality in terms of the play of object images. Wallin refers to both these activities as important interactions in working with all attachment patterns and their consequential narrative themes.

<sup>121</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 57. Attachment patterns of early life thus influence the narrative themes that make sense of people's lives.

working and long-term memory processes and finally, the PFMC consolidation of explicit memory is this self-knowing capacity that can traverse time. This self-knowing is *mental time travel* in which the individual can “have a sense of recollection of the self at a particular time in the past, awareness of the self in the lived present, and projections of the self into the imagined future.”<sup>122</sup> Developmentally around three years of age, this autobiographical sense of self is strengthened by intentional interpersonal communication with caregivers that link the external events with imagination about what may be happening internally with characters in that mutually constructed story. It seems that “our relationships not only shape what we remember, but how we remember and the very sense of self that remembers.”<sup>123</sup> This is the crux of narrative memory as it begins with story and “reveals the possibility that some of our most cherished personal processes, such as thought or even self-reflection, may have their origins as interpersonal communication.”<sup>124</sup>

Imagine how this self-knowing emerges for Thomas in his practices of centering, whether it is in walking the labyrinth, going to Mass, or visiting parishioners. In all these ways of being intentionally aware, the subjective experience of inner space includes what I call the *monkey mind*, or the interrupting sense of self-recollections from across all three tenses of time that impinge on the present self that seeks to be open yet collected through practices of mindful awareness. These mindful practices might be considered a *container* that allow Thomas, in his deliberate noticing, to observe and experience these passing

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 85.



recollections. In so doing he can make choices about who he is, who he was, and who he hopes to be. Integration of memory has to do with working conceptually with memory by observing and naming what is happening in the moment, aware that this calms the *not-knowing* of uncomfortable sensations and feelings of implicit memory with functions of the hippocampus that tend to factual and autobiographical explicit memory processes.<sup>125</sup>

Much like a youngster engaged in the play of co-constructing a story with a parent, the stories Thomas tells himself as images of self and others arise in his mind's eye, is narrative memory at work. These narrative images or representations are amplified in the course of his work as he engages in conversation with his colleagues and his wife. "Many forms of human interaction – from children's play and drawing to adults' joint attention to autobiographical reflections – involve the co-construction of narrative around memory talk between individuals."<sup>126</sup> Narrative is socially constructed even as its coherence is further aided by other social interactions and deepened internally by intentional work with dreams, guided imagery, and journal writing. Siegel notes that "[t]he myriad of representations in each of these processes may often surprise the conscious mind" and furthermore, that "defining the process of narrative as more than

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<sup>125</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 243. The work of mindful awareness necessitates a collected sense of self or a *still mind*, as it were, even as memories coalesce in that stillness. A larger frame in which to consider the centering practices of Thomas comes from the Hasidic tradition and in particular the writings of Piasetzner Rebbe who lived and died in Poland during WWII. The Rebbe was astute psychologically in his teachings on stilling the mind so as place oneself in the presence of God. See Nataniel M. Miles-Yepez, ed. *Wrapped in a Holy Flame: Teachings and Tales of Hasidic Masters* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 275-277.

<sup>126</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 86.

just the verbal creation of stories, we can identify how each of these internal experiences is shaped by the central narrative themes in our lives.”<sup>127</sup>

### Enactments and Memory

The coherence of narrative processes can be reflected in behavior or *enactments*, and allow us to trace organizing themes of implicit memory processes and mental models with details of explicit autobiographical memory. In words that further evoke psychoanalytical language, Siegel asserts that “[t]hough we can never see mental models directly, their manifestation in narratives allows us at least to view the shadows they cast on other systems of the mind.”<sup>128</sup> This process of reflecting upon behavior and noting autobiographical themes is typical of working with countertransference.

We might say that in light of memory processes, the self is remembered and remembering within social contexts and so is in perpetual process of creating itself from each new perspective.<sup>129</sup> On the one hand, we can recall many differing selves from our own past. On the other hand, in the present moment our experience of shifting from one state to another, “the state-dependent quality of retrieval suggests that we will also narrate

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>129</sup>*Uncanny feeling and haunting presence of ghosts* become ancestors when one is consciously aware of their impact. Such is the significance of cohesive memory as it is experienced in the present so that narrative can become more coherent across time and space. Theologically it is important to know the difference between cohesion and coherence. “To get a feeling for this difference, imagine this mathematical idea: A *cohesive* state is created as a set of equations that rigidly defines the in- and the out- group status of any variable that it is assessing. Here the circle drawn to define boundaries of the set is clear and distinct: you are with in or out, identity defined, certainty established. In contrast, coherence can be imagined as an equation that embeds variables under consideration into the numerical sequences of the equation itself. As each new variable is encountered, it actually alters the equation and changes the shape of the ‘self’ that defines the in- and the out- group membership characteristics. The shape of the boundaries is continually emerging. Here we see that coherence embeds flexibility at its core.” See Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 207.

our lives from the standpoint of multiple selves.”<sup>130</sup> Memory then, is another ongoing process that creates the multiple self.

It is worth noting that at this point Thomas, as ordained minister, inherits the biblical stories and in this interpreting role, his personal memories are re-storied by the biblical narrative as viewed through hermeneutical lenses of the Reformed tradition. Biblical stories as corporate memory of the congregation are enacted liturgically each Sunday even as they inform principles and values of pastoral care and social justice advocacy outside the realm of the church. Each person brings a host of peopled memories to their Sunday morning worship experience. The preached and embodied Word addresses the remembered and remembering self even as the testimony of Scripture illumines our past, present, and future. The experience of countertransference is at work in the listening and liturgical play of the congregation. Later on in this and following chapters we will explore the images and emotions of the *in vivo* themes so as to understand their meaning as it informs countertransference, the multiple self, and *koinonia*.

### **Domain Five: Narrative Integration**

His wife and colleagues, in other times and places of his life, have functioned in other ways too and yet, he has established the notion of them as *rocks*, with the primary biblical notion of that image grounding the other ways he has of talking about these people.

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<sup>130</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 88-89.

Rock as present shelter and secure place evokes the temple mount or even the larger mountaintop upon which Jerusalem, the city of David, is built. Rock is also present as the broad place of safety in many of the Psalms. Rocks are placed in the river Jordan to mark the passage of the Hebrew people into the promised land of Canaan. Life-giving water pours from a rock stricken by the staff of Moses in the desert wanderings.

Rock also evokes Thomas' experiences at Kitchen Mesa in the desert landscape of Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center in Abiqui, New Mexico in the aftermath of 9/11. (2L1-5p8) Those experiences amplify his associations of rock to conceptual ideas about openness. From the biblical notions of rock to the more personal memories of Thomas, we notice that rock as an image is multivalent in meaning, akin to a geological formation: it has many layers, each formed due to a specific history that takes shape over time. The layers of association grow in the work of interpretation, especially when such work partakes in mutual and reciprocal conversation.<sup>131</sup>

### **Domain Six: State Integration**

#### Condition for the Possibility of Identity and Resonant Presence

The integrative work of this domain hearkens back to the earlier discussion about the existential paradox of the core self and the multiple self, and thus necessitates extended explanation as this particular construal of personhood is key to my proposal of countertransference as *koinonia*. There are three dimensions of state integration. The internal dimension of integration links the different self-states that define the self across

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<sup>131</sup>As Thomas' interviewer I must admit that in the moment hearing of his experience at Ghost Ranch and in particular, his experience of Kitchen Mesa, my eyes brightened and I leaned forward. I too have seen Kitchen Mesa from the desert floor of Ghost Ranch and have hiked it as well.

time, enabling a smooth shifting among these emergent and recursive layers that embody our fundamental drives and needs, to include such things as exploration and mastery, play and reproduction, sexuality and affiliation.<sup>132</sup> The various self-states that emerge from repeated ways of being are the basis, from an interpersonal neurobiological perspective, for conceiving of personhood as multiple selves. We have many self-states that comprise the unique coherence of persons as individuals.<sup>133</sup> Another dimension of integration is within a given state itself so that it functions more cohesively as a whole. The third dimension of integration is the multiple states of one individual *joining* with those of another individual for the sake of mutual flourishing of social connectedness that also honors individuality.<sup>134</sup> We might say that such integration is resonance: that it is both internal and interpersonal and thus, mutually co-regulating.<sup>135</sup>

Particularly congruent with what has already been noted about *hybrid identity*, and at the same time rendering that reality all the more complex, are the emergent and recursive patterns in the development of states amidst a changing context of internal systemic and external interpersonal constraints. Internal constraints have to do with the social space of synapses within the neural pathway. External constraints have to do with intersubjective experiences of presence, attunement, and resonance or, in other words, attachment patterns.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 200.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>134</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 245.

<sup>135</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 362.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

From a postcolonial perspective, the charged socio-political context with widening fissures between the *haves* and *have nots* makes more precarious the interplay of internal and external constraints of self-states in social flesh. The vulnerability of flesh knows no bounds: “The skin line does not so much protectively seam us in corporeality as create an unavoidable fold of unsecured vulnerability -- where so, pain and suffering, these saturating affects, will also likely seep into us.”<sup>137</sup>

Thomas, in the vulnerability of his first call congregation in an urban city environment, experienced the pressures of local neighborhood community responses to immigrant needs and concerns. He described a Town Hall meeting as

really my first speaking out for justice.... And speaker after speaker was just so violent and angry.... And after awhile I just couldn't take it anymore. I had gone in thinking I wouldn't speak and I knew I had to so I did, and talked about the love of God for all people, the Golden Rule. (2L22, 29fp9)

Significantly for Thomas, it is this first call congregation who, in his words, “*raised me into who I am* so I give honor and praise to that congregation” in his knowing and becoming. In his own flesh he was open to the intrinsic needs of others due to his vulnerability to God’s love. One incarnal relationship informed the other in reciprocal mutuality or resonance.

Integration of self-states is, in some ways, a *witness* to personal identity in that self-states can become engrained as personality traits, and further, that people can become known as being more or less open, more or less rigid, and more or less chaotic. The goal of integration in this domain embraces distinctive states and thus notes

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<sup>137</sup>Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the Global City* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 9. See also Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*.

boundaries, and at the same time, cultivates awareness of blocked, rigid, or chaotic states and notes the ability to shift easily between states. Integration ultimately respects the reality of multiplicity in this domain: “We have many states of mind that form the foundation of *who we are*. If a particular state is not integrated into the rainbow of available states of being ... then I may not be *open* to those states in someone else.”<sup>138</sup>

The differentiation and linkage of self-states with those of other people is foundational to living with open, objective receptivity and empathy in a multicultural world. In other words, resonance matters not only for personal coherence but also in community so as to make sense of the world in ways that are fluid and adaptive across time.

It is just one step further then, to consider the dynamic processes constitutive of state integration: countertransference and *koinonia* are descriptive expressions of the third dimension of state integration, the state of joining with another.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, this domain seems to be significantly poised, as if a fulcrum, foundational to those domains already mentioned, as well grounding the interpersonal, temporal, and transpirational domains. All of these assertions are predicated on the importance of attachment patterns of relationality and the vulnerable human body. So in that light, it is important to further refer to the *in vivo* themes as they speak from and to aspects of state integration.

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<sup>138</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 211. Emphasis mine.

<sup>139</sup>Asserting that countertransference and *koinonia* are resonant experiences of intersubjectivity highlights the importance of *coherence* and its relation to *coinherence* in the emphases of practical theologian James E. Loder as he implicitly nuances the work of Theresa Latini. Assessment of these concepts will be in the following chapters.

## Movement and Attachment: Amidst Constraints and Boundaries

Thomas notes the interplay of external and internal dimensions in change and growth even as he affirms intentional awareness of conceptual narratives that formed him. He says,

It wasn't who I was to begin with. I mean, I came in as a person who loved God, loved the gospel, loved people. But when you come to a community and you listen to what's going on, and you listen to the needs, and you know, it was like, 'Okay, this is life, this is the gospel, this is justice for all concepts.' (2L18fp10)

Thomas' ability to move easily across self-states is in part due to narratives that make sense of situations that call forth growth and change. He does not shy away from conflict and even views that as facilitating growth in relationships. (2L36p4) So his ability to be open and vulnerable in, with, and for the congregation is due to loving relationships that witness to secure attachments. We recall from chapter three the importance of the differing circles of community that nurtured his kind regard for others and continues to support his active engagement of other communities beyond the church.

The reader may anticipate already that attachment patterns are at play in the diversity of constraints as well as specific states where adaptability and flexibility can be broadened and built.<sup>140</sup> Siegel affirms,

We are always in a perpetual state of being created and creating ourselves. We will never be the same, and we have never been quite the way we are at this moment. This emergence of being as we flow from state to state is characterized by an underlying sense that there is an incredible amount of both freedom and cohesion within the system in a given moment.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 203-205. See also pages 209-212, 337.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 201. Jurgen Moltmann's conception of time highlights the importance of dynamic growth in community as well as connects with Kelly Oliver's emphasis on witnessing. It is the flow of state integration toward emergent complexity that exemplifies, from a theological perspective, the call of individuals to live as co-creators with God.



Freedom and cohesion within complex systems, internally and externally, characterize ongoing personal development of states of mind. How this is understood practically is affirmed in a compelling statement reminiscent of Mary Catherine Bateson's comments on learning, as well as earlier stated emphases from *in vivo* themes:

When we focus on perceiving reality as it is in the present, we can each experience this emergence as a sense of *vitality* and *freshness*. Recursive or repeating patterns in states of mind can bring a sense of familiarity to new encounters. This recursive quality reinforces patterns of response learned from earlier encounters with the world. In this way, past events can then have an impact on present moment experience.<sup>142</sup>

Thomas speaks to this dynamic reality of recursiveness and emergence in commenting about *transformation* in terms of what and whom he intentionally allows to speak into his life. He notes,

I do try to use my continuing education for that purpose: for *freshness*, *newness*, for people entering. I always want to think I'm *open* to new ways of doing ministry even though 'we've always done it this way before' is, you know, what people like to do. Fortunately people here are *open* and willing to do things different and so that's why I like to think that in me going out and bringing in new ideas and *freshness* into my own life, you know, I can share that with the congregation and they're very willing to *move* in new ways and that's what keeps things *fresh* here. *Fresh* for them and *fresh* for me. (2Lp36-44)

These remarks highlight that the development of states of mind and also their integration or, transformation if you will, has to do with the condition for the possibility of openness in and to the present moment, materially at the synaptic level and also subjectively at the relational level.

Note that it is both people and experiences to which Thomas is intentionally open, wanting to receive them for the sake of change, in his own relational body and in the

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<sup>142</sup>Ibid. Note the italicized emphasis is mine.

body of the congregation. It is worth noting that both complex systems – Thomas and this particular congregation – are linked, as well as differentiated and therefore, open to change in a way that vulnerable openness seems to characterize this intentional linkage of *called* pastor to this particular congregational body. We might consider this formal *joining* of one individual – whose personhood is understood as a multiple self -- to a communal body of multiple selves as an example of the third dimension of state integration. This joining is all the more striking in that the previous congregation was not open to the differentiated yet linked nature of the called pastoral position to encourage and welcome people of color into their midst. (1L11fp12)

It is worth noting too, that the congregational differences in such connectivity may well exemplify the collective patterns of attachment that lend texture to the intersubjective processes of countertransference. One congregation was seemingly more responsive and the other congregation was more reactive to the pastoral leadership in areas of social justice that had, ironically, to do with racial integration in the church. Blockages in state integration tend toward rigid or chaotic reactions and narrowed collaborative activity. Before exploring practices that foster openness and ultimately integration in this domain, it is helpful to be clear about what state of mind is from a neurological perspective.

#### State of Mind: Cohesion and Coherence

A state of mind is a “cluster of neural firing patterns whose distinctiveness embodies certain behaviors, feeling tone, and access to particular memories.”<sup>143</sup> States of mind arise from the brain’s efficient processes that bring together a variety of functions in

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<sup>143</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 199.

the moment, priming us to respond in cohesive, and therefore flexible and adaptive, ways. This *moment* of cohesion “can be brief or extended, and states of mind can have various degrees of sharpness or blurriness to their boundaries across time.”<sup>144</sup> Siegel proposes that a state of mind is “a pattern of activation of recruited systems within the brain responsible for (1) perceptual bias, (2) emotional tone and regulation, (3) memory processes, (4) mental models, and (5) behavioral response patterns.”<sup>145</sup>

So repeated activation of states of mind can become a self-state that is both cohesive and coherent, meaning that in the moment there is cohesion and across time there is continued effective functioning in that particular self-state. As one thinks about roles in public and private dimensions of life then, it is possible to imagine specialized self-states as including “sexual, affiliative, status-seeking, survival-oriented, and intellectual selves.”<sup>146</sup> Developmentally throughout life one fills certain roles, beginning in the family and in school. This contextual changing reality comes to the fore in adolescence with personal strong awareness of differing identities, some of which seem to be at odds with one another.<sup>147</sup>

Thomas is at ease in filling roles in differing circles of community. Beyond wearing the clerical collar he literally in-habits certain roles through costumes: Ellie the

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<sup>144</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 210.

<sup>145</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>147</sup>*Ibid.*, 209. In this regard Siegel notes that developmental studies and cognitive science seem to agree with IPNB’s view of the multiple self. As an identical twin, the awareness of differing and changing identities emerged earlier due to comparisons others made between my sister and me. I was the assertive one and my twin sister, the compliant one. This judgment perhaps was intensified by the visual difference of our bodies: I was taller and my sister was judged to be *more petite*.

Bear at the local elementary school, Santa Claus in Baltimore, a rocking DJ with dreadlocks. (2Lp12) The fluid adaptive nature of fleshing out certain roles is congruent with his value of “being a good community person.” (2L41p12)

The activity of states can be responsive or reactive, sensitive to contextual and thus relational realities, opening us up to incorporate new sensory information and thus new behavior, or closing us down with learned rigid behaviors that have to do with automatic survival behavior. Therefore, repeated synaptic activity -- reactive or responsive -- engages feelings, skills, memories, behaviors, and beliefs, and thus, a state of mind can become an ingrained trait of personality. People have various specialized self-states, each of which processes information so as to direct and achieve goals, so the issue of overall effective functioning across differing self-states and through time has to do more with coherence than unity through continuity.<sup>148</sup>

Effective functioning or coherence is important to Thomas. He states that in any community in which he has a leadership role, he views the *power* constitutive in those positions as having to do with *forward movement together* so as to accomplish goals.

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 211. Theologically, *coherence* rather than the *unity of continuity* over time may be what is at stake ultimately, in terms of understanding the work of the triune God as revealed to in the complete witness of the Bible. *Unity of continuity* seems to imply a static sameness over time. *Coherence* however, is understood as dynamic in that it has to do with effective functioning that emerges over time and because of increasing complexity in a system, which is to say, a relationship. The distinct plurality of the gospels is an example of dynamic functioning of coherence as the biblical narrative seeks to make sense of who Jesus is.

If we understand the spirited work and faithfulness of God as witnessed through the covenantal activity in the Hebrew Scriptures, then the New Testament witness to Jesus and the Holy Spirit may be viewed as not just *fresh* and *vital* but also as *recursively* bringing in relational freedom to human-divine experiences. In other words, coherence in the Spirit may be not just be limited to *coinherence* in Christ through baptism per the theological emphases of James E. Loder. Instead, we might read back and forth through the testimony of Scripture, noting that God’s covenantal faithfulness in the Spirit enlivens and makes new all human flesh in all time and space. The entire Bible testifies to God’s desire to further creation in ways that have to do with justice and loving kindness, forgiveness and freedom. The work of Walter Bruggemann in particular emphasizes the unsettling nature of God in relationship such that we are called to notice that it is not only humanity but also God who is called to change. Movement seems to characterize interpenetrating lives that matter and that seek to live from a more complete relational wholeness.

Delegating authority while retaining responsibility enables other people to “feel as if they’re doing something and can do something.”(2L44p13&p14) It is noteworthy that Thomas cultivates a state of approach in himself and others by engaging people in communal tasks whose purpose engenders some kind of healthier end state such as a reclaimed wet-land around the local lake or a congregation in which people’s talents are used for the glory of God. (3Lp12-13)

#### State Activity and Agency: Responsive or Reactive

Relationships are formative in shaping the responsive or reactive nature of differing self-states. “Our subjective lives emerge from mental states that are exquisitely sensitive to social interactions.”<sup>149</sup> We can say that the infant uses the parent’s mind to organize its own self-regulation as part of personal growth and development. The I-Thou relationship of attachment reflects parental patterns of self-organization. For example, states of shame typify children whose parents did not respond to their needs in timely, contingent, and marked ways.<sup>150</sup> Or consider the close relationship Thomas had with his mother and its formative impact on him; likewise with his father. In each case, their social interactions influenced him. He notes,

That’s a part of me, that caring stuff that I was brought into with the family.... So and there again, you know, community, being together, fellowship, *koinonia*, whatever that might be has been kind of a part of me: wanting people to know each other, be in relationship together. I think Sunday mornings here are *vital* for me, I mean, I *love* them. (1L35p7, 1L17fp8)

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<sup>149</sup>Ibid., 191. See also 203-205.

<sup>150</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 195.

Thomas approaches people. How could he not? His mother brought him along as she visited people in the community. Thomas helped his father make door-to-door milk deliveries in town. It seems he has secure patterns of attachment that allow him to approach others, even strangers.

Tears well up as he describes the importance, the vitality of naming visitors to the congregation or acknowledging people he encounters in his neighborhood walks around the lake. By his own admission, the act of seeing people and acknowledging them in greeting is an expression of “love and care.” Furthermore, emotion is elicited in Thomas by recalling these acts of kindness and his family’s influence in that regard. “It’s more of a kind of influence [than daily ritual]. It’s a simple thing that dad ingrained in me.” (1L4p9) That influence is seen in his moving around the church during fellowship suppers to connect with people and dropping in to visit groups that use the church building throughout the week. It also influences the way he navigates the wider context of his work: his ecumenical work with congregations in his city and his volunteer activities with neighborhood elementary schools. These are the positive examples of interpersonal systems and dyadic states of mind that nurtured him as a child. Thomas is secure enough to interact in situations of negativity. He leans into conflict despite feelings of anxiety and approaches others in conversation. He lives from the attitude that “every day is *fresh*” and an occasion for blessing and *joy*. (1L33p10)

A common human experience is the regression to earlier self-states, often unconscious, when as adults we return home to our family of origin, and the family way of being together as a system is reestablished. The familiar old ways of responding to one another’s states of mind as parents and child emerges once again: “Literally, what this

means is that each of their brains is responding to this new setting [of the grown child's returning home] with an alteration in its individual constraints to make old patterns of states of mind more likely to occur."<sup>151</sup> These automatic ways of being together as parent and child occur as states of mind shift simultaneously within a family system.

Imagine then, how in the experience of countertransference, a regressive state of mind may be evoked, and the power of the past impinging upon a present relationship. Imagine further then, how in the congregational experience of *koinonia*, a countertransference experience may be regressive and overwhelming in its charged nature of negativity. This reality points toward the necessity of monitoring and modifying practices that bring internal awareness to these old patterns and their formative power.

Just as we use other people's minds to organize our own minds, so we can cultivate inner resources of the self to regulate one's own mind. It is in solitude that we can return to and connect with the wellspring that is the ipseitous self. Siegel notes,

Solitude is an essential experience for the mind to organize its own processes and create an internal state of resonance. In such a state, the self is able to alter its constraints by directly reducing the input from interactions with others.... Solitude permits the self to reflect on engrained patterns and intentionally alter reflexive responses to external events that have been maintain dyadic dysfunction.<sup>152</sup>

Centering practices create the condition for the possibility of openness based on noticing through sensing, and then separating and linking differing streams of awareness.

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<sup>151</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 214.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 215. See also part one in O'Connor, *Our Many Selves: A Handbook for Self-Discovery*.

### State Integration: Practices and Information Processing

Neurologically, such mental processing happens in the neocortex with its six vertical layers in the cortical column. From the bottom layers six, five, and four flow in-the-moment sensory information and from the top layers one, two, and three flow information distilled from previous learned experience. Mindful awareness, cultivated by meditation practices, is in middle cortical layers three and four where there is the flow of differentiation and linkage of *top-down* and *bottom-up* processing. What grounds the mindful awareness process is being able to sit with the direct-in-the-moment-flow of sensory information. The other streams of awareness – observing, constructing concepts, and (deep) knowing – also exist in-the-moment but partake additionally in top-down processing and thus, also encompass issues that range across time and space. Siegel notes that “[m]indfulness may enable layers three and four to be disentangled by at first practicing enhancement of the bottom-up flow of present sensory experience.”<sup>153</sup> The monitoring and modifying practice of state integration is cultivating awareness of bi-directional processing in the neocortex through mindfulness meditation.

It is this interplay between top-down and bottom-up processing that is so important in negotiating not only states of mind (or the multiple self) but also intersubjectivity or the reality of countertransference and *koinonia*. Top-down processing involves not only conceptual thoughts formed by previous learning but also the reinforced bodily and emotional reactions from attachments patterns and models of good/bad and right/wrong. Thus, our present experience of states of mind is shaped by these top-down constraints. Bottom-up processing allows us to live more directly from

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<sup>153</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 105.



our five bodily senses, our gut level wisdom, awareness of self and others, and a larger sense of interconnectedness.<sup>154</sup> We might say that bodily sensations of bottom-up processing put us in direct contact with our ipseitous self. Yet we still need to bring that in play with top-down processing so as to clarify bottom-up processing through competencies of receptivity, self-observance, and reflexivity, all of which characterize the awareness constitutive of mindfulness meditation.<sup>155</sup>

The play of top-down and bottom-up processing (re)turns us to the play of the experiencing and observing selves as well as the narrative self and the ipseitous self. The importance of smoothly shifting from state to state or, in other words, navigating the multiple self or hybrid identity is highlighted by the constraints of top-down processing. Top-down processing or the invariant representations that have been formed by previous learned experience need to be loosened to allow for the deep knowing that flows from direct experience in a mindful state. The crux of this interplay has to do with the charged reality of invariant representations constitutive of countertransference or *koinonia* that witness to the power of memory and narrative in the self-understanding of the core self. In the words of Siegel,

The mind emerges from this matrix of memory shaped by interpersonal and embodied patterns of energy and information flows. We can see then that synaptic connections (memory) and interpersonal responses (social interactive habits) converge upon a personal identity that we then carry around with us as a transparent cloak that constrains how we live our lives. Mindful awareness is an opportunity to make the cloak visible, to see beneath its surface texture.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 134-137.

<sup>155</sup>*Ibid.*, 139f.

<sup>156</sup>*Ibid.*, 150.

Mindfulness draws upon the dialectic play of the observing and experiencing self to access the wellspring of the ipseitous self and in so doing, builds and broadens that sense of identity.

#### Mindful Awareness and Bodily Freedom: Emergent and Honest Identity

It is in the practice of mindfulness that one experiences the freedom of a larger interconnected self beyond one's personal narrative identity. This is the paradox of meta-cognition and awareness of personal identity at play. In this play of mindfulness an inner space of freedom is created and enlarged, enabling stability or state integration. This inner wellspring also allows for the creation of a more generous relational presence with and for other people. Theologically we might wonder at this experience of freedom, perhaps holding lightly the idea of being *in Christ* or *new creation* as a way to name this experience of life that is lived less with constraint and more open to creation. Siegel says it in this way: "Accessing ipseity creates freedom as it enables us to experience life with a sense of novelty and emergence. In many ways the restricted cohesiveness of personal identity can give rise to the flexible coherence of the ipseitous self."<sup>157</sup>

State integration is training the mind through intentional awareness so that the brain is re-wired. In other words, it is how states become traits. It is the daily task of re-directing attention to the present moment with kind acceptance of what is, and in so doing cultivate a state of openness to self and other, including God. This is hard work that brings us to the edge of our window of tolerance where we flirt with the anxiety of chaos

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<sup>157</sup>Ibid., 157.

or rigidity.<sup>158</sup> This training through intentional awareness involves key functions of the PFMC: a body scan helps *regulate the body*; the play of the observing self with the experiencing self enables *attuned communication*; the monitoring of chaos and rigidity moves us toward *emotional balance*; the focused and felt sensation of breathing provides space enough between mental activity and physical action or *response flexibility*; the naming of what we are feeling enables *fear modulation*; internally embracing others with an attitude of loving kindness stimulates *empathy*; moving imaginatively between past, present and future provides freedom of *insight*; interconnections of self and other evoke and enlarge our *morality*; and this morality, coupled with our felt bodily wisdom, puts us in touch with *intuition*.<sup>159</sup> This is the generativity of mindfulness meditation.

Significantly, mindful awareness takes seriously the body and its sensate experiences in the bid to cultivate open, objective observation of the self. To engage in this practice is to enter into awareness not only of one's own intra-psychic experience but also to become aware of the intersubjective nature of life. To sit in mindful awareness is to feel and notice the embodied relational aspects of experience, to know intimately and ultimately that one is not alone but in the company of the communion of saints. To practice mindfulness meditation is to know, from the bottom-up the sensations of anxiety and desire, and thus, to notice from an energetic perspective, what is *mine* from what is *yours* from what is *ours*. Such knowing allows us to wonder and play with notions of *what is* with *what ought to be*, to distinguish fear from love, and in so doing, to make

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<sup>158</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 225. The window of tolerance may be the inner expression of historical limited freedom we experience in the world. Hybrid identity allows us to see this inner and outer embodied connection more clearly from a postcolonial perspective.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 227-232.

responsive choices rather than knee jerk reactions. To observe the felt overlapping dimensions of relational space from the *inside-out* is ongoing integration that becomes the ground of an ethical spiritual life of accountability and creativity. To practice daily the art of sitting in mindful bodily awareness is to be in touch with emotions of the remembering self and present feelings of *joy* and sorrow.

Being centered through the practice of mindfulness is what enables *honesty* in relationship with oneself and with others. It strengthens an attitude of approach even in the face of conflict and allows for resiliency, forgiveness even, in repairing the inevitable ruptures of life in relationship together. Such is the ground that then enables generous *hospitality* and embrace of people. We can begin to see the contours of personal *agency* that is born of mindful freedom and thus, transformative for self and others.<sup>160</sup>

Thomas views honesty as the ground and dynamic for community life together. Honesty is how he names his experience of community: “if we can’t be honest with each other, we won’t go far.” (3L31p10) That journey together as a community is enabled by images of “open hearts, open minds, open lives to God” even as it is enabled by *centering* practices or *tune ups* that are times of retreats with members of session as well as various other retreats for men and women throughout the church year. (3Lp11)

### **Domain Seven: Interpersonal Integration**

The work of this domain has to do with *joining* from a *me* to a *we*. The earlier domain of state integration anticipated the specific focus of this domain, especially in its

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<sup>160</sup>For a model of covenant relationship that connects well with the emphasis of this domain see Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, “A Theological Foundation for Family Relationships,” in *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

focus of intentional attention in the practice of mindful awareness. In this domain, the importance of attending to *intention* is rooted in the resonance circuitry of the social brain. We are social creatures and our capacity to be attuned to our own internal states extends into attuning to others has to do with mirror neurons.

Mirror neurons in our PFMC harness the reality of observed attention and intention in actions such that the observing mind anticipates and learns from guessing about another's internal world that motivates its behavior. Siegel explains,

The mirror neuron system and related regions' creation of emotional resonance shifts the limbic and bodily states so that the prefrontal region can reflect on those changes and create compassionate (feeling with one another) and empathic (understanding another) responses.<sup>161</sup>

In this way one mind nurtures another, connects with another, enters into the interior space of another. Mirror neurons are what allow people to empathize with on another. This work is extended by *interoception*, and the ensuing interplay of mirror neurons with the wisdom flowing from the bodily viscera allows an individual to discern the difference between what is *my* sense of things with what is *your* sense of things and what is *our* shared sense of things.<sup>162</sup> Becoming aware of our representations or mental maps if you will, allows us to discern how to respond in resonant ways that are helpful to ourselves and to others in timely, contingent and marked ways. Such attunement is personal and interpersonal at the same time.

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<sup>161</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 169.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 168, 171.

### Mirror Neurons and Empathy

The intersubjective life is the playing out of empathy, each body entering into the *pathos* of the other. It is using the whole of our broken yet good bodies in a vulnerable way to make connections with other good and broken bodies for the sake of healing, individual and corporately. The practice of empathy has to do with using our bodily sensations as a way into feeling that then wonders about unmet needs, our own and that of others.

Thomas is tuned into the needs of those people who can no longer attend church. In talking about the meaning of visits with homebound members he imaginatively projects himself into the future: “It’s probably because that could be me in thirty years and I’ve seen, you know, so many elderly people just wanting to be part of the church.” (1L1p6) Thomas goes on to comment about the feeling dimension of the visit in terms of a female parishioner’s need for presence, both that of God and that of the community. Her absence becomes presence and thus, the visit is an occasion for re-membering her as part of community. He notes,

For me it’s allowing her to feel the church. It’s allowing her to feel God’s presence.... I bring communion so she is able to share the meal with me and become church.... It’s allowing her to know that she’s not forgotten.... Because I know what church has meant for her in the past and I know that it hurts her that she’s not in relationship with people here. (1Lp5-6)

The kind regard of Thomas is cultivated through an open attitude that literally translates into an open door in his office. “This is the space where I want people to be able to come in and for me to come out. I can see people coming in and out so I come out and visit.” (1L14p4) The open office area is a social space of interaction of mutual visibility that enables timely connection with congregational members.

Thomas speaks about the importance of seeing and being seen in the official role as pastor at funerals, noting “there’s always room for those pieces of building relationships with those families that are grieving.” (2L15p1) It is just such empathetic presence that keeps him rooted in ministry. “I mean pastoral care is just so *vital* for the congregation to *know who you are*, and especially new pastors coming in. It’s so *vital* for them to *see you do a funeral and how you can be there* and just love the people and walk with them.” (1L27fp18) Such care is not limited to people of the congregation but is extended to their family members who have no pastor or even community members not affiliated with a church. (3Lp1) The intentional activity of caring begins with presence that is attuned to others, resonant with their emotions so as to discern feelings and needs.

Thomas acknowledges he is “a visual person. I need to see you.” That need is linked with the importance of naming and greeting people, all of which has to do with “wanting them to know they’re loved and cared for,” whether it is visitors to the congregation or people whose path he crosses while out walking in the neighborhood. (1Lp9) From that same perspective, Thomas talks about the church being a place where people are missed, that is, their absence is noted when they have not been seen at worship. (3L9fp5) Overall, Thomas has a “vision that people would just know each other.” (1L42p25) He yearns for mutual seeing and feeling together during hard times and good times, where this presence of love and care is manifest in ordinary ways and nurtured in specific ways by congregational life together.

So there seems to be some kind of accountability of presence, a sense of bodily connection that matters because this particular body is seen and valued by others. We might say that this expectation about ongoing congregational presence and participation

of specific individuals has to do with anticipation and intentional awareness, that there is some hope of seeing and being greeted by one another as the body of Christ gathers together weekly. And is not this what we mean when we think about the church enacting the compassion of Jesus? – that people are seen and heard, that we are valued in and of ourselves, that we begin to meet one another’s needs by noticing who is present and who is absent when we are called to worship each Sunday. Thomas affirms that within the congregation “we all want relationships. We all want to be in touch with somebody and we all want to know that someone knows we’re not there.” (3L6p16)

The connectional church is a church where people are in touch with one another, actually enlivened by the sight and touch of others, and moving towards one another in an open attitude of embrace. Thomas makes clear that having been raised up in his first call church and influenced by that African American congregational culture his pastoral identity is characterized by touch and the giving of hugs. (1Lp18-19) Not only does he want to connect with everyone, Thomas wants to connect people with one another.

In some ways this sensing and noticing characterizes the ministry of presence and calls to mind the image of the Shepherd who is vigilant in noticing the whereabouts and health of the flock. In fact, Thomas draws upon this imagery and says, “As the Shepherd I want to again feel that people are connecting with each other, being fed spiritually. I want to make sure everybody is named and connected.” (1L27p23. See also 1L30-42p19 and 1L27p24) Thomas is full of teary emotion as he talks about visits to church members in the hospital, present to their birthing and their dying. He notes that in neonatal units and in hospice it is all about “being in their presence and allowing them, especially pre-



surgery, for folks to know the church is thinking about them. And I know it is important to people because I've seen their reactions, I've heard their thanks.” (3L26fp8)

The apostle Paul helps make sense of interpersonal integration in terms of emotional connections within the corporate body in his correspondence to the church at Corinth. He writes,

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the member of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.... If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (I Cor.12:12, 26-27)

Emotional resonance with one another matters in the life of the church. Likewise in that same chapter, the apostle notes the importance of gifts differing that enliven the congregational body. Thomas highlights the importance of gifts in talking about member participation and engagement in the body of Christ. He links seeing people's gifts with a calling to serve and thus, the importance of reaching out to members with a request to consider serving the church in and from their particular gifts. This request begins with receiving one another as sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, and thus being seen as valued individuals. Part of resonant and attuned presence in the corporate body is that “people need to feel needed in the church.” (3L19p13) To see and value people in such a way is to take seriously our baptismal identity and the fact that inclusion into the body of Christ is to become changed as this larger body incorporates individual giftedness and woundedness. This aspect of calling and serving the church is the resonant presence of differentiated people, each with their unique gifts that come together in the Spirit. And even if people are unable to serve and be present to the church in the requested way, people “feel the church is remembering [them] and noticed those gifts.” (3L12p13)

### Domain Eight: Temporal Integration

The experience of living in time and space affords the opportunity to play with and hold the tension of awareness that, on the one hand, we are created and finite, transient creatures who are mortal and on the other hand, we seek deeply the sense of being infinitely permanent and therefore, immortal. At the heart of this domain is the integrative work of acceptance of self and life as it is given, and so be able to endure creatively the existential anxiety that temporal existence poses. We need to learn how to differentiate longings for certainty, permanence, and immortality and then link these with the reality of life's uncertainty, transience, and mortality.<sup>163</sup>

The issue is whether one can broaden and deepen into generous hospitality towards oneself and others, or whether one chooses, at some level, to be rigid and chaotic in one's intentional awareness. How does one choose to live with insight that emerges daily from relational encounters? Is it with open hands and heart? Is it with the chaos of emotional flooding? Is it with a rigid determined stance that is closed off to self and others? The hope is that in the midst of our spirited creatureliness we can hold our finite selves in curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love as we seek to make meaning of our lives.

For it is through our ability to plan, anticipate, and make narrative sense of past, present, and future that we are in touch with the implications of time as temporal creatures. This is the gift and challenge of the prefrontal middle cortex. How ironic that *top-down processes* allow us to create invariant representations so as to process information quickly based on prior learning and so make plans, and *bottom-up processes*

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<sup>163</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 233. See also Levine, *Healing into Life and Death*. Levine, *Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Conscious Dying*.

draw upon the ability to sense and anticipate each moment, and so in tandem, these processes move us squarely into imagining death and thus contextualize the meaning of our very existence. This tension of paradox is narrative control on the one hand, that denies the inevitability of death and on the other hand, is open to experience present reality with detailed clarity.

Temporal integration then calls us to see clearly the shadow side of how our drive to make narrative sense of our lives can also constrict our ability to live fully. Harkening back to top-down processing Siegel notes what is at stake in invariant representations: “As we grow into adulthood, it is very likely that these accumulated layers of perceptual models and conceptual categories constrict subjective time and deaden our feelings of being alive.”<sup>164</sup>

### Embracing and Moving Within Paradox

In some ways this domain and its integration is a call to live life fully, to risk lively emotional presence in the feeling space of one’s body and in relational space with others, even and especially in the presence of death as just another companion in life. Being present to our own life and its eventual bodily demise is the call to be present moment-by-moment and breath-by-breath, and so discern actually the relationships that are enlivening. To discern life is to be in touch with death. The challenge is to not close down over those death-dealing experiences. Rather it is to allow those experiences to

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<sup>164</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 105. For a psychoanalytical perspective see also Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*. For a classic meditative perspective see Levine, *Healing into Life and Death*.

open us up more fully to life. We might say that navigating the gift of this paradox is that it puts us in touch with desire and identity so as “not to die an unlived life.”<sup>165</sup>

There are many deaths we feel and live through before we die physically. For Thomas it was the devastation and self-doubt about his gifts in ministry because of separation from his second call congregation closely followed by the charges of sexual misconduct. It was also facing and approaching negative relationships in the congregation, and still being open with and to people. In describing the situation he states,

I knew it was a small amount of people but I knew they were powerful people, and I know clergy get eaten up and spit out, but how could this be happening to me? I didn't understand so it was a devastating piece for me.... I didn't know if this would be the end of ministry or where I would go. I mean I questioned, I was really doubting, doubting my gifts, *who I am*, who I was. (1L36-45p12)

Living through that situation, Thomas interpreted and clarified the focal meaning of his ministry as tending to diversity, including race and class, in the awareness that the congregation was not able to move in such progressive ways of peace and justice because of a small group of people. He was able to affirm the value of *movement*: in terms of walking the path of peace and justice, congruent with his sense of self as interpreted by Biblical imperatives, and also in areas of trust and forgiveness with colleagues. (1L7fp14)

As embodied attitude, *approach* is the extension and movement of intentional awareness that values life. (1L12fp10) To engage a person in conversation despite anxiety of conflict is a practice of approach, trusting in dialogue as giving life. So is the internal dialogue between the observing and experiencing self that approaches and engages in life situations that feel like death or even engender death and loss. Such

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<sup>165</sup>Poem *Fully Alive* by Dawna Markova. See [www.worldprayers.org](http://www.worldprayers.org).

*openness* allows us to center our awareness and move through death-dealing situations to the other side with a narrative that makes fresh meaning of and connections with life.

### **Domain Nine: Transpirational Integration**

This last domain encompasses all the previous domains, a *breathing across* all others as it were.<sup>166</sup> Central to this domain is the deep interconnectedness of all of life: that we are but a part of a grand resilient cosmological web. In a way, the deep realization of our fragile interconnectedness is not only breath-taking, it is breath-giving and breath-receiving. We know our breaths here on earth in this one body are creaturely and finite, yet this same breath awareness leads us to the unending space of ipseity. Being rooted in the *ipse* or suchness of identity is a release into freedom, the freedom to be who we are uniquely and relationally called to be in awareness of our intimate and ultimate connection to life itself. Inherent in this domain is a sense of ethical imperative to live with wide expansive *joy* rooted in a fully alive *body*, in an awakened and kind mind, and with grateful and *vulnerable* dependence on others.

We cultivate this “integration of integration” through mindful awareness practices. From the perspective of analytical psychology we can play with those self-object images that are too narrow and constricted, loosening their hold on us. Descriptively and from a theological stance, one might imagine God’s Spirit breathing across the waters, and in its movement, differentiating that which is still connected throughout the whole cosmos. The *joy* of broad expansive welcome felt internally and

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<sup>166</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 386.

experienced in *hospitality* celebrates *diversity* and *love*. The breathing body takes in and radiates love.

Thomas is involved ecumenically with religious partners in his community. A Catholic parish provides a centering community that strengthens his own devotional practices. An annual prayer breakfast works across religious affiliations to celebrate and further wellbeing and human flourishing in the larger civic community. The image of *love* is what makes sense of these relationships and their connectedness. Thomas interprets the Golden Rule as “love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never ends. That’s the image.” (3L18p23) He goes on to say, “It comes down to in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, ‘Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’ And for me, it’s the centering of the love, the swirling. Who does not want love to be treated with love?” (3L28p23) Integration in domain nine is literally taking in and giving out this kind of loving awareness, breath-by-breath and moment-by-moment, each day, aware of its intimate cosmological interconnections. The experience of this embodied ethic of love goes beyond the experience of ipseity, and broadens it into a larger perception.<sup>167</sup>

### **Significance of Integration**

Attuned resonant presence toward self and others is what enables *trust* to emerge, breathing across all domains of integration: “Kindness and compassion engender trust and can be seen as our natural state.”<sup>168</sup> Thomas affirms, “I feel my ministry is all about

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<sup>167</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 320.

<sup>168</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 189.

relationships.... It's as much as we clergy can be about being with people and in relationship and listening and comforting.... And the main thing is about being, b-e-i-n-g. Just be.” (2L11p1) Furthermore, it is vital for him that this presence is dynamic and literally connectional, reaching out to touch people, even greeting people with hugs. (1L25fp19)

### Trust

A state of openness toward self and others speaks to the intra- and inter- relational dimensions of receptivity. This is trust: when we can *receive* or be in touch and connected to our inner and outer worlds. In the words of the psalmist it is the experience of the quiet and calmed soul who is “like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.” (Ps.131) Another image presents itself in the gospels: it is Jesus welcoming the child into the midst of disciples. These are seemingly peaceful images of vulnerability and reception that embrace the body. Yet these images’ larger (con)textual location hint at the reality of powerless agency and marginalization, and evoke continuing biblical themes of generous loving hospitality for the neighbor and stranger that is interrupted by conflict, perhaps even betrayal.

Trust is based on marked, timely, and contingent communication of secure attachment as well as repair of rupture in relationships. Trust in another person is an open vulnerable state of receptivity such that interactions feel *safe enough* for individuals to be their true selves in the presence of that trusted other. It can be nurtured through practices of mindfulness wherein one is self-attuned and thus fosters internal self-regulation. In both cases, trust as a “receptive state is created by the evaluative circuits of the brain and

opens us to the world around and within us.”<sup>169</sup> Just so, modifying practices strengthen us in being present to ourselves and to others, and create the condition of possibility to further open us up to approach others, even to those who have betrayed us.

The gospel narratives all speak to Jesus’s betrayal at the hand of his disciples, notably Judas and Peter. John’s Gospel describes the intimacy of the relationship with the disciples using words like *truth* and *testify*, *peace* and *abide*, *love* and *completed joy*. There is even a certain vulnerability to the Johannine image of Shepherd that describes who Jesus is in relation to the disciples.<sup>170</sup> So there is no surprise when the narrative data of Thomas’ experience of *koinonia* in the congregation reveals the dynamic of betrayal from a fellow staff member. Looking back on the situation he comments,

Oh yeah, I maybe *trusted* too many people, I mean, I’m pretty open with *who I am*. I give a lot of ‘line’ to people, you know, and it was my youth director who was the center of the secret meetings and some of it came about because she was a little more fundamental and couldn’t understand where I was on some of the more progressive issues... Not that I don’t *trust* people [but] I’ve had to come back with my *trust*, with my faith in people in the church again... the *trust* was really broken with colleagues, and so *trust* and faith in them, forgiveness took me a really long time. (1L7fp14)

Trustworthy presence matters in all relationships and especially so for a pastor who understands the particularity of his service in and among God’s people as being “given to the people ... to be there while people are hurting.” (1L40p18) The ministry of compassion and kindness emerges from vulnerable bodies. How can it be otherwise if we minister from *who we are*?

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<sup>169</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 86.

<sup>170</sup>The vulnerability inherent in the Shepherd image encompasses both negative and positive aspects. A *thick description* emerges beyond the Johannine image when the narrative of Shepherd King David and Psalm 23 are considered as testimony that witnesses to this complex image. This image will be explored later in this chapter.



So a practice that keeps us in touch with our deepest vulnerabilities even as it opens us up in support of the intention to approach others with a *trustworthy attitude* might be an example of *centering* for the sake of *connection* and *communion* or, in other words, *hospitality*.<sup>171</sup> In this context, the practice of the classic *loving-kindness meditation* is an important practice of modification that, from the perspective of Siegel, activates and stimulates “both the social- and the self-engagement systems.”<sup>172</sup> He goes on to explain, “When we harness the social circuits of compassion and kindness, we create a state of other-directed and of self-compassion that, with practice, can become a readily accessible internal stance and trait in our lives.”<sup>173</sup>

The intentional invocation of loving-kindness phrases evokes states of compassion. Furthermore, the dynamic linking of trust and compassion opens us up to live from our birthright or naturally created state of loving-kindness. This opening is a movement of tender embrace of our very selves with awareness of other states and dispositions that live within us. It is also a movement towards others, acknowledging their mysterious ambiguity of multiple self-states and their ability to navigate that reality. As such, the practice of loving-kindness meditation exemplifies, even as it strengthens,

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<sup>171</sup>For a contemporary classic treatise on centering prayer see Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (Rockport, MA: Element, 1992).

<sup>172</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 74.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, 83. For resources that address the wisdom of compassion from clinical psychological perspectives see the following: Jon Kabat-Zinn and Richard J. Davidson, eds., *The Mind's Own Physician: A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama on the Healing Power of Meditation* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2011). Christopher K. Germer and Ronald D. Siegel, eds., *Wisdom and Compassion in Psychotherapy: Deepening Mindfulness in Clinical Practice* (New York: Guilford, 2012). For resources about the daily practice of mindfulness meditation from a Buddhist perspective see the following: Paul Gilbert and Choden, eds., *Mindful Compassion: How the Science of Compassion Can Help You Understand Your Emotions, Live in the Present, and Connect Deeply with Others* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2014). Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life with the Heart of a Buddha*. Tara Brach, *True Refuge: Finding Peace and Freedom in Your Own Awakened Heart* (New York: Bantam Books, 2012).

the many connections that live in and among us, which is to say, integration or the *telos* of domain nine.<sup>174</sup>

### Truth

And so it is from this understanding of trust – breath-by-breath -- that truth emerges. Truth is grounded in freedom that acknowledges our personal and historical limitations of our autobiographical narrative as well as the larger dimension of cosmological interconnectedness. (John 8:31) To understand the significance of truth is to understand the functional difference between *cohesion* and *coherence*:

With truth, coherence emerges over time as the larger frame of ‘what is’ has space for the various elements to come together as in integrated whole as unfolding across time. We sense coherence with the fourth dimension of time, linking patterns of then with observations of now as we anticipate the emergence of next. Cohesion holds things together now; coherence reveals the interlaced web of reality across past, present, and future.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (New York: Hyperion, 1994). The following quotation speaks from a particular Christian perspective on trust, attachment, image, and feeling in the practice of *centering* prayer and prompts me to wonder if *likeness of God* can be understood as *state* that becomes a *trait* in the parlance of IPNB? And might the developmental movement between image and likeness, state and trait describe the energy of countertransference or *koinonia*? “Our trust of God needs to be free to soar in us unbound by our attachments to particular images and feelings, just as our sense of God needs to be free to soar unbound by the many other attachments in our lives that in fact are securing substitutes for the Real One. Over a lifetime we are called to relinquish many such attachments. We all know how hard this is. We need a graced trust if we are to relinquish what we so desperately cling to for security, for the sake of our *real* freedom and security in God. As this happens, we are slowly moved from the latent image of God in which we are born toward the actual likeness of God, for which we were made.” See Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Your Life to the Awareness of God*, 14-15. This quotation seems to describe the movement of discipleship, from glory into glory, in the words of Jurgen Moltmann. *Glory*, understood from the Hebrew Bible’s notion of *God’s substantive presence*, is a visible manifestation of the divine to humans. See Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 57-65. See Jurgen Moltmann, “Glory: Divine Eschatology,” in *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004). For an interpersonal neurobiological perspective see Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician’s Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 86.

<sup>175</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician’s Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 89. The difference between *coherence* and *cohesive* is also important from a theological perspective. James E. Loder is helpful in this regard as is Jurgen Moltmann. Tilden Edwards also may be a resource in use of the term *coinherence* as it relates to the aforementioned theologians.

Truth may be considered *integrative coherence* that depends upon the play of memory and ongoing life experience that links these elements “into a flexible and open sense of what is, of what could be, and where we need to go. On the physical side, we link the neural net profiles of activation in ways that cohere together.”<sup>176</sup> Seemingly then, there is a neural basis for truth due to “neural firing in which patterns coalesce and synchronize to yield representations that fit well together.”<sup>177</sup> We need to linger here for a moment.

The coherence of well fitting patterns of neural firing over time may be considered truth. The *present cohesion* that makes efficient functioning of neural pathways, and thus holds things together now, can be stretched and deepened over time into *coherence*, or a larger whole precisely because it encompasses not only the present but reaches back to the past and also forward to the future, making sense of all three tenses of time.<sup>178</sup> The ability to discern coherence is intimately linked with the ability to be in the moment of cohesive functioning. We engage in accessing and strengthening cohesive and coherent dimensions of our individual lives through two key practices that monitor and modify our behavior: mindfulness meditation and ionic play of images intrinsic to our narratives. One practice (in)forms the other as they interpenetrate each other.

Mindful awareness provides inner space generous enough to entertain all the subjective- and objective-images that emerge in this practice of meditation. This inner

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>178</sup>The ease of moving back and forth in time from the present moment is a movement intrinsic to the capacity to forgive.

hospitality welcomes images in all their complex dimensions.<sup>179</sup> Iconic play of images is part of the re-authoring of our individual narratives that happen in and because of such *lived-through* experiences of time. Engaging both practices allows us to move within and create a larger freedom that then invites a more generous hospitality in and for the world. Incarnal freedom sustained and challenged by these practices is thus temporal and spatial, and ultimately relational. At this point we might imagine worship as the corporate setting or horizon for these practices as we think about the elements and experience of liturgy. And in that light, we can further imagine the importance of the pastoral leader to be so engaged in these practices as an individual and also apart from the formal liturgical, yet in and for the sake of healthy congregational life.

To know the truth and for the truth to set us free is to make distinctions by cultivating meta-cognition. It is to differentiate, through mindfulness meditation, awareness itself from the object or subject of our awareness.<sup>180</sup> Such differentiation engages the sensory streams of awareness so that these images are experienced through bodily sensations, emotions, and thoughts. Particularly important to note is that images are charged with affect so that differentiation involves the experience of being present to emotional energy. Linkage also involves this same emotional energy, so staying present in the body and feeling is integral to mindful awareness and necessary to discern whether the energy is life-giving or deadening. It is important to note that while these images arise within personal embodied space and experience, they partake in the larger global arena of

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<sup>179</sup>Refer to the Rumi poem *This Being Human is a Guest House* in Appendix A. Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, eds., *Life Prayers from around the World: 365 Prayers, Blessings, and Affirmations to Celebrate the Human Journey* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 98.

<sup>180</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 93.

competing worldviews fleshed out in images and narratives. A postcolonial global economy only makes it more imperative that a pastoral leader be in touch with the imaginal sources of anxiety and desire through mindfulness meditation and iconic play.

Faithfulness to these practices can only deepen the pastoral leader's ongoing discursive dialogue with biblical and church narratives. These practices of course, also put us in touch with our *ipseitous* self and also the *reified* aspects of our individual narrative. The intersection of swirling subjectivities is held in the practice of mindfulness where we bodily feel and engage the experiencing self and the observing self. There is almost an *ethical imperative* to live life consciously and daily, with the intention to be present in the sensate body and imaginative conceptual mind. To do so is to play with the top down and bottom up information processes in the layers of our PFMC as noted in the integrative work of domain nine. In all these regards then, narrative resonance and the iconic play of images is important pastoral work that emerges in the inner practice space of mindfulness meditation.

We will engage the notion of truth as integrative coherence through the representation or image of the Shepherd in the Gospel of John and in the Twenty Third Psalm, an image to which Thomas referred in his pastoral reflections and that make further meaning of *in vivo* themes. To explore the biblical image of Shepherd is to explore the linked images of congregational leader, God, Jesus Christ, and people, and by extension, the congregation. The associations of this one image in biblical literature provide a *thick* description with which to engage playfully and mindfully.

In keeping with the importance of differing streams of awareness in our knowing and becoming, and having emphasized the importance of the sensate body throughout the

domains of integration, in the final section of this chapter we turn now to the formative role of images, feelings, and thoughts in our emotional communication and relational development. In so doing, the trajectory of IPNB continues even as there will be more interdisciplinary focus on theology and psychology as influenced by postcolonial theory.

### Images

Images are powerful, imprinting themselves on us in visual and other sensate ways.<sup>181</sup> Images emerge from the subjective and the social realms. Significantly, images are related to the trusting experience of secure attachment processes, implicating the creative living of cultural realms to the *third* or *intermediate space* of play. Winnicott draws attention to the comment of a Jungian analyst, quoting Fred Plaut: “The capacity to form images and to use these constructively by recombination into new patterns is – unlike dreams or fantasies – dependent on the individual’s ability to trust.”<sup>182</sup> So images are linked with three realms of reality formative for individuals: the interpersonal reality, the actual world reality, and the third area of play that is creative and cultural.

One step removed from bodily sensations are images, and images linger, an *uncanny haunting* of power and meaning that is almost accessible in its impact.<sup>183</sup> Haunting encompasses that which lived, the living, and the not-yet-lived so the meaning

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 249.

<sup>182</sup>Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 102.

<sup>183</sup>This phrase was coined by Sigmund Freud in his work in the psychoanalytic realm but is used now in various disciplines that are indebted to insights from trauma theory, particularly the seminal work by Cathy Caruth. See Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. For a theological appropriation of trauma theory see Lange, *Trauma Recalled: Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology*. For a biblical resource that views community through the lens of trauma see O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*. Insights from trauma theory condition postcolonial emphases in new ways and further highlight emphases of interpersonal neurobiology.

and therefore the power of haunting is emergent and present yet rooted in the past. The use of the term haunting today takes seriously the historical realm in its three tenses and so implicates shadowy social forces as they bodily impact the human psyche. Haunting describes the linkage of sociopolitical and psychological states:

Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view.<sup>184</sup>

Images are haunting in their power precisely because of their presence, resonant not only in the immediate experience of now, but also in the past and the future. It is their ability to move among the three tenses of time that troubles not only individuals but also implicates images in the life of the larger community. Just so, the longevity of certain images across time and space is indebted to this ongoing troubling. The image of *Shepherd* may be an example of this haunting presence, especially when one considers this image theologically from the biblical trajectory and perspective of desire. The ongoing livingness of this particular image enjoins questions about power, agency, and transformation in the context of historical freedom.

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<sup>184</sup>Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, xvi. Jurgen Moltmann's view of time highlights the theological importance of haunting vis-à-vis the three tenses of time. See Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, 128-129. It is worth quoting him at length. He writes, "There is not just a single past, present and future, with varying content, as the idea of a universal history would like to suggest. There are in fact different pasts, presents and futures of individual historical events. We cannot consider the past merely as the preliminary history to our own present. We must view it as a past present, with its own past and its own future. We must then distinguish between the future of that past present, and the present which has grown out of it. Present present has as its presupposition, not merely past present, but also the future of the past present. What is called present today came into being out of the hopes and multifarious possibilities of the past present. Analogously, we must distinguish between the present future (as an imaginative field of hopes, fears, and diverging aims, with a forecourt of already definable and as yet undefinable possibilities) and a future present (which is the reality that develops out of these). The present present is not identical with the future of the past present; nor will the future present be congruent with the present time."

A further complicating aspect of haunting has to do with the multivalent symbolism of images and their formative energy. There is no one particular meaning inherent in an image but rather a multiplicity of meaning that shifts and slides, dependent on inner and outer contexts to call it forth into conscious awareness.<sup>185</sup> Imaginal power is undeniable. And no wonder: there is death and life at work in each image, a positive and negative energy that haunts and holds us, further complexified by many associations, both personal and collective in scope.

Within us there is a veritable community of images at play within our multiple self-states. They enlarge or narrow our self-understanding. Some images are connected to roles and responsibilities whereas others remain in our dreams at the break of day. Some images guide us consciously and others come to us more cloaked, courtesy of processes of projection. Other images are resonant in worship and cultural spaces we inhabit. Some of these images are part of a larger constellation of images; others remain singular and isolated. Some images remain with us for our lifetime and others have a lifetime of their own as they have their way with us.<sup>186</sup> Oftentimes it is the shadow side of images that introduces us to their power. A stereotype is just such an example.

There is a cluster of images that provide energy and information about Thomas' experience of *koinonia* in the congregation: *open door*, *Shepherd*, *table*, and *hospitality*. Images in general and these in particular are part of sensate and emotional connection

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<sup>185</sup>Even at the imaginal level, the IPNB emphases of *cohesion* and *coherence* are at play in complex collaboration with the implicit emotion processes of countertransference. See the upcoming section of right brain affect regulation for more clarity on this process as it relates to countertransference.

<sup>186</sup>W. Paul Jones notes several patterns of orienting questions and corresponding answers that construct our biblical and theological worlds of belief. His notions partake in the power of formative images that we experience through narrative and song, poetry and liturgy. See W. Paul Jones, *Theological Worlds: Understanding the Alternative Rhythms of Christian Belief* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).



with one another. They allow us the condition of possibility to communicate with resonance and thus, allow for shared worlds of understanding and energy, and therefore the possibility for change and transformation. The central image of this cluster seems to be the *Shepherd* and, in terms of its particularity in Jewish Christian thought and tradition, may engender associative understandings of the other *in vivo* themes.

It is tempting at this point actually to play with the Shepherd image, to engage not only its imaginal power but also to focus on its historical, biblical, and theological representations.<sup>187</sup> Yet such conceptual theoretical play is not the particular level of play in the stream of conceptual knowing that is deep and noetic. Rather, the bodily processing of image stays close to its energetic and affective dimensions in the way of associational knowing, paying attention to emotions and feelings. This is hard work to stay in the emotional contours of the image itself and to let its presence be felt and known.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>It is interesting to note that in the discipline of pastoral care, the Shepherd image has been a focal and orienting image, and in recent years, also a debated image. Reformation era theologian Martin Bucer, a mentoring influence on John Calvin, draws upon it extensively in his seminal work, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*. The interpretive key for pastoral care is Ezekiel 34:16. Correct Shepherd service is a fivefold series of tasks and dependent upon the active lordship of Jesus Christ. The Shepherd metaphor illustrates the goal of pastoral care: that Christians may come to know the power and rule of Christ in his church through the Holy Spirit. There is thus a Christological connection to the pastoral office: Jesus Christ as Lord carries out his pastoral ministry through the ministry of the church in which Christ is experienced as a living personal presence of God with us. Pastoral care concerns itself with evangelization of those who are scattered from the church and reconciliation for those gathered within the fold of the church. The pastoral work of evangelization is seen through soteriological and eschatological perspectives and this urgency renders it the work not just of the pastoral office but also of all Christians. In the twentieth century Seward Hiltner in the classic book, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, uses the image of shepherding as an organizing perspective for pastoral theology. Viewed as an operation-centered field of Christian life and practice, the focal perspective of shepherding encompasses pastoral leader activities of healing, sustaining, and guiding for the sake of functional wholeness. According to Hiltner's schema, the pastor also communicates the gospel and organizes the fellowship of the church. For contemporary responses to the Shepherd image see chapters four, five, and six in Craig C. Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005).

<sup>188</sup>Recently at church during education hour, adults were asked to look at many differing images of Jesus and write down what they thought the artist wanted to say about Jesus and also to note what images were disturbing or attracting to them. It was interesting to note the difficulty for people to stay within the image. Most adults did not speak from their direct experience with the image but instead spoke of Scripture stories. Using a different frame of interpretation, one might say these adults did not speak from their embedded theology but from a received theology. It is the difference of first and second order thinking.

Such work is the depth dimension of knowing that is considered *reflective thinking* in IPNB where information processing from the bottom-up engages images, not the top-down linguistic conceptual categories that have been constructed from repeated learning. The mindfulness dimensions of receptivity, self-observation, and reflexivity allows for more engagement with working memory as it focuses on images in the context of a dynamic, uncertain world.<sup>189</sup> This mindful awareness is the play of attuned resonance with the self, as if one were a child again, lost in the reverie of playing with objects given and found, open to what arises in the moment.<sup>190</sup>

### The Image of the Shepherd

Thomas affirms, “As the Shepherd I want to, again, make sure that people are connecting with each another, being fed spiritually. I want to make sure that everybody is named and connected.” (1L27p23) At another point he speaks of this Shepherd image as integral to *being*:

The Twenty Third Psalm. There are all the time for you, just being, walking besides you through the highs and the lows, a presence with you wherever you go.... I've mentioned Shepherd being a good image for me being with folk, with the sheep, willing to spend time, extra time if need be. I think I may have mentioned it but it frustrates me when people think I'm too busy and don't tell me when they're in the hospital. (3L6fp6)

This Shepherd image defines the kind of exchanges that Thomas has with people. Attuned and resonant presence is important for him as pastoral leader, and not just with

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Each way of processing is needed. And it is important for people to dwell in each kind of thinking as well as be able to move easily from one to another mode of thinking.

<sup>189</sup>Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 248-251.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*, 160, 324-328.

positive people either but also with those folks who are a *pain-in-the butt*. “Just because I don’t get along with somebody I’m not going to visit [them] because that’s not a Christ-like I think. And I think after I go visit with them and have a prayer, I know in the past it’s always been very helpful for the relationship.” (3L1fp7) There is the condition of possibility of change or even transformation in resonant presence that is large enough to encompass positively and negatively charged relationships as well as good and bad times.

Pastoral presence is not confined to the hospital room or sanctuary, but is also present in the ordinary places we frequent. Thomas recalls, “I go to Cub on my way home and I run into four people that I just have been thinking about. They’ve been on my list to talk to and here’s four people that I meet at Cub. (3L103p3) Such presence is a meeting of those we hold in our mind’s eye and then behold and greet them in the ordinary social spaces of everyday life. The synergy of social synapse in the brain as it (in)forms the mind with its processes of sensing and feeling, thinking and remembering, opens and moves us toward others. Thomas’ long presence at the grocery store (ninety minutes) suggests an *openness* to and *joy* in others that may be a disposition cultivated by intentions of caring and concern over those parishioners he has not seen at church for some time. Unlike the Shepherd who sought missing, sick and injured sheep, Thomas happens to run into these people at the end of his workday. Yet in seeing them, he makes time for them: he is present to them.

These examples of Shepherd are not merely personal and anecdotal but are in fact redolent with history, personal and biblical, linking Thomas’ pastoral experience in ministry with that specific image in Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament literature. They also evoke the question of the Shepherd as more (or less) than humanly good. What

about the shadow side of the Shepherd image? From whose perspective is the Shepherd good? Or bad? Why? And what may we learn about ourselves, others, and God in exploring the multiple dimensions of a familiar image?

We seldom see much less explore the positive and negative aspects of an image, particularly if it is in the Bible. Yet it is important to do so for images reflect and shape the power dynamics of relationships and thus also reflect agency and transformation. There are unavoidable power challenges in ministering to and leading others; this is the vulnerable shared social reality of congregational life. Images so often live in these shadow lands of intersubjective space.

Images carry pre-reflective power, heavy with the past and charged with the future and so may obscure the present moment of encounter with one another. The countertransference situation of projection is part of any relationship; transference and relationship exist simultaneously, and that, if engaged consciously, becomes the creativity constitutive of dynamic relationships that values possibilities and newness, or re-creation. The challenge is to engage and play with the image so that it illumines and opens up the relational space. Such engagement allows us to make contact with the charged power of the image as it lives in, among, and between us.

Contemporary and cultural use of the Shepherd image conditions other, more traditional associations of leadership. In particular, the 2014 release of the movie *American Sniper* opens with a conversation around the kitchen table with a father admonishing his two boys about how to live life from the caretaking perspective of a Shepherd. This positive image is contrasted with that of a wolf and a sheep, each image valued in negative terms. The protective image of Shepherd shapes the imagination so

that one of the young boys becomes a sniper in the armed conflict against Iraq. The image of Shepherd is expanded to include not just the familiar rod and staff that wards off wild animals but also encompasses a high power rifle and scope that seeks out certain people amidst armed conflict. Now other people are seen as beasts – and sighted through a sniper’s scope – are shot to death to help secure a *pax Americana*. The Shepherd image carries this newer narrative of domination, death, and violence where people in other sheepfolds are seen as enemies and become targets of violence. How might this particular Shepherd image interact with biblical narratives of the Shepherd? We are called to pay attention to the interplay of the *found* subjective-images with the *given* objective-images of tradition.

Jesus was more than the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John; he was imagined as the gate/*open door* as well as the way and the truth, the resurrection and the life. (10:7,10; 14:6; 11:25) He was killed because of others’ perceptions.<sup>191</sup> They saw how Jesus fleshed out these images in his own body and relationships. These images took on a life of their own, still connected to the actions and stories of the marginalized peasant from Galilee, yet also connected to people who heard and hoped in him and to those

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<sup>191</sup>These images in John’s Gospel are particularly compelling when one notes that they re-present an isolated community’s perceptions of Jesus as they try to make sense of that compelling presence. The stark contrasts of the storyline in terms of *insiders* and *outsiders* become a study of exclusive claims that are real and powerful to a local community back then and also resonant in today’s local congregation connected to other local and global congregations. It is illustrative of *koinonia* as a paradox of tension: *exclusive* (imaginal and narrated) claims for the sake of *universal* claims of presence that is human and divine, immanent and transcendent, in the flesh and also Spirited. This paradox presses the question of located presence of interpretation, noting that from a postcolonial perspective, the universal claims of this gospel are felt from a dominant perspective of power and authority. As North American readers we often forget that we are called to (mental) travel in time and space in our practices of reading the Bible and in so doing, inhabit other places where power and dominance are experienced differently. With awareness of the self as multiple, our biblical reading is rendered more complex as we are called to be aware of and to cross borders of mental self-states and in so doing, also note how those interior borders are connected to external boundaries of nation-states and their socio-economic and political policies as they impinge on our lives and those of others. See Dube and Staley, *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*.

authoritative people who feared and rejected him, and connected further still to communities of people, across time and space, who make sense of life together in the play of these images. To people in power Jesus was a radical threat that must be rooted out and hung up on a tree to die. To marginalized people Jesus was a presence that conferred new identity and thus, new life.

These religious authorities, unlike the secular Roman powers, may have remembered the prophesy of Ezekiel where God as the *true Shepherd* addresses the Shepherds of Israel who have not cared for their flock so much as benefitted from their role and responsibility. The Shepherds have fed themselves rather than feeding the sheep. The prophet Ezekiel proclaims,

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.... I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David, shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. (34:15-16, 23-24)

The prophet reminds us of God's covenant whose *telos* is shalom for those beloved by God: secure and safe living in their land, whose bounty feeds the people and whose strong arm saves them from enslavement, free from fear of wild animals and beastly behavior of people. And the larger biblical narrative reminds us that such freedom is for all people in all times and places, that by faith we journey as blessed ones much like Abraham, blessed so as to be a blessing for others, led by God's Spirited presence.<sup>192</sup>

This Shepherd image evokes further biblical consideration and stories. One is reminded of the Shepherd-King David whose reign ranged from embodying the hope and

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<sup>192</sup>Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11.

the goodness of God's justice to unjust acts that called forth testimony from the prophet Nathan.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, and in response to famine and a political situation he had inherited, Shepherd-King David makes expiation by crucifying the seven sons of Saul outside the city gates and letting their bodies hang there for days. This time it is Saul's widow Rizpah, one of the bereaved mothers, who witnesses to (in)human injustice by the ongoing presence of her insistent vigil day and night. With the urgency of grieving love and her body she protected their bodies from being savaged by birds and wild animals until the rains came, after which King David collected the bones.<sup>194</sup> What are we to make of these sacred story fragments about the Shepherd David who is God's chosen one as king of Israel, the one from whom Jesus descends?

On the one hand, traditional presentation of the Shepherd image as pastoral leader evokes the transcendent presence of God and Jesus as the Savior where there is seemingly, a clear embodiment of just and loving kindness. On the other hand, the Davidic Shepherd-King muddies this glorious clarity with demonstrable human sin and evil, an immanent presence of entangled love as it were. Life and death is at work in these shepherd images. We are called to remember that Shepherd work and presence partakes of both realities in ambiguous ways. Psalm Twenty Three reminds us of the interconnectedness of life and death at work in pastoral presence whose nature is communal, human and divine.

Thomas cites this Psalm with reference to the image of the divine Shepherd. It is consonant with Thomas' preferred pastoral work of doing funerals more than weddings:

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<sup>193</sup>2 Samuel 3:2; 7:4f; 11-13.

<sup>194</sup>2 Samuel 21. See chapter two in Boesak and DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism*.

it is presence that matters, *b-e-i-n-g* with one another, and so experiencing constraints that narrow life and also delighting in the joy of broad generous places that support and celebrate life. In that substantive material presence, there is more than comfort given and received. There is healing for the sake of the world. A sense of centered stillness and focus leads one to walk along paths of justice and righteousness, guiding one to walk through dark and evil times and places. In that vulnerable place of being with enemies, a welcome table is set. Perhaps one is sitting cheek to jowl with enemies in the unity of fellowship – for it seems there is affirmation and anointing in the abundance of oil and in the cup of overflowing gladness. There is a sense of movement beyond wants and fears, from death into life: a renewed fellowship.

Playing with images is a recursive task, not a logical linear undertaking. One proceeds by leaps of thought, intuitive hunches that stay close to gut level wisdom. Affect guides us as we take in bits and pieces of an image. So does memory: we do not know the full narrative of Shepherd-King David. Nor do we clearly grasp the image of the Good Shepherd as it fits in with the other I AM sayings in John’s Gospel. Instead we are grasped by feelings not easily named and unrelated thoughts that take some time to interpret and process. This is the *working memory* of reflective thinking that needs time and presumably space in which to descend to the imagination of the heart.

When we are vulnerable to bodily emotion as a place where wisdom resides we can linger there, become aware of, and track its movement. In this way associations in, among, and between images emerge into our conscious awareness.<sup>195</sup> The images of table

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<sup>195</sup>It is important to note that the role of emotions in making meaning is complex and biosocial. Neuroscientist Ed Tronick notes, “... there is not a single meaning, but rather a laminated flow of meanings that emerge over time from multilevel meaning making systems.... It seems to flow logically, but it also is the case empirically that the body and brain processes engaged are not equivalent as different meanings



and hospitality are thus linked through this process to the image of Shepherd, dependent upon a broad, *open* space.

Thomas speaks of such a place and, significantly, this open space is initially named in terms of an image that comes to his mind as a resource for conflict. He points to a large watercolor of a desert mesa hanging on one wall of his church office. There is an adobe courtyard with an *open door*. I recognize the artwork by Georgia O'Keefe, and venture a guess that the scene is Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu, New Mexico. Ghost Ranch is an education and retreat center that for years was associated with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Thomas sees by my grin that I have been there, as has he. He notes, "We all have in our heads what Ghost Ranch is ... You can climb up on the bluffs and look out and see the sun set.... My one at home has the sunset on the desert and so for me, it's that peaceful place in the midst of chaos." (2L2-5p8) Some places haunt us with a feeling of home. They exert a pull on our heartstrings. External landscapes become images of art internalized as inner terrain of the imagination. Beloved places can become inner images that offer secure rest and beauty, a place where the experiencing and observing self feels at home.<sup>196</sup>

*A peaceful place in the midst of chaos* is an image evocative of the welcome table that gathers together friends and enemies, a nod to the Twenty Third Psalm. Such a

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unfold.... Although the narrative meaning comes to colonize the experience, it is never equivalent to the flow of the meanings *experienced*. It comes after the experience of the other meanings and is incorporated into the flow of meaning forward in time." See Ed Tronick, "Multilevel Meaning Making and Dyadic Expansion of Consciousness Theory: The Emotional and the Polymorphic Polysemic Flow of Meaning," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 95.

<sup>196</sup> Some practices of mindfulness urge the cultivation of an image of security to orient and stabilize the experience of sitting with the charged emotions that may emerge during meditation. Such images are considered *safe* places. One can make sense of this need by recalling the IPNB concept of the *window of tolerance*. Contemplation partakes of the play and rest within the intermediate space created by the interpersonal realities of inner and outer dimensions. See Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 2.

welcome table further invokes the vision of the prophet Ezekiel: the broad mountains of Israel where lush vegetation and good pastures nurture God's flocks amidst the scattered flocks at the mercy of Shepherds who have not fed their sheep. The power of this desert image is contextual. Thomas and his wife Abigail were alone at Ghost Ranch immersed in prayers for the world immediately in the wake of 9/11. He notes, "It's an image that I look at often and ponder things going on in the life of the church.... It reminds me of the peace that can be present in the midst of stuff going around us, so for me it's powerful." (2L40fp7) The image of a natural place, and in particular, this image of a nurturing and spacious place amplifies both the peace and chaos that exist, entangled in the always-emerging openness of historical freedom. It is interesting to note that this desert landscape may have resonant connections with the desert places in Israel.

Contemplation and prayer can be an open stance to self and others in intentional awareness of God's desire for peace in this unsettled world. Contemplation opens the heart to take in, digest, and be fed by images, even as faithfulness to the discipline of prayer can expand such images, thereby enlarging and opening the inner space of hospitality to the world and its needs.<sup>197</sup>

Furthermore, this image of wide wilderness and big sky draws attention to the *open door* in the courtyard. The thick adobe walls of the courtyard contain an inner space, a shelter from the sky and wilderness, a place of safety and gathering for people. The image reminds us that open spaces are both public and private, and that the two dimensions are linked. There is a *threshold* to contained spaces that needs to be opened and crossed, thereby allowing for commerce in either direction, a flow of contingent,

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<sup>197</sup>See Ulanov, *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*. See also chapter six in Ann and Barry Ulanov, *The Healing Imagination: The Meeting of Psyche and Soul* (Canada: Daimon, 1999).

contextual, and provisional communication.<sup>198</sup> In some ways, the watercolor scene exemplifies the church as community: “We are Christ’s body here in this little corner of the world and so what goes along with our church motto is ‘*Open hearts, open doors, opening lives to God.*’” (1L40fp20) For Thomas, such openness begs the question about thresholds and boundaries. “How do we leave this *table* that we gather at on Sundays and be Christ’s people out in the world? That’s always my challenge to the people: to be Christ’s body in the world, to be *hospitable.*” (1L1-3p21) This question is a question of bodies open to one another, able and willing to make connections with each other.<sup>199</sup>

Importantly, it is emotional and embodied interpersonal connection that Thomas’ remarks highlight. Recall his ability to access and express his emotions of joy and sorrow. Remember how he highlighted that junior and senior youth were able to eat, pray, laugh, and cry together weekly, and his twofold admonishment to them. Continue to be in contact with one another through texts and phone calls, and know that such times

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<sup>198</sup>Healthy collaborative communication is marked, contingent, and timely, characteristic of secure parent-child attachments. Such lively communication is important in fostering the capacity for navigating the ebb and flow of emotional energy in attending to the presence and wisdom of images or, in other words, contemplative prayer. It is why prayer holds us even as we are able to hold others in prayer. This original relationship in its security has a certain vitality and livingness to it that enables the child to play with confident abandon and to explore with tentative confidence. In the view of IPNB it is important to note the following about *reflective integration*. “By viewing mindfulness as a form of relationship with the self, we can unravel the strands that connect the three fields of parent-child attachment, prefrontal neural function, and mindful awareness. The nine functions that emerge from the activity of the middle aspect of the prefrontal region are both the process and the outcome of secure parent-child relationships. These intimate connections are filled with interpersonal attunement that enables the child to feel felt. It is our central proposal that mindfulness is a form of intrapersonal attunement in which you begin to resonate with your own internal state.” See Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician’s Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 325. To explore the importance of the right-brain in affect regulation as it impacts mindful communication see Allan N. Schore, “Right-Brain Affect Regulation: An Essential Mechanism of Development, Trauma, Dissociation, and Psychotherapy,” in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>199</sup>The material substance of bodies, hospitality and the Eucharist are explored in two books from a postcolonial perspective. See Caravalhaes, *Eucharist and Globalization: Redrawing the Borders of Eucharistic Hospitality*. See also Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*.

now, recalled and remembered in the future, would continue to be formative and life giving for them. Sharing emotions and feelings is important in the cultivation of relationships to self, others and God. The hospitality of God's table celebrates such vulnerability. The table talk around kitchen tables is an ordinary place that enables the process of continued emotional growth as brothers and sisters in Christ.

### Table and Hospitality

Having made clear the openness to and connections between table and hospitality, it is worth repeating how connections are important to Thomas. He connects and facilitates connections with others, inside and outside the church, and that activity of being is integrally rooted to what happens at the *table*. Thomas affirms, "Christ wants us to gather around the *table* and to call each other by name at the table ... then sends us from the *table*. And so how can we do that as a body?" In other words he asks, "How can we take being God's people in this place and take it out into the community?" (1L11-14, 20-21p20) Inner sanctified space is linked with social civic space. There is a permeable flow of bodies moving in space. Transcendent *agency* is linked with immanent and personal agency: human and divine activity is as one personal body of an individual. Bodies gathered around a table are linked with bodies that have not crossed into that inner space of worship but are still on the other side of that wall.<sup>200</sup> Formation around the Lord's Table enables and even demands that such vulnerability of giving and receiving

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<sup>200</sup>To explore God's power *for* others that is cognizant of boundaries and border crossings see Anna Mercedes, *Power For: Feminism and Christ's Self-Giving* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2011). She explores the implications of power *with* others signals a mutual equality that may not necessarily exist in many relationships.

love be bodied forth in the world beyond the walls of the church. *Movement* toward others is emotion extended in positive feelings that leads to action.

### **Emotions and Feelings**

The *movement* inherent in the experience of emotions and feelings evolved from simple survival responses for the homeostatic regulation of human life. As such there is no conscious awareness necessary in the brain for the primary evaluative work of emotions that hearkens back to its role in evolutionary survival. “Indeed, a large body of data suggests that unconscious affect regulation is more essential than conscious emotional regulation in human survival functions.”<sup>201</sup> Especially important and at the forefront of cross disciplinary conversations is the recognition that right-brain processes of *non-conscious affect regulation* is powerful in human development, in psychopathology and trauma, and in the condition for the process of change in psychotherapy.<sup>202</sup> “Affect regulation is usually defined as the set of control processes by which we influence, consciously and voluntarily, our emotions, and how we experience and behaviorally express them.”<sup>203</sup> This focus on the early importance of right-brain affect regulation is important paradigmatically.

Just as there has been a paradigm shift from the unitary to multiple self in the field of theology so there has been a cross disciplinary shift from cognitive approaches to motivational and emotional processes in the fields of developmental science, biology, and

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<sup>201</sup>Schore, “Right-Brain Affect Regulation: An Essential Mechanism of Development, Trauma, Dissociation, and Psychotherapy,” 116.

<sup>202</sup>*Ibid.*, 113,127.

<sup>203</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.

neuroscience as well as in the practice of psychoanalytical psychology.<sup>204</sup> Unconscious implicit emotion is important, with the right-brain “dominant for the recognition of emotions, the expression of spontaneous and intense emotions, and the nonverbal communication of emotions.”<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, the right-brain helps us adapt functionally so as to move easily between “internal bodily based states in response to changes in the external environment that are nonconsciously appraised to be personally meaningful.”<sup>206</sup>

Significant to our purposes is how unconscious implicit emotion in right-brain affect regulation furthers our understanding of the multiple self, countertransference, and *koinonia* in light of the *in vivo* themes. In contrast and up to this point, the *window of tolerance* as referred to by Siegel and Ogden is focused on left-brain processes that develop later in life and thus relate “to secondary-cognition processes (conscious, verbal, explicit) and striatal motor activities (voluntary action; controlled overt behavior)” that are sustained by a moderate arousal range.<sup>207</sup> Thus, the monitoring and modifying behaviors draw upon mindfulness and iconic play as part of this capacity for the left-brain to appropriate cognitive-behavioral insights. Furthermore, the left-brain’s importance in narrative coherence and cohesion signal its function in secondary-process modes of language development.

As we turn to right-brain processes we will rely upon the work of neuroscientist Allan Schore to make these connections before turning to the work of Antonio Damasio to focus on emotions and feelings of joy and sorrow as they relate to the narrative data.

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid., 131.

Finally, the work of pediatrician W.D. Winnicott extends the notions of joy through his concept of play. Throughout the focus on emotions and feelings, the secure attachment bond between infant and primary caregiver is paramount.

Early attachment relationships between infant and caregiver reflect the nonverbal emotional dance of unconscious communication that is critical to human survival and so foundational to the development of a fluid harmonious experience of self and others. The relational body thus continues to be at the center of our inquiry. Unconscious implicit emotions are at play here as well as the more conscious experience of feelings. Both conscious and unconscious dimensions of emotions and feelings will be explored, thus broadening our understanding of intersubjective space. Theological implications for *koinonia* will conclude the section on emotions and provide a natural transition to the following section that engages conceptual thought about Jesus Christ from the image of Shepherd and the *in vivo* themes of table and hospitality.

#### Right-Brain Affect Regulation

As we recall from earlier discussions about the role of dissociation and emotion in the formation of the *multiple self*, right-brain tasks are important. Schore highlights the role of the right-brain:

Late-forming repression is associated with left-hemispheric inhibition of affects generated by the right brain, whereas early-forming dissociation reflects dysregulation of affects resulting from the dis-integration of the right brain itself.<sup>208</sup>

Unconscious affects emerge from right-brain processes of dissociation. Other clinical data shows the right-brain is important to the processing of unconscious negative

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<sup>208</sup>Ibid., 115,133.

emotion and self-images. Furthermore, it seems that right-brain processes confirm the psychoanalytical model of one unconscious mind communicating with another unconscious mind, thus fleshing out understanding about the intersubjective nature of countertransference that values bodily processes of affect and arousal.<sup>209</sup>

These differing aspects of right-brain processes begin early in human development with the interpersonal neurobiology of secure attachment. The contingent, timely, and marked communication of the caregiver to the infant reflects attuned resonance that is nonverbal and responsive to the infant's shifting states of arousal. A dance between infant and caregiver is created. Schore describes it this way:

Through visual-facial, auditory-prosodic, and tactile-gestural communication, caregiver and infant learn the rhythmic structure of the other and modify their behavior to fit that structure, thereby cocreating a specifically fitted interaction.<sup>210</sup>

Significant to our emphases is that this nonverbal intersubjective communication is rooted in the play of bodies whereby the mother evaluates, regulates, and communicates the infant's internal arousal and affective states, thereby modulating both high or low non-optimal levels of stimulation for the infant. The aliveness and deadness of the relational body are engaged, dependent upon the maternal body's ability to be present to itself as the condition for present attunement to the infant body.

Schore goes on to note "the regulatory process of affective synchrony that creates states of positive arousal and of interactive repair that modulates negative arousal are the fundamental building blocks of attachments and its associated emotions."<sup>211</sup> This

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<sup>209</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>210</sup>Ibid., 116-117.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., 117.



interactive regulation of emotion is an evolutionary mechanism of biological regulation within and between people. Not only that, but Schore asserts that

For the rest of the lifespan, internal working models of the attachment relationship with the primary caregiver, stored in the right brain, encodes strategies of affect regulation that nonconsciously guide the individual through interpersonal contexts.<sup>212</sup>

In this regard then, it is interesting to note that developmental researchers' description of nonverbal intersubjective communication is congruent with descriptions of right-brain affect regulation, and how each description calls to mind the reality of countertransference, even as their implications may disrupt long held and valued psychoanalytical perspectives about the conceptual reality of *enactment*:

Preverbal communication . . . is the realm of non-consciously regulated intuitive behavior and implicit relational knowledge. Whether information is transferred or shared, which information gets across, and on which level it is 'understood,' does not necessarily depend on the sender's intention or conscious awareness.<sup>213</sup>

These emphases of non-conscious behavior, knowledge, and awareness are important counter-realities in light of earlier stated IPNB emphases of intentional and conscious awareness and practices in monitoring and modifying the mind, brain, and relationships. Non-conscious intersubjective reality is the larger contextual arena in which emerging processes of differentiation and integration continue to take place throughout our lifespan. We can never make fully conscious the unconscious. There is a fluidity of consciousness and unconsciousness that exists at the same time in differing mental self-states. All we can do is tend to what emerges in the interplay of implicit and explicit emotional processes, extending our capacity to be present to a wide range of

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<sup>212</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid., 117. The implications of right-brain affect regulation as it impacts classic psychoanalytical views of *enactment* will be explored later.

emotions and their wisdom. Addressing the reality and role of implicit unconscious emotion and its processes render more complex the intersubjective reality in which we live.

We might even say that the intersubjective reality lives in us, thereby acknowledging the communal and changing internal subjective reality wrought by relational processes that form our minds and brains and relationships. The intra- and inter-relational processes of right-brain affect regulation make clear that inner and outer subjective experiences are linked and even overlap, creating rich spatial and temporal dimensions of embodied relational life. Furthermore and at this point, we might dare wonder about Winnicott's notion of *play* in the *intermediate space* as it extends into creative living. At this point then, the interpersonal neurobiological realities of *cohesion* and *coherence* become more nuanced, as does their theological significance. These wonderings will be explored later in this chapter.

The role of the right-brain in attachment processes is primary in experience-dependent growth and development of emotional regulatory circuits in the embodied brain. To further make the case for the reality of countertransference as a model of non-conscious communication it is important to learn from the interpersonal neurobiology of attachment trauma. Research in the neurobiology of pathological dissociation focuses attention on the importance of higher and lower right-brain processes and the necessity of their integration for healthy emotional functioning. What comes to the fore is the understanding of the right-brain as the locus of what is described alternatively as the

*emotional or corporeal or implicit self*, which is to say, the biological substrate of the unconscious human mind.<sup>214</sup>

The vertical axis of the right-brain is the cortex with the limbic system and brainstem included in the subcortex. The limbic system has to do with motivation and emotion whereas the brainstem regulates autonomic function, arousal, and pain systems.

Together then,

The lower subcortical levels of the right brain (the deep unconscious) contain all the major motivational systems (including attachment, fear, sexuality, aggression, disgust, etc.) and generate somatic autonomic expressions and arousal intensities of all emotional states.<sup>215</sup>

The integration of the lower subcortex with the higher orbito-frontal limbic levels allows for conscious expression of emotional affect and states. The communication and regulation of emotional states is an adaptive mechanism that contributes significantly to the sense of identity. Schore notes, “This right lateralized hierarchical prefrontal system performs an essential adaptive motivational function: the relatively fluid switching of internal bodily based states in response to changes in the external environment that are nonconsciously appraised to be personally meaningful.”<sup>216</sup> The conscious experience of personhood is dependent upon unconscious biological dimensions of emotional intensity and arousal, and secure relational attunement and resonance that supports the integrative work of the right-brain in its processing of internal and external stimuli.

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<sup>214</sup>Ibid., 124, 144. On page 124 Schore emphasizes the *somatoform dissociation* by quoting Allen, who notes that “dissociatively detached individuals are not only detached from the environment, but also from the self – their body, their own actions, and their sense of identity.”

<sup>215</sup>Ibid., 124-125.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., 125.

The flow of energy and information in right-brain affect regulation reveals that tender stewarding of arousal and intensity is needed in the social space of synaptic connections within and between people if there is to be cohesive and coherent autobiographical narrative understanding. In other words, the sense of continuity of the subjective self across shifting mental states has to do with optimal regulation of emotional arousal and intensity. It is worth quoting in full a description of what happens when the higher and lower right-brain processes cannot be integrated due to relational trauma:

This fragile unconscious system is susceptible to mind-body metabolic collapse and thereby a loss of energy-dependent synaptic connectivity within the right brain, expressed in a sudden implosion of the implicit self and a rupture of self-continuity. This dis-integration of the right brain and collapse of the implicit self is signaled by the amplification of the parasympathetic affects of shame and disgust, and by the cognitions of hopelessness and helplessness. Because the right hemisphere mediates communication and regulation of emotional states, the rupture of intersubjectivity is accompanied by an instant dissipation of safety and trust.<sup>217</sup>

*Dissociation* then, is a neurobiological response to emotionally intense states of arousal that are either too high or too low and thus, not being metabolized consciously, remain as unconscious charged affects in implicit memory. Dissociation is a strategic bodily response that simply blocks out unmanageable emotional pain by rendering it unconscious.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>218</sup>Dissociation describes a continuum of experiences of detachment from reality as a reaction to stressful stimuli and feelings of threat. Peter Levine created a model for conceptualizing dissociation based on the fact that experience is constituted by a number of elements. He identifies those elements as sensation, image, behavior, affect and meaning. He utilizes the distinction between implicit memory and explicit memory, and thus SIBAM is a way into working with aspects of implicit meaning that is not totally in the realm of the unconscious embodied mind. See chapter seven in Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. See also chapter four in Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*.

While the aforementioned quotation draws attention to dissociation as pathological because of severe relational trauma, most relational theorists in psychology view dissociation as normatively inherent in the developmental process. Recall from earlier discussions that attachment relationships and memory condition how experience is stored and recalled. In that context then, the formation of subjective identity is *state dependent* based on whether the external situation is appraised as safe or threatening. The process of dissociation exists on a continuum, defined generally as a kind of *forgetting* “in which multiple arenas of cognition, affect, and sensation may be split off from consciousness for varying lengths of time and with boundaries of varying permeability.”<sup>219</sup> There is a multiplicity of consciousness and unconsciousness that is temporally and relationally dynamic, interacting with changing contextual circumstances. One relational theorist thus notes, “Not one unconscious, not the unconscious, but multiple levels of consciousness and unconsciousness, in an ongoing state of interactive articulation as past experience infuses the present and present experience evokes state-dependent memories of formative interactive representations.”<sup>220</sup>

It is clear that developmental growth has to do with the capacity to easily shift mental states so as to foster a cohesive and coherent sense of self-identity across time and space as historical beings, and the freedom to do so smoothly is relationally conditioned by the emotional body.<sup>221</sup> This ability to *move* between mental self-states is dependent

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<sup>219</sup>Pamela Cooper-White, *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 50.

<sup>220</sup>*Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>221</sup>Recall earlier discussions about hybrid identity and the experience of oppression as formative to multiple subjectivities conditioned by issues of race, class, and gender. We might also add sexuality, ethnicity, age, (dis)ability, etc. It is here too, that the named experience of *oscillating freedom* begins to make sense of suffering bodies. Internalized secure attachments in the form of relational images suggest a

upon increased capacity to self-regulate emotional arousal and intensity, initially fostered by interactive regulation. These emphases – multiple levels of consciousness and unconsciousness, and smoothly shifting states -- shared by relational theory and neuro-psychoanalytic work become more nuanced when attention is paid to how the right-brain is the locus of implicit memory and the differing bodily experiences of high and low intense arousal. Likewise, the countertransference dynamic of enactments in the co-construction of intersubjectivity assumes more detailed significance from a neurobiological perspective of right-brain affect regulation.

#### From Dissociation to Enactment to Intersubjective Fields

As a way into the following discussion it is helpful to recall the concept of *enactment* from a relational paradigm of psychoanalysis. Enactment values that which is nonverbal, to include behavior, and is defined classically as ongoing inevitable “nonverbal cues and communications that occur in a helping interaction.”<sup>222</sup> This basic definition is extended by linking together clinical models and neurobiological work so that “[i]ncreasingly, enactments are understood as powerful manifestations of the intersubjective process and as inevitable expressions of complex, though largely *unconscious self-states and relational patterns*.”<sup>223</sup> Furthermore, because enactments are viewed as part of affective primary processes (and therefore unconscious), “as intense manifestations of transference-countertransference entanglements, enactments seem to

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re-valuation of the image of Shepherd. This biblical image will be explored in the following section of Conceptual Thoughts.

<sup>222</sup>Cooper-White, *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 58.

<sup>223</sup>Schore, “Right-Brain Affect Regulation: An Essential Mechanism of Development, Trauma, Dissociation, and Psychotherapy,” 128.

generate interpersonal as well as internal processes eventually capable of promoting integrations and growth.”<sup>224</sup> The right-brain is involved in the unconscious emotional processes of intersubjective enactments that have the potential to be life giving in therapeutic change and thus vital to human flourishing.

If, as this thesis is proposing, countertransference may be understood as *koinonia*, then the following investigation of intersubjectivity through right-brain affect regulation may be considered a *thick* interpersonal neurobiological description of these psychoanalytical and theological concepts, each of which seeks to foster complex, differentiated growth and integration for the sake of mutual human vitality. The following discussion augments previous discourse on affect as it relates to the *window of tolerance*, highlighting the distinctions between right- and left-brain ranges of optimal arousal that sustain differing levels of cognition. In so doing it renders more complex the construction of intersubjective fields of resonance between people and highlights the role of the body in the experience of countertransference.

The right-brain’s affective and emotional processes are involved in state-dependent recall of implicit memory. Two differing domains of the autonomic nervous system are implicated in these right-brain processes due to its capacity to contain very high or very low levels of arousal characteristic of primary processes in early life. *Hyperarousal* expends energy and *hypoarousal* conserves energy. These different body-states access differing affects, behaviors, and cognitions. Autonomic arousal dysregulation provides insight into these two bodily domains of right-brain processes:

Thus, early relational trauma, reactivated in transference-countertransference enactments, manifests in dysregulated autonomic hyperarousal associated with

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<sup>224</sup>Ibid., 129.

sympathetic-dominant affects (panic/terror, rage, and pain), as well as dysregulated autonomic hypoarousal and parasympathetic-dominant affects (shame, disgust, and hopeless despair).<sup>225</sup>

Right-brain processes tolerate very high or very low threshold experiences of arousal and these distinct processes enable the creation of distinct (inter)subjectivities. Generally the hyperarousal system responds to perceived danger and the hypoarousal responses tend to reflect the perception of a life threat. Activation of the automatic nervous system therefore is a bodily response to perceptions that seem to be death-dealing in the bodily environment itself or in the environment in which the human body is situated.

Each right-brain process is at play in clinical work when working at the edge of tolerance, as must be the case, when seeking to repair and thus, to regulate overwhelming feelings of affect for the sake of integration. This edgy place of vulnerability for therapist and client is the *safe enough* relational space where emotions are felt and explored in the countertransferential field.<sup>226</sup> Therapeutic resonance thus tends to these two patterns of destabilization of the automatic nervous system in enactment, attentive to the co-constructed emotional resonant field and the possibility of client dissociation.

Significantly then, the body is present in such attuned resonant listening. The emotional sensitivity of the right-brain is bodily grounded in the automatic nervous system. Schore emphasizes it this way: “*An intersubjective field is more than just an interaction of two minds, but also of two bodies, which, when in affective resonance,*

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<sup>225</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>226</sup>Ibid., 130-131.



elicit an amplification and integration of both CNS and ANS arousal.”<sup>227</sup> Our bodily presence to one another matters in terms of attuned resonant listening and responding. The psychobiological processes of the automatic nervous system nuance our understanding of countertransference. Schore goes on to say,

Countertransference processes are currently understood to be manifest in the capacity to recognize and utilize the sensory (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and olfactory) and affective qualities of imagery which the patient generates in the psychotherapist... Similarly, Loewald points out that countertransference dynamics are appraised by the therapist’s observations of his own visceral reactions to the patient’s material.<sup>228</sup>

Construction of the intersubjective field relies upon the material substance of bodies working together in a charged energetic realm of resonance. The experience of gut level responses that become translated as feelings, images, thoughts, and knowledge is actually in either one or another domain of right-brain processes, if not in both processes.

On the one hand, there is the *high energy charge* intersubjective field of hyperarousal. On the other hand, there is the *low energy charge* intersubjective field of hypoarousal. These two systems can work reciprocally or unilaterally. What is important is that they “represent two discrete intersubjective fields of psychobiological attunement, rupture, and interactive repair of what Bromberg terms *collisions of subjectivities*.”<sup>229</sup> Enactments in each field of arousal will “show qualitatively distinct patterns of primary process nonverbal communication,” meaning “body movements (kinesics), postures, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, and the sequence, rhythm, and pitch of the

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<sup>227</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Ibid., 134.

spoken words.”<sup>230</sup> Hyperarousal dyadic enactments are explosive with the fragmentation of the implicit self, whereas hypoarousal dyadic enactments are implosive with the collapsing implicit self. In each of these psychobiological states of arousal there is a distinct bodily experience of the implicit self.

Significant to earlier theoretical discussions about *vulnerability* is how the affective states of the low energy parasympathetic dominant intersubjective field are implicated. Recall that bodily experiences of the implicit self coalesce around affect states of shame, disgust, abandonment, and hopeless despair. “Shame is the most powerful affect a person is unable to modulate.”<sup>231</sup> Shame is a bodily state and associated feelings, images, experiences, and thoughts. And at the same time we know from regulation theory that *amplification* and *intensification* are at work in any healing therapeutic alliance. The moderating work of affect regulation for the sake of change leans directly into the vulnerability of shame, working at the edges of tolerance for client and therapist.

This work necessarily evokes amplification and intensification by virtue of resonance within the intersubjective field and thereby creates the condition for the possibility of change. “The resultant cocreated increased arousal (metabolic energy) allows for hypoarousal dissociated unconscious affect to be intensified and thereby experienced in consciousness as a subjective emotional state.”<sup>232</sup> This shared deep

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<sup>230</sup>Ibid.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 135. Theologically shame may be associated with the scandal of the cross and crucifixion of Jesus. This conceptual reality will be addressed not directly but implicitly in a later section concerning the image of Shepherd. However, more detailed exploration of this particular image and the experience of shame might be a fruitful project in the future.

<sup>232</sup>Ibid., 136.

contact sustained *in* time is empathetic and more significantly, it is an interactive relationship that is attentive to regulation and repair in an interpersonal relationship. Resonant time together is not enough for conscious awareness to emerge; intense and amplified emotional energy is also needed for conscious feeling to emerge from unconscious affect states. It seems then, that such resonant relationships need to be *trustworthy enough* so as to be sustained in and across time. It is in those relational moments that amplified and intense feelings are conscious enough to be *worked through* in a way that offers the condition of possibility for transformation.

The focus of the right-brain is in real time and thus the capacity to be present in attuned and resonant ways to one another highlights the dynamic of enactments within *safe enough* relationships. Lichtenberg denotes these moments of heightened affect as *disciplined spontaneous engagements*, meaning that

*Spontaneous* refers to the [therapist's] often unexpected comments, gestures, facial expressions, and actions that occur as a result of a suppressed emotional upsurge. These communications seem more to pop out than to have been planned or edited. The [therapist] may be as surprised as the patient. By engagement, we refer to communication and disclosures that are more enactments than thought-out responses.<sup>233</sup>

We might think of this engagement as emotional vulnerability and emotional availability that enlarges the window of tolerance, thereby allowing the integrative aspects of emotion to broaden learning across differing emotional states and thus, contributing to the development and unification of the self.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid., 140. See LeDoux who notes, "And because more brain systems are typically active during emotional than during nonemotional states, and the intensity of arousal is greater, the opportunity for coordinated learning across brain systems is greater during emotional states. By coordinating parallel plasticity throughout the brain, emotional states promote the development and unification of the self."

Right-brain processes, beginning from bottom up processes to the higher cortical brain system, illumine the ongoing developmental trajectory and the importance of emotions functionally necessary for personal integration of many different states allowing for cohesive and coherent self-understanding and consolidation of personal identity. Significantly, the right-brain is involved not just in making the unconscious more fully conscious; it is also about the restructuring of the unconscious. Furthermore, because right-brain processes have to do with stress moderation, there is also the capacity to respond to new stimuli and situations, and thereby grow and change.<sup>235</sup> Fundamentally, right brain processes allow us to be emotionally resonant so as to integrate the past and present moment while also being open to the future. It is this full-bodied emotional openness to time that is so important for human flourishing, individually and corporately. Such open embodied welcome of past, present, and future experiences of and in time suggest the fundamental connections of countertransference, the multiple self, and *koinonia*.

### **Time and Right Brain Processes: Countertransference, Multiple Self, and *Koinonia***

So how do we understand the significance of right-brain processes in terms of countertransference, the multiple self, and *koinonia*? This question is at the heart of my proposal: countertransference as *koinonia*. It all comes down to the *emotional body* and its ability to move in and through the historical experience of time in all three tenses. Right-brain processes regulate emotion and thus, integration in the (relational) body. Intensified and amplified emotion experienced within secure enough relationships is the

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<sup>235</sup>Ibid., 143.

significant factor to keep in mind while circling back to these conceptual realities of countertransference, multiple self, and *koinonia*.

In what follows below, I briefly highlight why this proposal of emotional regulation may be an important consideration in our experiential and theoretical understanding of *koinonia*. These comments further serve to contextualize the theoretical concepts that conclude this chapter even as they evoke and build upon content from earlier in this chapter. I invite you, the reader, to be open to and notice any associations that arise in the interplay of your present reading and past experiences as you muse about *koinonia*.<sup>236</sup>

### Countertransference

Countertransference, through the revaluation of enactments, is understood more robustly as a generous space of bodily resonance that is open and therefore vulnerable to oneself and to the other person's presence. Emotional growth and maturity as a person is affective and intensive, reliant upon trustworthy relationships of love made real in present and attuned listening, heart-to-heart and body-to-body or, right-brain-to-right-brain. In other words, while countertransference is always a dynamic in any relationship, attention to its charged nature is critical. So is the ability to withstand and move into its intensified energy with trust that in so doing, fundamental truths are amplified and offer the

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<sup>236</sup> Imagine my surprise when, after months of writing this thesis, throughout which I have invited you, the readers, into conversation with me, I discover this same invitation to the readers of the most recently published book by my primary resource in interpersonal neurobiology. He writes, "We need to become aware of our inner experience beyond merely discussing facts, concepts, and ideas, devoid of inner felt awareness and subjective textures. This is a way to invite your conscious mind to explore your personal experience as we move along. Ideas are able to have their greatest impact when they are combined with a fully felt experience. This is a choice I can offer to you as the author in the form of an invitation, one you can participate in, if you choose, as a reader. In this way, this book can be a conversation between you and me." Siegel, *Mind: A Journey to the Heart of Being Human*, 16-17.

condition for the possibility of transformation. It is a personal issue of how much charged energy one body or another can withstand, individually and within relationships.<sup>237</sup>

Countertransferential energy is both visible and invisible as we make ourselves present to one another. Behavioral enactments, verbal and nonverbal, signal the deep currents of bodily sensations, images, and feelings that move us nearer or farther from our self and others. The gut level emotional wisdom that rises up within our bone and flesh in relational moments of encounter becomes the very possibility of engaging images and feelings, thoughts and sensations, and therefore, enlarging our conscious awareness.

We might imagine that openness to this (un)conscious emotional process as *hospitality* that welcomes the company of inner strangers in all their guises as we are touched by the relational presence of encounters in the world and particularly at church. Such welcome assumes a generous capacity to engage both anxiety and desire as we meet both people and ghosts that haunt the edges of consciousness. In offering hospitality to others and these inner aspects of ourselves, we meet ourselves (and others) coming and going. We encounter charged emotions of memory, explicit and implicit. Furthermore and in this meeting, there is the possibility of the transformation of time and inner subjective-object images. Such engaging participation in present moment and imaginal

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<sup>237</sup>Ann Belford Ulanov uses the image of *lightning* to convey this reality in the context of analysis. See Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*, 66. Trauma theorists note that the ability to work deeply and transformatively with emotion is linked with *muscle toning*. Babette Rothschild writes, "Muscle tension gives our bodies form, grace, posture, and locomotion. Without muscle tension it would not be possible to perform even the simplest of tasks.... It is confusing to think that someone could actually be more relaxed when more tense, an oxymoron." She goes, "However, it may be that individuals with greater muscle tone are better able to tolerate hyperarousal than those with lesser tone. For instance, a greater degree of muscle tone increases self-confidence and reduces feelings of vulnerability and helplessness.... The idea is to build a positive experience of being in the body by developing musculature than can better contain hyperarousal and the full range of emotions." See Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*, 135, 136-137.

memory allows for resilient building up of the implicit self in community, thereby enabling the possibility to traverse more easily across time and relationships.

Recall however, that intensification and amplification of right-brain processes render such resonant presence to self and others more complex. Time travel and transformation is tricky because these charged conditions of emotional energy are always present, resident in our inner community. Our bodies contain community that is electric. And this community has a life (process) of its own.

Mitchell describes this psychic life process in ways that intimate the emotional interaction of community members with one another in the gathered church. “Thus memories become revived as perceptions, ghosts are raised, and new and different perceptions generate different, less dissociated memories, as ghosts are transformed into ancestors.”<sup>238</sup> We become more substantively real to one another and ourselves as we play with images and memories of our own lives in conversation with the objective object-images of biblical texts, prayers, and hymns. The congregation as the body of Christ lives from the storied memory of tradition fleshed out in liturgy, ministry, and service. Mitchell helps us understand the complexity that is engendered in making these emotional connections with self and other as he highlights the importance of *time* in relational connections.

Mitchell further quotes Loewald who notes, “[w]e encounter time in psychic life primarily as a linking activity in which what we call past, present and future are woven into a nexus . . . the nexus itself is not so much one succession but of interaction.”<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup>Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity*, 49.

<sup>239</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

Significantly then and in the play of images, this linking (or connecting) of time is not only what makes us human, but also what makes us more whole. Loewald affirms,

“The richer a person’s mental life is, the more he experiences on several levels of mentation, the more translation occurs back and forth between unconscious and conscious experience. To make the unconscious conscious, is one-sided. It is the *transference* between them that makes a human life, that makes life human.”<sup>240</sup>

This oscillating ability is deeply emotional. It is playing with charged energy. Crossing these psychic borders weaves a complex inner life and contributes to a rich engagement with others in a way that helps each one become more wholly human.

Not only is the church a place where relationships are generated and deepened, healed and changed, they are also challenged and broken. We bring all of our relationships to our encounters with one another and perhaps nowhere else does this reality become more charged, positively and negatively, than in a congregational setting. The overtones of other voices and other rooms come to life as we move through worship. We bring more than our selves to this gathering. In the emotional memory of our own flesh we bear up under the presence of our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our aunties and uncles, our cousins and friends. It is in and through these relationships that we suffer joy and sorrow, and the possibility for healing and transformation as these lives are linked to the storied past of our faith ancestors.<sup>241</sup> We participate in and witness to the communion of saints. It is also these relationships that contribute to the multiple self and its experience in time.

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<sup>240</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>241</sup>This bearing up of one another’s life assumes burdens of suffering as well as yokes of joy. It recalls the pastoral work of early church theologians as well as the more recent work of Charles Williams, a British author who wrote theologically about *coinherence*. He used Galatians 2:20 in his consideration of what it means to bear one another’s burdens in the spirit of the risen Christ. Williams founded a community to embody that intentional awareness. This particular community, *Companions of Coinherence*, shared in



## Multiple Self

Differing attachments to a diversity of people render more complex the originary primary attachments that first condition our capacity to explore and negotiate the world, and in so doing, allow us a certain range of responsive adaptability and flexibility not only to changing external environments but also to our inner worlds of mental states. In other words, the right-brain allows us to be in emotional touch with our multiple self-states, to move back and forth among them, and in this interior processing of emotion, to be in touch also with other people in external environments.

To be in touch with the emotional movements in our guts is to be in touch with relational wisdom that is electric, charged positively or negatively. We feel the electric nature of connections that flow in and between us. We know the deadened sensation of emotional barriers. We sense the amplification of this energy writ large in narrative histories that make meaning of human divisions, creating and linking personal mental states with the rise and fall of nation-states, cities, neighborhoods, tribes, clans, and families. We discover that playing with this energy is engaging life and death at elemental and also cosmic levels. Emotional energy powers our relationships.

It shapes the interior landscape of the multiple self through the decisive experience of power. Dissociative power is implosive and explosive. The split self shows forth the actuality of our human condition as vulnerably dependent upon one another. Our divided self by its very nature demands we engage in subjective discourse at the personal

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the emotional, spiritual, and medical suffering of those living, dead, and not yet born. Initially and through public television, I was made aware of his work through an episode of the final season of *Inspector Lewis* in August 2016. For a website resource see <http://web.sbu.edu/friedsam/inklings/coinheretance.htm>. See also the generous ways that *coinherence* is used in Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Your Life to the Awareness of God*.

and collective level of conversation as we track the traces of embodied power that form the multiple self. The transformation of power occurs in the interstitial space of emotional energy and conscious awareness. When there is trustworthy enough space to explore our inner community, feeling and thinking work together in creative play. Imaginative narrative and the activity or (re)authoring of our life stories happen in this experience of emotional power. This is the wellspring of the emerging self where the interplay of individual self-states allows for increased differentiation and complexity toward the *telos* of wholeness.

This emotional capacity to move arises from an interior-resting place within the self. The oscillating presence of the experiencing and observing self, and the ease with which it finds itself at home in the interconnectedness of all reality might be considered the *ipseitous* self. We have noted previously that its emergence and resilience are nurtured and sustained by practices of intentional awareness. Church liturgy may be considered an external place of rest that calls forth intentional awareness of mind, breath, and body as we engage in the movements of worship. Recall Thomas Weston's devotional practices informed by church tradition as well as his weekly participation in the liturgy of the Mass at a neighboring Roman Catholic Church. Consider how the presence of the multiple self intensifies and amplifies the experience of community in the congregation. Wonder about the formation of the multiple self (or hybrid identity) of Jesus by processes of domination that both enrich and challenge the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming as people of God. Imagine what it would be like for congregations to engage intentionally the actual reality and dynamics of the multiple self.

*Koinonia*

The emotional body constitutes the intersubjective space of the called, gathered, and sent church. We may posit that *koinonia* is not just Spirited human and divine interaction (in)visible in congregations and in the person of Jesus Christ. *Koinonia* is also and at the same time the complex flow of emotional energy as it is bodied forth in, among, and between people. This emotional energy is relational in its inner and outer dimensions. Its charged energy and affect ground the need for cohesiveness, coherence, and complexity in the human drive for relational integration. And similarly to Spirited action that is human and divine, there are visible and invisible dimensions to right-brain processes that are fleshed out in life together.

The church as the body of Christ is a community that welcomes us into affective life and emotional engagement with self, others, and God through its worship, ministry, and service. Just as the Spirit moves in and among congregational members, so do emotional currents. We are moved toward one another or away from each other. We are open or closed to one another. In this back-and-forth-movement within community, we flesh out our mutual need for and willingness to engage in the dynamics of reconciliation.

At times, we participate in and witness to Spirited and relational dynamics that while *intimate* and *integral* to the Christian story, may not feel properly *ordered*. Chaos seems to reign with no visible coherent storyline. Fragmentation seems to characterize our lives. The divine Spirit seems absent to our sensate body. Even as we trust in the power of God to uphold, guide, and sustain us, such transcendent power is not always visible in our corporate life together, much less the world outside our door.

We may not feel or in other ways experience the presence of the divine in our midst. We may lament the absence of God, unable to feel or imagine any connection with the divine because of emotional pain and trauma. Rather, we feel overwhelmed by human weakness and powerlessness precisely because of the grip of human power over and against us. Emotional right-brain processes help us to consider the dysfunction or brokenness that is experienced inside and outside the church. We remember our vulnerable dependence relationally creates our human identity as people. It is in that light that we can appreciate further postcolonial emphases of hybrid identity and interstitial space as it relates to the identity and personhood of Jesus.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as story and presence constitute another dimension of *koinonia*. It is possible to understand the significance of this particular life not just in terms of the reconciliation of divine-human action in and across time. It is also possible to understand the life significance of Jesus Christ broadly and deeply through right-brain process of emotional regulation, and in conversation with emphases of postcolonial theory. In so understanding, we are in touch with the vulnerability of being created human and the relational emphases of personhood that make sense of human identity in the global world of empire. We will explore this significance conceptually and through the image of the Shepherd figure later in this chapter.

This emotional consideration of *koinonia* introduces and complements the Barthian emphasis of Spirit as the center that links multidimensional *koinonia* and energizes the *telos* of reconciliation.<sup>242</sup> Latini highlights relationality in and through the

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<sup>242</sup>Having said that, it needs to be clarified that emotional right-brain processes of *koinonia* do not apply to the *koinonia* of the Trinity in the conceptual model of Karl Barth and as innovated by Theresa

Spirit of God, drawing attention to the ways in which God's Spirit is present and inter-connectional. *Coinherence* or inseparable intimacy amidst differentiation is important in the union of human and divine Spirits. I highlight emotion as that which *connects* people inter- and intra- relationally, and in so doing, that emotional connection allows for the condition of possibility of integration or reconciliation on many levels.

As we move forward, this case will be made with consideration to the continued analysis of the *in vivo* themes, even as it presumes what has been already noted. The following section takes seriously our communal nature and the role of emotions therein. Recall that pastor Thomas Weston experienced sorrow and joy in his congregational experience of ministry. It thus unfolds in more detail the relational impact of *sorrow* and *joy* in forming our lived-through experience of self and others. In so doing, the explanation renders an interpersonal neurobiological description of relational personhood that further makes sense of my proposal that countertransference is *koinonia*.

In particular, this explanation continues to develop a narrative description that is congruent with the primary insights of IPNB. In other words, in naming (or in this case, explaining) emotions, the energy of emotional affect is discharged and therefore, transformed. Emotions so named are thus tamed enough so that meaning may be made in the moment and across time. The activity of naming emotions allows us time and space enough to feel and experience the emotion.<sup>243</sup> It is only by this naming that a coherent

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Latini. This aspect of *koinonia* does not need to be addressed in order for my case to be made. In this current project, I am interested in the other dimensions of *koinonia*: those of the Incarnation, of the church and Christ, in and among church members, and in the church and the world.

<sup>243</sup>Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, 115-116.

narrative can develop; otherwise, the present moment of emotions may be cohesive only, but not extending further into narrative that makes sense of the past, present, and future.

We can begin to see why right-brain processes further allow for the deepening of left-brain processes. Integration of right- and left-brains is the wellspring of human flourishing. Coherence and cohesiveness are both needed for emotional growth and continued open curiosity, acceptance, and love that is flexible and adaptive. Complexity is actually engendered in this process with the notion of wholeness as its *telos*.

Furthermore and as we move through the next section, we might wonder about the integration of sorrow and joy as they flow mingled together in our lives, and as they provide the emotional ground for communal experiences of *hospitality* as we follow the *Shepherd* and gather around the *table*. A connectional and wondering question presents itself now at this juncture: *how might emotional right-brain processes be another way to feel and think our way through the conceptual reality of reconciliation or forgiveness?*

This question of integration continues the (methodological and) conversational turn from Spirit to emotion in the consideration of countertransference as *koinonia*. I invite the reader to hold this question lightly as a theological perspective on the coherent and integrative emphases of IPNB, noting that in what follows, this question might also be an ethical framework for understanding human agency and action as it relates to our emotional processes. Indeed, emotional processes may be considered the ground of our relational experience of historical freedom.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>244</sup>See Yanay, *The Ideology of Hatred: The Psychic Power of Discourse*.

### **Emotions and Feelings: Mental Maps of Joy and Sorrow**

The emotional machinery of our brains enables assessment of an external object or event such that we react to situations that are positive for life by approach or withdrawal in situations that are negative for life. Emotions are grounded in the body and are visible actions or movements, originally activated contextually to promote survival or wellbeing of the human organism. Emotions help us appraise and respond to the environment in which we find ourselves. Emotion and motivation therefore are linked, and also integral to processes of change.<sup>245</sup> Especially important in this regard is the right-brain's ability to respond quickly, rooted in its function "for the recognition of emotions, the expression of spontaneous and intense emotions, and the nonverbal communication of emotions."<sup>246</sup>

The impetus for feelings is objects and events that are interior to the body in origin.<sup>247</sup> The feeling machinery of our brains produces a mental map of the body that is both imaginal and conceptual, and together, these define a bodily state as good for life or bad for life.<sup>248</sup> The emotional impact due to assessment and appraisal of external objects or events therefore is extended by feelings, understood as "the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes."<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup>Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 38, 80.

<sup>246</sup>Schore, "Right-Brain Affect Regulation: An Essential Mechanism of Development, Trauma, Dissociation, and Psychotherapy," 114.

<sup>247</sup>Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 91.

<sup>248</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>249</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

The embodied brain allows for the integrated human experience of consciousness, emotions, and feelings. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio states the integral nature of these connections by highlighting the role of brain maps as they relate to body states and thus, feelings:

That means feelings depend not just on the presence of a body and brain capable of body representations, they also depend on the prior existence of the brain machinery of life regulation, including the part of the life regulating mechanism that causes reactions such as emotions and appetites.<sup>250</sup>

Body states can be actual or simulated body states due to modification. Mirror neurons produce *as-if* body states. Recall how the child uses the mind of the parent to regulate its own discomfort. This interactive process in a secure parent-child attachment thus allows an empathetic state to emerge from the emotion of sympathy.<sup>251</sup> Certain body states can also be hallucinated.<sup>252</sup> And then there is a variety of chemicals that induce feelings and therefore, different bodily states.<sup>253</sup>

Human regulation of life processes characterized by efficient fluidity of states and optimal intensity of pleasure may be thought of as *positive feelings*. Struggling and chaotic states with varying intensities of pain may be thought of as *negative feelings*.<sup>254</sup> In terms of understanding these insights from the perspective of integration in IPNB Siegel notes,

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<sup>250</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>251</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>252</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid., 131.



A positive emotion arises with increases in integration, whereas a negative emotion occurs with decreases in integration. With positive emotional states, the individual is both internally and interpersonally more integrated; the results are a broadening of perspective and a building of increased differentiation and linkage.<sup>255</sup>

From the perspective of Damasio, relationships and ethics are intimately connected in the bodily states of feelings that we identify as joy and sorrow as each feeling relates to the ethical values of good and evil. Emotional approach and withdrawal in relationships have to do with the fact “that in the trajectory of our lives fluid life states that feel positive come to be associated with events that we call good, while strained life states that feel negative come to be associated with evil.”<sup>256</sup> Thus the mental maps of bodily states associated with joy and its variants of positive emotions have to do with pleasure. Joyful states reflect the equilibrium of harmonious being in which there is ease and efficiency in activity and wellbeing.<sup>257</sup> There is also increased complexity and thus, coherence, in the self-organization and regulation of the individual person. In a corresponding way then, the mental state of sorrow has to do with pain and is associated with negative states of anguish, fear, guilt and despair. In a sorrowful state there is decreased functional ease in wellbeing that signals lack of equilibrium.<sup>258</sup> Feelings of joy and sorrow testify to the state of our flesh. Feelings are not public but are “are always

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<sup>255</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 338.

<sup>256</sup>Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 132.

<sup>257</sup>Ibid., 137. Barbara L. Fredrickson has targeted ten positive emotions in her research: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love. See Barbara L. Fredrickson, “Building Lives of Compassion and Wisdom,” in *Wisdom and Compassion in Psychotherapy: Deepening Mindfulness in Clinical Practice*, ed. Christopher K. Germer and Ronald D. Siegel (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2012), 52.

<sup>258</sup>Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 138.

hidden, like all mental images necessarily are, unseen to anyone other than their rightful owner, the most private property of the organism in whose brain they occur.”<sup>259</sup>

Yet feelings play a role in our social behavior and determine decisions we make, and in that sense, are visible. The anticipatory function of our brains and the interplay of top-down and bottom-up processing mean that over time, “different options for action and different future outcomes become associated with different emotions/feelings.”<sup>260</sup>

Social emotions, both positive and negative, and thus social behavior encompasses ethical behavior.<sup>261</sup> If feelings play a role in homeostasis and the governance of social life of individuals then feelings also testify to the state of life in human community. In light of religious community and its vision of human flourishing, feelings matter. Damasio comments,

Intelligent reflection on the relation between social phenomena and the experience of feelings of joy and sorrow seems indispensable for the perennial human activity of devising systems of justice and political organization. Perhaps even more importantly, feelings, especially sorrow and joy, can inspire the creation of conditions in the physical and cultural environments that promote the reduction of pain and enhancement of wellbeing for society.<sup>262</sup>

Feelings appraise and help us flesh out our felt commitments in social and ethical behavior. Our ability to move towards others in compassion has to do with gut level wisdom and a capacity to experience, broaden, and build upon positive emotions. In so

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<sup>259</sup>Ibid., 28. These mental images are not confined to the visual dimension but are multi-modal and so include auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory images. See pages 194-5.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid., 146.

<sup>261</sup>It is important to note here the condition for possibility of complex interplay of emotions and implicit memories that is extended by feelings and more conscious awareness of memory and forgetting in service to communal formation of identity. The Lord’s Supper and Passover are such ritual examples that play out narrative coherence in cohesive moments of enacted worship.

<sup>262</sup>Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*, 165.

moving, *complexity* and *coherence* is engendered in the fleshly body due to linkage and differentiation at many levels and in the widening of the window of tolerance. Bodying forth our Christian commitments and values is a matter of bodily wisdom as it interacts with the biblical narrative and traditions to make sense of our individual and corporate lives in all three tenses of time. *Narrative coherence* is integrative as it makes meaning of individual emotional wisdom and felt feelings through the larger metanarrative of sacred Scripture in the context of community. The communal celebration of Word and Sacrament is life-giving because of its interpretive pull toward the positive emotions, even as it makes sense of life's sorrows and those related emotions.<sup>263</sup>

From the perspective of IPNB and in light of the biopsychological aspects of emotion, "meanings are self-organized, regulated internally and private as well as dyadically organized, regulated with others and shared."<sup>264</sup> Life together in community

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<sup>263</sup>The refrain of the hymn *Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine* affirms this logic and further highlights the positive emotion of gratitude or praise: "This is my story, this is my song, praising my savior all the day." This story and song has subjective and objective images that may be charged with affect or emotion. At this point the significance of emotional wisdom and felt feelings in human flourishing seems to converge from various disciplines: IPNB, analytical psychology, and theology. The common practice of contemplative prayer or meditation is further implicated.

Dialogue between faith and the hermeneutics of the historical Jesus quest, nuances faith and, at the same time, illumines how that faith may be considered an individual interpretive task that is embodied relational knowing in community. An important aspect of our faith journey is the ongoing discernment of embedded and received theology as we encounter others' life experiences and faith. Appropriation of others' interpretive insights of faith from their contextual perspective as we reflect upon our own faith journey may draw us into conversation with Neo-orthodox Protestant theology as well as with feminist, womanist, and queer theologies, among others. There are many levels of subjective discourse throughout the space(s) and time(s) of our life through which we seek narrative coherence, even if coherence is provisional, contingent, and contextual. This individual dynamic, and amplified in community, testifies to the textured and complicated reality of reconciliation imaged as unity of diversity. It also nuances the layers of *cohesion* that contribute to the multiple layers of narrative *coherence*, each of which impacts how we might understand the faith statement of how our lives *coinhere* in Jesus Christ. That "all things hold together in Christ Jesus" may be an emergent and dynamic faith statement that calls for human agency and power in making narrative decisions rather than just a descriptive biblical statement about the spirited power of Jesus.

<sup>264</sup>Tronick, "Multilevel Meaning Making and Dyadic Expansion of Consciousness Theory: The Emotional and the Polymorphic Polysemic Flow of Meaning," 87.

offers the condition for the possibility of expanded conscious awareness and thus, increased complexity and coherence in consciousness. In other words, emotions have meaning and impetus for continued formation. The *connections* (of emotional presence) we may feel in worship implicate processes of the brain. The felt emotions in the *cohesive* moment have to do with the right-brain. The narrative *coherence* in liturgy draws upon the left-brain.

Thomas knows sorrow and *joy* in his life and body, feeling and expressing emotions easily. He taps into his gut-level wisdom and compassion, and so admits,

I get goose bumps when I sense *joy*. I will tear up.... tears of happiness and tears of sadness. It's probably a gift that God has given me to tear up at a moment's notice.... I don't hold back that sharing of mine and I feel it in my voice and in laughter. (3L15-28p19)

Thomas inhabits his emotions even as he is inhabited by emotions. His amplification of emotions through laughter and tears allows people to join with him in the expression of emotions. Such *response flexibility* is an important aspect of collaborative, contingent communication that is experience-dependent. Siegel goes on to note, “response flexibility is likely to be state-dependent: Internal and interpersonal contexts can promote or inhibit the integrative mechanism on which they are created.”<sup>265</sup> Thomas seems to be able to resonant with a variety of his own internal states as well as that of others, hearkening back to secure childhood attachments with his family and other significant adults. These vital connections to emotions ground and further awaken compassion and empathy.

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<sup>265</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 168.

Thomas has an open stance of emotional vulnerability because it is *who he is*: “I’m Thomas Weston who likes to have fun and can cry and laugh with anybody that I meet.” (2L8p2) He goes on to say that “it’s about being *positive* and inviting people into relationships.” (2L2p2) His relational presence is attuned resonance that allows for mutual feelings to emerge, be expressed and interpreted relationally and in community from a faith perspective. This resonant presence happens in prayer, sermons, funerals, session meetings, pastoral visits, and education. (2Lp2-3; 1Lp18, 22, 24; 3Lp19) Seemingly there is no context wherein emotions are not experienced and welcomed.

Thomas addresses the range of experienced emotions in his response to my question about which emotions come to mind when he reflects upon his experience of congregational ministry. “It’s been a *joy*. It’s been a privilege to enter into people’s lives in a variety of ways. It’s been a journey of highs and lows.” (1L41-43p1) Significantly however, joy seems to predominate in the life experience of Thomas. It seems to be what binds him up and holds him together. We might even say that joy is integrative for him. He affirms “there’s gotta be *joy*” at the Session meetings, meaning “a feeling of *lightness*, of *freshness*, of *newness*.” (3L18, 26-27p17) Joy signals *community*, *acceptance of belonging* and *life* for him. (3L24, 38, 42p17) Specifically *joy-filled ministry* is about “*honest relationships* and *who we are* as God’s people.” (3L6-7p18) Repeatedly Thomas has emphasized the vitality that inheres in being vulnerable and thus open to one another, specifically through the honest expression of emotions. He often pairs that emotional emphasis with eating at the table together in fellowship hall, in one another’s homes, and in the sanctuary through the ritual of the Lord’s Supper. (3L26fp15. See also 1L37-46p26)

Honest relationships that acknowledge the ups and downs of life through eating, praying, laughing, and crying thus express the reality of *b-e-i-n-g* that is so important to Thomas. Human emotions are mirrored in interpersonal relationships and shape core memories constitutive of long-term memory and thus, inhibit or enhance the compassion and wisdom of our lives.<sup>266</sup> Secure relationships enable people to walk through narrow valleys of suffering to broad places of openness and acceptance. We have seen how Thomas has relied upon people – his wife and colleagues – in his movement through *devastating* despair and doubting his gifts in ministry to more positive emotions and active engagement in ministry. He was able to stay present to emotions and name them, not only to himself but also to others. That initial vulnerability was supported by prayer and has since changed into a more conscious discipline of centered prayer and retreats. (2Lp6) Those practices allow him to be present to emotions and move through them to a broader, more positive experience of feeling connection to the ipseitous self.

Emotional regulation is central to integration, and within practices of prayer and meditation, emotions can be held and transformed. Daily practice can expand the *window of tolerance* so that a broad range of emotion can be felt, taken in, digested, and become a source of learning through which a person passes.<sup>267</sup> We do not need to be consigned to an inner space of emotional constriction. By sitting with emotions we can learn that they are active embodied mental processes that pass through us even as we pass through them.

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<sup>266</sup>Ibid., 164-166.

<sup>267</sup>See this particular chapter for the importance of play of emotions and their movement in the feeling body in expanding the *window of tolerance*. It further highlights the role of vitality and secure attachment patterns as it addresses trauma- and attachment-related physical and emotional tendencies and their treatment. See Pat Ogden, “Emotion, Mindfulness, and Movement: Expanding the Regulatory Boundaries of the Window of Affect,” in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W Norton & Company, 2009).

Intentional awareness of meditation allows us to navigate the moods of shifting mental states with a welcome embrace and release of many emotions. This is the hospitality of self-attunement and emotional regulation to which we are called when we engage in practices of contemplation and prayer. This mindful attention to the play of emotions in these practices necessarily encompasses images and thoughts.

By being attuned and vulnerable to our inner states of being we can move through suffering and sorrow to states of joy. This inner movement is what we see reflected in the language of the Psalms. It is precisely the ability to give words to emotions and feelings that allows for the emergence of coherence in the midst of that which undoes us.<sup>268</sup>

Imaginative speech eases entry into and connection with our inner emotional landscape.

John Calvin affirms this account of Scripture in his introductory remarks to the Psalms.

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think, not inappropriately, ‘an Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul,’ for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life of all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities in short, all the distracting emotions which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> IPNB and trauma theory intersect with their shared emphasis upon the body. Trauma often leaves people with no words to make sense of the experience. Lack of words makes difficult narrative coherence. The ability to sit, however lightly, with embodied emotion and feelings is, in some sense reliant upon words to make meaning, even if one releases thoughts and settles more into that inner quiet space of rest. For books on trauma that are helpful to emphases in IPNB see Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Fogel, *Body Sense: The Science and Practice of Embodied Self-Awareness*. David Emerson and Elizabeth Hopper, *Overcoming Trauma through Yoga: Reclaiming Your Body* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2011).

<sup>269</sup>Serene Jones, “Soul Anatomy: The Healing Acts of Calvin’s Psalms,” in *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 51. The prophet Jeremiah may be understood to be giving words to the intergenerational experience of trauma experienced by a community. See O’Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*.

Our emotional worlds are laid bare in the Psalms. The words of the Psalmist testify to inner feelings and give us words to speak in the presence of others and God. We encounter ourselves, others, and God in the Psalms. The Psalms witness to the movement of our life in God: “Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” (30:5) Mourning becomes dancing and sackcloth is turned into clothes radiant with joy. Trusting relationships – with self, others, and God -- enable the movement of emotions from passing states to enduring traits of personality. Scripture testifies to this condition of possibility with its emphasis on compassion and wisdom as integral to the life and practice of faith.

### Positive Emotions and Joy

We may understand the transformative significance of this emotional movement from the *broaden-and-build* theory of positive emotions and, in so doing, understand the integrative significance of joy. The first emphasis of this theory is that positive emotions open minds by expanding “people’s awareness, temporarily allowing them to take in more of their surrounding contextual information than they do during neutral or negative states.”<sup>270</sup> Expansive awareness wrought by positive emotions is characterized by the ability to be open, agile, and flexible in one’s behavior, meaning attention and motivation, thinking, and feeling.<sup>271</sup> Such broadened awareness has to do with *responsive* rather than reactive behavior. Therefore this openness is a capacity to pause and, in the

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<sup>270</sup>Fredrickson, “Building Lives of Compassion and Wisdom,” 49. Recall the *window of tolerance* in the IPNB literature authored by Daniel J. Siegel. In particular see how *presence* is understood neurologically by the concept of the *open plane of possibility* in chapter one of Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*.

<sup>271</sup>Fredrickson, “Building Lives of Compassion and Wisdom,” 51.



spaciousness of time, to feel one's thoughts and to think one's feelings. Such open and sustained awareness is the fruitfulness of positive emotions.

Responding repeatedly with positive emotions thus allows for situational appraisal that further engenders other more positive feelings, building and broadening this capacity neurologically and relationally. Therefore, a second theoretical emphasis is that momentary states of positive emotions can become enduring traits of personality over time. We might say then that this upward spiral of emotions facilitates personal growth and transformation. Compassion and wisdom are viewed from this perspective of states becoming traits.<sup>272</sup>

So not only are compassion and wisdom virtuous in and of themselves, the presence of these states has to do with expanding the felt experience of open and reflective awareness. In the research of Fredrickson, compassion is a variant of love. Experienced contextually and relationally love is understood in these nine positive emotions: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, and awe.<sup>273</sup> These pleasant emotional states may be considered as love, whose temporal nature ebbs and flows in relationship. She states, "In its most basic form, love is the positive emotion that arises from trusting connections with others. When we become aware of interconnection and delight in it, we experience love."<sup>274</sup>

Such affirmation of secure trusting relationships as generative of compassionate love calls to mind not only the vitality of secure attachments but also the personification

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<sup>272</sup>Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>273</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>274</sup>Ibid., 53.

of church as the (secure, trusting) body of Christ. Recall the stance of the maternal presence in object relations theory wherein it is precisely because of this secure resonant and attuned presence, the child is able to explore and play within that relational space.

Just so, Thomas understands the vitality of his pastoral care and presence in the congregation from a value of *play*, noting

And yes, I cry. Yes, and I do love to laugh, and I think we always tend to take ourselves too seriously. I'm pretty playful with people, kidding and joking with people and knowing that sarcasm can get to be a part of it, but I think I know my limits of where I am with my *playfulness*. So with a Session meeting, if we don't come out of there with fun, that's not right. So in all of our meetings we have fun. I mean, it's important to have and laugh and be *joyful*. (1L5-13p22)

He goes on then to talk about the congregation as a *joyful place of being*, reading the mission statement from the weekly worship bulletin. The church description reads,

... reflecting God's love in thoughtful *joyful* worship; growing with vision and *vitality*; remembering the Spirit of our heritage; serving the community with concern for the world; supporting just and peaceful living; encouraging faith exploration; *enjoying* laughter and music and one another; a Christian place of belonging for all. (1L15-19p22. Emphasis mine.)

The emergence of joy as a positive emotion is dependent upon (inter) connections with people that, in their delight with one another, are secure enough to play. Recall the opening question of the *Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms*: "What is the chief end of humankind?" The answer is to "glorify God and enjoy God forever."<sup>275</sup> This congregation seems to lean into that stance and activity as disciples of Christ or, at the very least, state their desire and intention to embody those attitudes and actions in their life together and for the sake of larger community.

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<sup>275</sup>Music resonant with this catechism question is the familiar hymn *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee* or Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. See question and answer 1 in both the Shorter and Larger Catechism of *The Westminster Standards in Book of Confession Study Edition: Part I of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1999), 229, 249.

Joy seems to be the interpretive key in their congregational understanding not only of one another individually and communally but also of God. While there will be more to say about joy, at this point it is important to note that joy is large enough to encompass and comment upon other emotions as it orients us to wholeness and human flourishing. The interpretive play of worship evokes and nourishes our embodied memories with Scriptural narratives that re-frame not only our experience of time but also our situations of suffering and pain, sorrow and its related affects.<sup>276</sup> So our present moments, remembered past, and anticipated future are held and viewed in the light of joy. Theologically the emotion of joy and its related feelings may be understood through the biblical commentary on yearning desire that seeks to illumine life's journey toward the human glory of completed salvation and rest in God.<sup>277</sup>

### Positive Emotions and Play

The capacity to play is linked with the capacity for positive emotions, and these emotional and playful capacities are predicated developmentally on the response flexibility of the caregiver. From the perspective of IPNB we are reminded “a broad range of positive affect states depend upon the ability to regulate a wide range of arousal, which, in childhood, is facilitated by the caregiver’s sensitive, attuned responses to both positive and negative affect.”<sup>278</sup> Furthermore, and quoting neuroscientist Schore, “Affect

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<sup>276</sup>The 2015 Pixar movie *Inside Out* illustrates the importance of joy as an interpretive emotion and the importance of narrated autobiographical memory in making meaning of our lives.

<sup>277</sup>That emotions matter as to how we live not just as individuals but as people oriented to some kind of salvation who together seek the harmony of justice is the conclusion of a book by a neuroscientist. See Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*.

<sup>278</sup>Ogden, “Emotion, Mindfulness, and Movement: Expanding the Regulatory Boundaries of the Window of Affect,” 220.

regulation is not just the reduction of affective intensity, the dampening of negative emotion. It also involves amplification, an intensification of positive emotion, a condition necessary for more complex self-organization.”<sup>279</sup>

*Amplification* emerges from trusting and resonant relationships that delight in spontaneity, vitality, pleasure, and flexibility or, in other words, play. Amplification, in its mutual receptivity, builds upon the back and forth-ness of embodied emotion. One might imagine amplification as a dance of joy perhaps. Church as the body of Christ offers a multiplicity of relationships where the condition for the possibility of resonant presence resides. Meaning and thus connection (to self, others, and God), is co-constructed in the emotional flow of energy and information that happens in, among and between our embodied minds.

The play of the congregation happens in worship and in fellowship hall. Worship awakens and tends to the affective play of emotions and is extended by the continued hospitality of fellowship in a more informal (table) setting. Or the ordinary tables of fellowship hall invoke the liturgy of welcome in the sanctuary that follows conversation over coffee. In this intersubjective play oriented around tables there is the possibility of encountering and nurturing our true selves. Play begins in the (relational) body and then creates an intermediate space that bridges the inner and outer space of individuals that further conditions our experience of (cultural) social space.

The relational dynamics of play in *secure enough* relationships affirm individual agency and the emerging possibility (of transformation) by creating this *intermediate space*, which is open yet bounded. Play is grounded in and furthers the liveliness of

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<sup>279</sup>Ibid.

bodies and creates intersubjective space and in so doing, not only engenders relational curiosity, openness, acceptance, and love, but also joy. Play brings us into arenas of illusion and disillusionment, and thus into a world of shared reality that can be intensely experienced in creative activity and living. Intimately and ultimately, play grows from trust in an (m)other that thus enables trust in oneself, others, and in the world.

Classically understood through the work of W.D. Winnicott as he observed the interactions of infants and their mothers, the concept of play has influenced psychoanalytical theory and now more recently, the field of IPNB through its significance for evolutionary survival, attachment, and affect regulation.<sup>280</sup> Play assumes first the vitality of the maternal body such that the infant also feels the livingness of its own body. The vitality of this dyad is enacted in the reliable handling and holding of the infant or, in other words, the infant's absolute and vulnerable dependence upon the caregiver is an experience of confident security and trust. From this secure attachment and as the infant grows and engages subjective and objective perception there is

an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the

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<sup>280</sup>For the importance of play from an evolutionary perspective see these two chapters: Jaak Panksepp, "Brain Emotional Systems and Qualities of Mental Life from Animal Models of Affect to Implications for Psychotherapeutics," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009). Stephen W. Porges, "Reciprocal Influences between Body and Brain in the Perception and Expression of Affect: A Polyvagal Perspective," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diane Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009). For the relational *dance* of play and intersubjectivity see these two chapters: Colwyn Trevarthen, "The Functions of Emotion in Infancy: The Regulation and Communication of Rhythm, Sympathy, and Meaning in Human Development," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009). Dan Hughes, "The Communication of Emotions and the Growth of Autonomy and Intimacy within Family Therapy," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009).

perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.<sup>281</sup>

Trust and confidence allows for creative play that engenders rest and a resting-place for the experiencing and observing self. This spatial dimension of rest is the realm of culture and the arts, to include worship and therefore, has inner and outer dimensions.

It is a *transitional space* in which objects are given and found, where imagination and reality overlap, emotions flow and relationships come to life. It is a place where images figure prominently, enlivened by the play between subjective object-images and objective object-images. Church may be considered a place that contains and is created by the liturgical play of these personal and traditional images of God. Congregational worship tends to and is tended by the interplay of these personal and more formal God-images. It is in this relational space that primary processes are engaged and nurtured in creative play that is constitutive of the journey toward the great I AM.

### **Conceptual Thoughts**

Conceptual thoughts are born from life experiences and as such are foundational to the attitudes that ground our learning. Recall their function in top-down processes as part of the anticipatory brain. There is a neural feedback loop of how previous learning frames the way we look at others and ourselves and thus, continues to form the ways we respond to people and life experiences. In this regard, the dialectic of conceptual thoughts and the *window of tolerance* emerge as important; it is our ability in any mental self-state to keep open and responsive to what is happening in the moment of engaged encounter

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<sup>281</sup>Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 2.

with self and others. What we think matters in our ability to be open to and approach others.

It is in light of these neurological realities that the specificity of *in vivo* themes is important. In this section we will explore the image of *Shepherd* and *in vivo* themes of *hospitality* and *table* through the overarching conceptual reality of Jesus Christ from a postcolonial perspective. Recall that we have previously drawn upon this perspective with regard to Jesus and the suffering body. The ongoing spiral nature of the conversation engages a larger realm of conceptual thinking that embraces the *in vivo* themes. In particular, the conversation seeks just to raise some salient points and questions rather than develop them at any length. The goal is to introduce briefly and play lightly with conceptual ideas.

Having said that however, it is also important at this juncture to recall that the focus of inquiry and analysis of the research findings has been into the pastoral leader's experience of *koinonia* in the congregation. It is only appropriate then, to acknowledge that in light of the research findings, I am curious about this particular image of Shepherd as I think about a pastoral leader as one who is an empathetic *Other* with the ability to *move* toward individuals so as to *witness* their *subjective emotional experiences* of life and to share, even create together through *presence* and conversation, a *narrative* that is meaningful, *trustworthy*, and *true*. This capacity to witness at an internal level occurs because of pastoral ability to create a *dialogical resonant space* with another person. I dare say then, that the pastoral leader might be an active *agent* who, for the sake of *freedom* and *love*, witnesses to and engages in the shared emotional interplay between *history*, *memory*, and *identity*. This mutual presence of *power* – spiritual, material, and

discursive -- is necessarily active in and among people and all the more so, when a pastoral leader re-presents an image of leadership that in and of itself, has been shaped by a long and tortured history. The Shepherd image for pastoral leadership has a history that engages both memory and identity.

For centuries, the pastoral leader in the biblical imagination has been thought of and seen through the image of the Shepherd. Resident in this image are layers of communal memory written as history that shapes identity: this is the reality of discursive power in forming people.<sup>282</sup> This is the power of the biblical unconscious at work, especially in the literary history of the biblical prophets who wrote from and to generations of people traumatized by war and exile.<sup>283</sup> Their language about those times leaves an important thread to follow.<sup>284</sup> Images are symbolic metaphors that are emergent as an expression of emotional intensity of that which often leaves us inchoate about the lived-through experience. “Any attempt to convey the reality of trauma requires the creation of new aesthetic forms that creatively blend different literary and artistic categories.”<sup>285</sup> Imagine then, that the Shepherd imagery is, in part, formed by this (con)textual history. What is its cohesive power then and now? Why might this image

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<sup>282</sup>This claim exists alongside the Christian claim that God’s power is present and at work in sacred Scripture read and proclaimed.

<sup>283</sup>See the books of Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. We are reminded that “[t]hus the three great prophetic books (a) share a focus on this *crisis*, (b) refer the crisis to the defining reality of YHWHY, and (c) construe the crisis as one of YHWH’s *judgment* that produces the crisis and YHWH’s *fidelity* that makes possible a hope for the future of Israel beyond exile.” See Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 191.

<sup>284</sup>In her book Kathleen M. O’Connor writes, “In its poignant beauty, the literature transforms memories of violence, reframes them, and gives them *coherence* – partial and momentary – to lead victims and their offspring through the turbulent morass that is disaster.” (Emphasis mine.) See O’Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*, x.

<sup>285</sup>Angela Connolly, “Healing the Wounds of Our Fathers: Intergenerational Trauma, Memory, Symbolization and Narrative,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 56 (2011): 615.



continue to be potent enough that later biblical authors continued to draw upon its resonant power? To ask these questions is to acknowledge that images arise and are out of our conscious control. Images exist because they serve a function of making present that which hovers on the edge just beyond conscious verbal apprehension. Images allow us to assume a certain perspective of witness and distance that otherwise we could not inhabit.

We might hazard a guess that in this situation of witnessing these poetic prophets are akin to analysts and allowed themselves to be *temporally present* to people and the horrors of displacement and exile. In so doing each prophet, similar to an analyst, was “emotionally affected without losing his imaginative capacities” so as to ground the violent realities with emotional capacity to hope “and without losing the capacity to distinguish inner and outer reality, past and present that opens the way for the patient to ‘enter so to speak, the world of metaphor.’”<sup>286</sup> The prophets engaged the exilic situation of the Hebrew people deeply at an emotional level, able to experience and interpret that trauma through symbolic images that further narration, acceptance, and the *working-through* of traumatic realities. The prophets as witnesses testified to what they saw with their own eyes and also to that which cannot be seen. They addressed and responded

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<sup>286</sup>Ibid., 617. What is at stake here in terms of memory and trauma is captured further in the research of Susanna Kaiser. She interviewed sixty-three young people in Argentina who had not been directly affected by the trauma of the military dictatorship (1976-1983). They were however, affected by the mediated knowledge of it through intra- and inter-generational dialogue, education, and media. She explores post-memories of terror through the permeable conversational topics of knowledge, fear, silences, awareness, impunity, indifference, justice, communication media, representations, and human rights activism. See Kaiser, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the "Dirty War"*.

imaginatively to the oppressive conditions of exile and in so doing, made clear ethical obligations and responsibilities in relationships.<sup>287</sup>

From this particular (his)storied perspective, what insights might emerge as we wonder about the Shepherd as a cohesive and coherent image present and active in larger narratives beyond the Bible that make sense of leadership and power?<sup>288</sup> What (con)textual truths might be uncovered about agency and response-ability of pastoral leadership for the practitioner precisely because of this image and not another image? In other words, what might we miss knowing if we did not attend to this particular image?<sup>289</sup>

### Shepherd Image

This questioning engagement takes seriously the longevity of church tradition in its shaping of conceptual and thoughtful reality of the Shepherd image even as it acknowledges upfront a twofold response to this image. Traditionally, this image has been an image of pastoral care and guidance by church leadership, drawn from Hebrew prophetic texts and a variety of New Testament books.<sup>290</sup> On the one hand, some people are comforted by this familiar Scriptural image of the divine as a way to understand not

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<sup>287</sup>See the introduction in Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*.

<sup>288</sup>See the movie “American Sniper” for a recent example of how the Shepherd image is used in popular culture.

<sup>289</sup>We have briefly if implicitly introduced the shadow side of power – the historical actuality of trauma in the exile experience -- in the aforementioned textual comments about the literary history of the prophetic books from which comes strong images of the Shepherd that associatively control New Testament usage of that same image.

<sup>290</sup> See Alastair V. Campbell, “The Courageous Shepherd,” in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert C. Dykstra (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005). See Seward Hiltner, “The Solicitous Shepherd,” in *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings*, ed. Robert C. Dykstra (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005). See Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, trans. Peter Beale (East Peoria, IL: Vera Press, Inc., 2013). For a large survey in which one can trace (pastoral) images as they interact with changing pastoral notions of sin and salvation, sickness, and health, see E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1983).

only the transcendent God, but by extension then, God's immanent and pastoral presence mediated in the love, care, and concern of people in the congregational body of Christ. On the other hand, other people are discomforted by the implications of this Shepherd image as it extends to understanding certain persons only as sheep, whereas pastoral leaders are imaged then as Shepherd. Finally, they note that only God in Jesus Christ is the Shepherd.

Initially it is interesting to note that such discomfort with the pastoral image of Shepherd may simply be a contextual issue of emplacement in the world. Many peoples in the world rely upon and indeed live in close proximity to livestock, including sheep. People have direct lived-through experience with herding not only sheep, but also goats and cattle. Others live with the settled routines of chickens and pigs. There is an intimate *fittedness* of animal and human life such that their experience of beloved community is broad enough to include animals and the environment. For these people, the Shepherd image makes sense of their lives and livelihood. They are in touch with life and death realities of survival. They experience community conditioned by how the environment itself poses questions of welfare and ethical imperatives about how to live together. In this context, ideas of life as flourishing may be imperative, not a luxury beyond thinking or even dreaming. In this situation, ethics about the good life in common matters substantively. Their pastoral life has to do with being close to the land, dependent upon changing seasons, and vulnerable to whims of weather and market values. The land has to be secure enough for people and beasts to roam in freedom, fertile enough to sustain families and communities.

Oftentimes however, weather and surrounding communities render perilous the pastoral existence and uncover the vast ecological interconnections among varied and diverse forms of life. Famine, drought, and war kill animals and people with impunity, devastating the land and its waters. As it was in biblical times, so it is now. It is this enduring world reality that exposes any romantic and innocent portrayals of all things *pastoral*. Rather, it is this gritty common ground experience that highlights the yearning desire for the peaceable kingdom and the need for leadership that shepherds humanity into this particular vision of community even and especially in the midst of hard times.

It is worth leaning into this image. The Shepherd image is by no means the singular image of God, Jesus Christ, or human leadership in ministry. Taking a cue from the emphases of the multiple self and thus remembering that we as human subjects are comprised of multiple, co-existing identities that are fluid and may change over time, it is congruent to think that amongst formative images of pastoral leaders, Jesus Christ, and God, certain images are more salient at times than others, even and especially images that might not resonate personally with us, let alone make rational sense to our way of thinking. However it also must be said that the positive and negative affect of charged emotion resonant with this particular image highlights the importance of this image in the collective psyche of the church. Certainly church history and theology amplify and intensify the enduring nature of the Shepherd image.

Perhaps at such a time as this, we may be surprised as to what this image can offer in the way of emotional and community wisdom as we think about leadership and power. To think through notions of leadership is to think through ideas of power, and we need a standpoint or vantage point from which to explore the “field of structured power relations

in which we move, live, and are.”<sup>291</sup> The Shepherd image is just that and more: in and of itself the image is more than singular personal identity and thus provides an intersubjective perspective of linked lives and alterity. The Shepherd is shepherd by virtue of his role and responsibilities vis-à-vis the flock. The presence of sheep – each and every one -- necessarily defines the Shepherd.

Just as the sheep need a Shepherd, the Shepherd needs the sheep. Difference matters. It is formative. Difference is part and parcel of being in relationship. The Shepherd image naturally includes sheep in its range of role and responsibility of the job. This field where sheep graze and where Shepherds roam, metaphorically and literally, is descriptive of power relations that speak about trust and truth, agency and freedom.

This constitutive otherness allows, indeed it challenges us to think beyond binary dualisms of leadership identity and of power, to imagine instead, a field created by the very tension of difference between Shepherd and sheep. Might this not be the metaphorical difference between divine and human, which is to say notions of God and Jesus Christ? Might this also and therefore be the actual difference of humanity and divinity resident in each person? To ask these questions about alterity is to wonder about relational webs of power beyond the formal hierarchies that structure power in more visible, public ways. The *relational coinherence* of shepherd and sheep complexifies notions of power and leadership. And practically speaking, the Shepherd image intersects

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<sup>291</sup>Catherine Keller, “Power Lines,” in *Power, Powerlessness, and the Divine: New Inquiries in Bible and Theology*, ed. Cynthia L. Rigby (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 58.

with other biblical images as well as being a common liturgical theme in congregational worship.<sup>292</sup>

Power may be a web (or field) of relations, both visible and invisible. And in this field of relationships, there is *movement* towards others. This assertion seems to be clear in descriptions of the Shepherd and his responsibilities in the prophet Ezekiel. (34:1-31) Movement on the broad mountainside is for the care and nurture of the sheep. One might even say that this movement is *intentional*, that not only is there tender regard for the sheep by the Shepherd, there is also focused attention that is rooted in *desire*, even *joy* amidst the judgment. The Shepherd wants, even yearns, for the flourishing of the sheep. It is that *pastoral intention* that shapes the formative movement toward others: seeking the lost, binding up those that are injured, tending to the sick, and finally each night, bringing the sheep together as one body into the fold. An overall and larger image of life and thus power and leadership, emerges from the prophet's words. There seems to be a larger vision at play. The pastoral setting of Shepherd and sheep intimates a secure garden, perhaps even the Sabbath rest of creation.

At times we are in touch with the contours of this pastoral image, not only in biblical imagery but also in church prayers and poems, hymns and visual art. God's *shalom* on earth exists in imagery that may (or not) move us to do something about living in that way. We enact it through church ritual and tradition in the round of seasons that

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<sup>292</sup>Within the last two weeks and in two congregations, the Shepherd motif emerges in prayer and song. By example, the post communion prayer offered thanks to the "... shepherding God, that you have gathered your scattered flock again this day, feeding us richly with the Food of Paradise. Accompany us as we serve you all the days of our lives, and gather us with the saints in the day of our death; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Sovereign."

become years and decades and centuries. We persist in circling around this certain image of Shepherd (and associatively it seems, that of *shalom*).<sup>293</sup>

The church exists in the intersubjective field of this Shepherd imagery. And how can it not be so? Both testaments employ this imagery to speak of divine leadership for the common good and hoped-for actualized human potential in that regard. If God and Jesus Christ are each imagined as the Good Shepherd, our witness to and participation in *koinonia* as disciples may therefore correspond to and coinhere in this image of leadership and power that further points to the community envisioned by the reign of God in Christ Jesus. The church celebrates this field of associative ideas imaginatively in and through the liturgy.

We might say then, that the Shepherd image is a *gate* through which we can enter so as to gain understanding about what it means to stay at the table and abide as it were, with others.<sup>294</sup> We may even dare imagine this communal gathering as that evoked by Psalm Twenty Three in its description of being at table and supping with our enemies or, at the very least, those people who differ from us. We may also call to mind the Lamb

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<sup>293</sup>In Advent Year A readings for the First Sunday (Isa. 2:1-5; Mt. 24:36-44; Rom. 13:11-14; Psalm 122) the church is called to *wake up*. First, we are called to notice our moral failures, which is to say, all the ways in which we are snoozing because of our creature and consumer comforts that keep us complicit in the ways of injustice. This call is another way of talking about or framing the importance of *intentional awareness*. Second, we are called to notice the ways in which we keep awake. As part of enacting that intentional awareness, we (re)tell stories from the Bible as well as from our own actual realities. *Re-narration* is important. It may happen in our sensate openness to and reception of the proclaimed Word and sermon each week. The biblical narrative helps us to cling to God's vision of peace as we seek to be witnesses from and for God's kingdom within the fold of our own particular and overlapping contexts.

<sup>294</sup>New Testament scholar Karoline Lewis speaks of the controlling image of gate in the *I AM* sayings of John's Gospel and thus, condition our understanding the other images of who Jesus is, including that of the Good Shepherd. See Karoline M. Lewis, *John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).

that was slain and all those who gather around the throne of salvation, which is to say, the communion of saints.

The church is a gathering of Easter people and in the season of Eastertide the weekly liturgies and biblical texts amplify the Shepherd image with further revelation of Jesus as the crucified Lamb. The slain Lamb is our Shepherd whom we are called to follow. This Lamb of God takes away the sins of the world. The Passover and Exodus journeys become another covenantal journey for a people baptized into and also yearning for new creation. God's love creates new freedom in which to live. We sing together, "Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life."<sup>295</sup> A kaleidoscope of images continues to present themselves in the psychic space of worship: The Lord is my shepherd and you and I shall lack for nothing. The Lord leads us into places of renewal and reflection. In Sabbath rest we find joy. Besides still waters (of reflection) we can see more clearly that others are our sisters and brothers. We are fed with the desire to live in peace with all creatures. Physical landscapes and liturgical environments enfold one another. We indwell each one even as they indwell us.

The significance of the interior and exterior landscapes in which the Shepherd lives is important to explore. Significant to our purposes and in some contrast to liturgical images of the crucified Christ are other, earlier church emphases that situate the Shepherd imagery in paradise garden, hearkening back to Genesis 1 and 2.<sup>296</sup> These ancient perspectives re-frame how we might think of power and leadership from a religious

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<sup>295</sup>See hymn in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pew Edition*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 780.

<sup>296</sup>In what follows I am indebted to the work of Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker as they reclaim the notion of paradise as salvation. It is this larger conceptual setting that contextualizes, historically and theologically, the biblical image of the Shepherd. In so doing, it renders more radical notions of discipleship and rituals of the church with its vision.



vantage point that seriously tends to spiritual and material reality. In contrast to the violent imagery of the slain Lamb or even the crucifix that has dominated church interiors for centuries, early churches gloried in sanctuaries adorned as paradise gardens and in fact, believed, as did Irenaeus, that “[t]he church has been planted as a *paradisius* in this world.”<sup>297</sup>

The mosaics in early church sanctuaries provide visual testimony to the presence of the Shepherd in lush pastures, abundant with sheep and flowing rivers. Jesus was pictured as the Good Shepherd. This visual mosaic narrative was fleshed out in ritual practices, prayers, and hymns that situated Jesus, and thus Christians, in fields, pastures, and broad mountaintops or wandering among vineyards, orchards, and gardens.<sup>298</sup> “Like the breathing of a human body, the images said that God blessed the earth with the breath of the Spirit. It permeated the entire cosmos and made paradise the salvation baptism in the Spirit offered.”<sup>299</sup> This is a stunning vision, especially for a church persecuted in those early centuries. Yet the focus rested on (re)creation and God’s Spirited presence.<sup>300</sup>

The spiritual presence of God is everywhere and blesses everything. Imagine what it is like to live with, in, and through this divine power in the enclosed space of the church and in one’s everyday world. Jesus as the Good Shepherd in paradise garden re-works and renders more complex notions of the Spirit. If we participate in the Spirit

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<sup>297</sup>Brock and Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*, 84.

<sup>298</sup>*Ibid.*, xvii, 18.

<sup>299</sup>*Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>300</sup>The contrast of theological emphasis in art and liturgy was at odds with worldly experience of violence, including the imperial terror of crucifixion. Not until the tenth century did the Christian art portray Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross. See page 50 and chapters nine through fourteen in Brock and Parkers’ book.

through baptism, then we might say that we *coinhere* in God's Spirit. This relational coinherence in the Spirit is a different notion of divine-human vulnerability and agency than that posited by a suffering Jesus hanging from a cross. As disciples we are called to tend paradise garden with the Good Shepherd in whose care we grow to discern between good and evil which is to respond in faith to the powers and principalities, and to enact ethically the grace with which we have been blessed.

The freedom that comes with coinherence in the Spirit does indeed have to do with *power*. "Late antique society understood that spirits inhabited many aspects of life. To be human was to be a social creature under sway of powerful forces.... Christians did not move from a secular, unbelieving world into a world of faith; they moved from being subject to the powers of demons to being free of their powers."<sup>301</sup> This reality prompts us to wonder about how, in fact, differing worldviews – socio-political, cultural, economic, and environmental forces -- that swirl around us today are powers that invite us to enact principal notions that we judge as sinful and evil by the standards of paradise garden. One aspect of power is that of narrative and the stories we tell one another about what is life-giving and what is death-dealing, or in other words, the power of love as enacted in the ministry of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd.

The power fleshed out by Christians in the early church was relational. "Ephrem of Syria spoke of mutual vulnerability as important to the health of a community and essential to love."<sup>302</sup> Such reciprocal power of solidarity was centered in "Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed as healer, exorcist, and savior to the afflicted and who shared his

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<sup>301</sup>Brock and Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire*, 126, 127.

<sup>302</sup>*Ibid.*, 128-129.

powers with the community through the ritual of baptism.”<sup>303</sup> To be a new creation in Christ through the baptismal rite of the church was to enter into spiritual disciplines that were viewed as lifelong practices of faith. Power of *response-ability* was sustained and strengthened through spiritual practices.

The gathered people worshiped under domes and sheltering walls whose visual art sings of the new freedom humanity has in God’s Spirit. Indeed, the paradise “image filled the walls of space in which liturgies fostered aesthetic, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual experiences of life in the present, in a world created as good and delightful.”<sup>304</sup> In that wall and ceiling art, God’s desire for intimate and ultimate community is clearly visible and present, enclosing the community in the sanctuary, a divine story into which humanity and all of creation is invited to participate. God, it seems, is still at work, creating the peaceable kingdom. We are called to notice where we can lend our talents and labor.

This field and garden and broad mountainous landscapes of the Shepherd imagery in early church spaces challenge us to imagine that we are with Jesus today -- here and now -- in paradise as the ground of salvation. This good-created world is already the holy ground in, from, and to which we live out our salvation or, in other words, our baptismal identity as Spirited children of God. Paradise, from the perspective of ancient peoples of Western Asia, is imagined as the best way to live this earthly life. “They pictured salvation as the landscape of paradise, an environment full of life that was entered here

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<sup>303</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid., xv.

and now through the church.”<sup>305</sup> This vision of saving paradise necessarily then extends into ethical responsibility for tending this garden in and beyond the walls of the church.

Paradise is not otherworldly but a worldly and earthy place in which to live from and for salvation for the sake of the common good. The Shepherd imagery itself is part of early Christian testimony that the created world in which we dwell is, in this present moment, paradise garden. This earthly context is delightful and good. Life on earth is good and affirmed as the context in which salvation is lived out. Paradise is the place where we labor and sweat, delight and joy in for the sake of God’s kingdom coming here and now, on earth.

What might it be like to envision our present times and context as paradise garden? Living this question is to be intentionally aware of God’s desire that impels both divine and human agency. It is to become aware that our breath connects with the permeable breath of God’s Spirit. It is also to be aware of how “community is intrinsic to creation and to God. It does not have to be created or engineered. Indeed, it cannot be. It can only be realized, celebrated, and reverberated in different constellations of relationship.”<sup>306</sup> Contemporary spiritual reflections from this same author remind us that

The way is pointed out and empowered through Jesus Christ, in whom is revealed the community we are called to be. This community has no intrinsic “outsides”: “I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (John 14:20); “I am the Vine, you

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<sup>305</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>306</sup>Edwards, *Living in the Presence: Spiritual Exercises to Open Your Life to the Awareness of God*, 62. This author draws deeply on the notion of *coinherence* in this book. His work is resonant with the witness of the early church, interpersonal neurobiology, and Latini’s emphases of *koinonia*. Illustrative of Edward’s integration of the spiritual life is the following quotation from pages 10 and 11. “Modern physical sciences, too, strongly reinforce an awareness of interdependence and coinherence in the movement of life. Thus we can turn to one another in expectations that, even with all our differences, we have much in common. God’s Spirit is reverberated among us in shared conversation, silence, prayer, and action.” He goes on to note, “Other spirits are reverberated among us too: spirits of confusion, narrowness, oppression, willfulness, and evil.” He then notes the importance of discerning the spirits from that of God.

are the branches” (John 15:5). The divine and human are coinherent in Christ, and by grace in us.”<sup>307</sup>

Participating both in the goodness of life here on earth and also being humanly responsible for it is *remaining* here, *abiding* as it were, in the present now and in the grace of *eternal life*. John’s gospel and the letters remind us that the garden work of paradise is in loving one another. It is the work of witness and testifying, relying upon all of our bodily senses so as to test the spirits and to love in “truth and action” for the sake of free and joyful fellowship with God, Jesus Christ, and one another. (I John 1: 1-5; 3:18)

#### Table Hospitality

“Be present at our table Lord. Be here and everywhere adored. These mercies bless and grant that we” – “may feast in Paradise with thee” -- or alternatively sung, yet at the same time in actuality, “may strengthened for thy service be.”<sup>308</sup> This prayer is sung around tables in fellowship halls of churches even as it is also sung around family tables at suppertime. We sing, yearning for paradise now, trusting in the power of Jesus that the reign of God is here, yet also and at the same time knowing it is incomplete and still to come.

We delight in the food and drink that is set before us. We taste and see the goodness of the Lord. We sense also that others hunger and thirst – for the material good and spiritual substance of paradise garden -- because we see their suffering from all that

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<sup>307</sup>Ibid.

<sup>308</sup>I grew up with this melody of the Old Hundredth from the 1551 Geneva Psalter, singing different words of praise and thanksgiving. The textual words cited here are the ones that we sang as extended family gathered on the farm homestead with my Norwegian Lutheran cousins. For the melody see *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pew Edition*, 883.

is contrary to God's intention for creation, also knowing that we too suffer in that same regard. We know at some gut level that our waterways are polluted, the beauty of landscapes diminished by the ravaging of corporate greed, and vast diverse habitats destroyed and poisoned. It is around tables that we can see who is included in the kingdom and who is missing. We see friends and enemies, the marginalized and the dominant. In bodies, both absent and present, and in the body of creation itself we behold the need for reconciliation, healing, and transformation. We open ourselves to feel the pain of these times and see glimpses of life even amidst what feels so destructive in our world today.

The welcome table that Jesus spread during his life and ministry took bodies seriously. M. Shawn Copeland draws renewed attention to how Jesus enfleshed freedom and thus by extension, challenges how radical our table hospitality must be as we celebrate the Eucharist. In and through his body, "Jesus' overall performance of masculinity was *kenotic*: he emptied himself of all that would subvert or stifle authentic human liberation. In these ways, his maleness stood as contradictory signification, undermining kyriarchy and its multiple forms of oppression."<sup>309</sup> Copeland further notes,

A healthy appropriation of sexuality is crucial to generous, generative, and full living. A fully embodied spirituality calls for integration of sexual energies and drives, rather than repression or even sublimation. Comfortable in his body, sexuality, and masculinity, Jesus lived out of a "creative interplay of both

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<sup>309</sup>M. Shawn Copeland, "Marking the Body of Jesus, the Body of Christ," in *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 273. See also her book, Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. It is important for me to note that in highlighting these claims of Copeland about Jesus, it is not my intention to contrast the uniqueness of Jesus as separate from his Jewish context. I am aware that it is easy to make assertions that are anti-Judaism. Rather, affirming and thus quoting Judith Plaskow, "If we acknowledge that the Jesus movement was a movement within Judaism, however, then whatever Jesus' attitudes toward women, they represent not a victory *over* Judaism, but a possibility *within* early Judaism – a Judaism that was in fact so diverse and pluralistic that it is impossible to state its normative position on anything." See Plaskow, "Feminist Anti-Judaism and the Christian God," 92-93.

immanent and transcendent spiritual energies.” Understanding *eros* as these creative energies integrated into a dynamic life force, we can say that Jesus had an eros for others; he gave his body, his very self to and for others, to and for the Other.”<sup>310</sup>

Social suffering conditions any personal suffering. No one is free from domination. We do not yet possess the joy of inhabiting our own bodies fully even as we profess trust in Jesus, the incarnate one. We *are* incarnal beings, created in the image and likeness of the living God. We are called to take joy in our created nature. Yet we continue to place other marks upon one another’s bodies even as others’ mark our own bodies. The witness of the objectifying gaze continues: race, gender, sex, sexuality, and culture. Difference is not celebrated but exploited as a way to dominate and control.

However, and gathered around the welcome table, we are called to love beyond domination and casual recognition. In the Eucharist there is the condition of the possibility that humanity can look upon one another and the body of creation itself with soft loving eyes. I suggest the self-reflection that prepares our hearts and minds and bodies to receive the Eucharist might be an *intentional regard* for self and Other. It is through this open regard that we can see the discourses and socio-cultural interactions that compose our subjective position and conditions our subjectivities, which is to say, our ability to be addressed and to respond in the flesh.

Grounding this practice of self-reflection and open regard is the psychic ability to live creatively and lovingly within the tension of oneself in one’s subject positions and in one’s subjectivities as a multiple self. Kelly Oliver notes that “[t]o conceive of oneself as a subject is to have the ability to address oneself to another, real or imaginary, actual or

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<sup>310</sup>Copeland, “Marking the Body of Jesus, the Body of Christ,” 273.

potential.”<sup>311</sup> She goes on to say that “[s]ubjectivity, on the other hand, is experienced as a sense of agency and response-ability that are constituted in the infinite encounter with otherness, which is fundamentally ethical.”<sup>312</sup> We witness to and from our vulnerable bodies. The truth of who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming is manifest in embodied presence and demands relationship with others. The loving regard that accepts difference and otherness – in ourselves, in those like us, and in those unlike us -- is guided, nurtured, and sustained at the Lord’s Table.

At the table, we are met by God and others. It is here that we are addressed in the fullness of who we are: human subjects comprised of multiple, co-existing subjectivities or identities. It is here that we see and are seen, marked bodies and all. And we are accepted in the particularity of who we are as acting subjects formed by multiple discourses. Copeland reminds us that “[i]n Jesus, God critiques any imperial or ecclesiastical practice of bodily exclusion and control, sorrows at our obstinacy, and calls us all unceasingly to new practices of body inclusion and liberation.” She goes on to underline the fact that “[i]n Jesus, God manifests an eros for us *as we are* in our marked particularity of race, gender, sex, sexuality, culture.”<sup>313</sup> Copeland invites the church to consider radical hospitality at the Lord’s Table with her provocative suggestion of a *queer* Christ who is both host and guest. She states,

... a “queer’ Christ embraces *all* our bodies passionately, revalorizes them as embodied mystery, and reorients sexual desire toward Gods desire for us in and through our sexuality. This is not a matter of fitting God into our lives, but of

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<sup>311</sup>Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 17.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid.

<sup>313</sup>Copeland, “Marking the Body of Jesus, the Body of Christ,” 279.



fitting our lives into God. Homosexual and heterosexual persons are drawn by God's passionate love for us working in us to bring us into God's love."<sup>314</sup>

It is in the (re)marking of Christ's flesh as queer that the flesh of church is marked for the sake of a more generous hospitality that knows no bounds. "These marks differentiate and transgress, they unify and bind, but the flesh of Christ relativizes these marks in the flesh of the church."<sup>315</sup> It is only in and through Christ that we become brothers and sisters, which is to say, that we are transformed into "*his very own flesh*."<sup>316</sup> Such embodied unity is grounded in radically generous hospitality of diversity. More strongly put by Copeland is her remark that "[t]he sacramental aesthetics of Eucharist, the thankful living manifestation of God's image through particularly marked flesh, demands the vigorous display of difference in race and culture and tongue, gender and sex and sexuality."<sup>317</sup> Such glad diversity hearkens back to the goodness of creation in paradise garden.

Equally strong remarks by other feminist theologians who focus on a body-centered theology highlight what is at stake in generous hospitality at the table: the livingness of presence from a body that is affirmed as God's own. Bodily acceptance that is both human and divine grounds personal action and agency that springs from the glad joy of one's very self. Such freedom of joy then leads us deeper toward others in community. We are thereby enabled to live from the inside out, in connection with and responsive to the world around us. "Divine presence makes others alive, in this sense it is

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<sup>314</sup>Ibid., 279-280.

<sup>315</sup>Ibid., 280.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid., 281.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid.

authoritative and such life can only emerge from a body that is self-affirming.”<sup>318</sup> Being able to act from one’s own body knowledge matters substantively for personal life and for life in community: “A body which is not present to itself, which makes a person absent in their presence, is death-dealing to itself and those around it. It can feel no connection, it is not able to be open to otherness.”<sup>319</sup> Table hospitality, in order to be life-giving for every-body, needs to *re-member* bodies, meaning to connect, unfold, and open up the experience of the *livingness* constitutive of each and every body. Such life can indeed exist in, among, and between us. This livingness is deeply entangled in relationships here on earth: life is at work and so is death.

The Lord’s Table itself – as a personal and public space -- stands as a witness to bodies in their wild diversity of livingness. I wonder if, as we move toward that sacramental table and with eyes of love, are we able to see that our bodies are sacramental? “Bodies are the divine presence on earth, they are sacramental and often profaned. All the created order pulsates with divine reality and needs no transformation to make it so.”<sup>320</sup> Life is created good and yet it is ongoing work to open up and cherish our embodied lives as such. “Profanity is not the failure to open oneself to outside intervention but rather the failure to love passionately all that we see, touch, taste, smell and hear.”<sup>321</sup> We are called to live life passionately from the emotional wisdom and relationality of one another’s bodies. “Love is the responsibility to become attuned to our

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<sup>318</sup>Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology*, Introductions in Feminist Theology, edited by Mary Grey, et al. (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), 98.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid.

<sup>320</sup>Ibid., 148.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid.

responses to the world and other people, and the energies that sustain us.”<sup>322</sup> Enacting the ethical impulse of love is living in the freedom and truth that God’s love provides.

### **Summary and Preview**

Desire or what we yearn after matters, substantively. Our embodied thoughts and feelings intimately form our embedded theology as it interacts with theological discourse we receive at the hands of mother church with its stories, traditions, and rituals. Weekly participation in congregational life is formative for us individuals and as a corporate body. Joining together we create a distinctive intersubjective space that we inhabit even as it lives in us. This interactive processing and participation in community has internal and external dimensions of transitional space. Not only do we face each other relationally in receiving grace and forgiveness, but also as disciples we reflect God’s glory in the emotional growth and maturing as beloved children of God.

The call to discipleship is to embody God’s presence and thus, takes seriously the human body as created in the original image and likeness of God. This human vocation to journey together toward re-creation yearns for the flourishing of all people and creation itself. Yet as we drink in the sight, sound, and sigh of one another in worship we know all too well the frailty of the human and corporate body. The vulnerability of difference and dependence that each one of us embodies relationally leans into a weak presence of open and joyful anticipation as we seek, moment by moment, to live out the ethics of table hospitality.

We might envision this call to embody radical hospitality as the narrative coherence that makes emotional sense of our life journey even as such connection around

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<sup>322</sup>Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 20.

the table happens only by the cohesiveness of such moments. There is no ordered hierarchy at such a table; rather, hierarchical power is dispossessed by the corporate presence of weak and vulnerable bodies.

This chapter has focused on the insights of interpersonal neurobiology so as to explore the emotional and relational dimensions of our body as individual persons and as a gathered community. We have seen how emotion structures communal belonging even as it forms individuals all with their own core sense of self amidst a dynamic and changing plural identity. Processes of differentiation and integration matter substantively in the ongoing formation of personhood. We have begun to wonder about what all of this might mean in terms of witness, power and agency, trust and truth, and participation in freedom.

The concluding chapter turns back to examine in more detail some particular aspects of *koinonia* from the Neo-orthodox Protestant perspective and at the same time also looks ahead to the proposal of countertransference as *koinonia*. In the interplay of these two perspectives new questions and thus, new possibilities emerge, not only for communal life in the church and academy, but also beyond those walls to the public square.

CHAPTER SIX  
COUNTERTRANSFERENCE AS *KOINONIA*: INTENTIONAL AWARENESS OF  
THE EMOTIONAL BODY

*May all that is unforgiven in you  
Be released.  
May your fears yield  
Their deepest tranquilities.  
May all that is un-lived in you  
Blossom into a future  
Graced with love.  
--- John O'Donohue*

*When the mind grasps onto preconceived ideas it creates a tension within the mind  
between what is and 'what should be.'*  
--- Daniel J. Siegel

The theoretical conversation of the previous chapter is important in describing dimensions of countertransference and the multiple self and thus, the lived-through experience of *koinonia* and in so doing contributes, from a phenomenological perspective, a *thick description* that is helpful to furthering the self-understanding of congregational leaders. First, the conversation provides an inter-disciplinary descriptive and interpretive foundation that broadens theoretical understandings about what it means to be human in relation to self, others, and God. Second, it is precisely the *thickness* of imaginative understanding that allows the congregational leader to *hold lightly* those same theoretical possibilities in the moment-to-moment engagement with parishioners. This capacity honors the ability to approach others with an openness that is “without

memory or desire.”<sup>1</sup> The bone deep knowledge of thick theory and description is what allows for multiple modes of sensing and thus, meanings that arise within the openness of the intersubjective congregational field. Third, such intra-relational space invites personal and pastoral attentiveness to one’s sensate bodily reactions to the theoretical and descriptive play of the *in vivo* themes. Congruent with the invitation to *wondering curiosity* in previous chapters, the reader is invited to reflect back upon responses to the theoretical lenses and to wonder about the inner source of such emotional body reactions. What theory excites? Attracts? Disturbs? Repels?<sup>2</sup> What is clear and compelling? What lays its claim on you? In the light of these questions, this concluding chapter seeks to unfold implications of countertransference as *koinonia* and in so doing, differentiate yet link those implications to Latini’s claims about *koinonia*. I begin the chapter by noting the contextual significance of this relational dialogue.

The focus of this final chapter is a proposal about broadening and building from an interdisciplinary understanding of *koinonia* in a pluralistic and multicultural world that seems to be beset by exclusive claims about what it means for people to be faithful, if not spiritual. Wars have been fought over differing religious claims in the name of Jesus Christ. And today’s headlines continue to remind us of religious warring factions in the name of Islam. The question of religious identity becomes a larger question about what it means to be human and thus, how do we live life together. This is one of the paradoxes shared by the three Abrahamic religions: the tension of God’s exclusive claims on people

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<sup>1</sup>Cooper-White, *Braided Selves*, 35.

<sup>2</sup>To ask these questions is to tap into the bodily sensations that ground the experience of countertransference and to tap into the flow of emotional energy and bodily wisdom.

as narrated by particularity of sacred scripture, tradition, and community, and the human experience of feeling (inter)connected to people or, the experience of *koinonia*.<sup>3</sup>

### **Worldviews at Play**

In this day and age it seems there are two broad emphases at work in worldviews that orient how we live: exclusiveness and universality are at play in these claims, particularly those of a religious nature. Both emphases delimit the paradox in which we are called to live. On the one hand, we choose our religious identity and affiliation even as we are chosen, captivated by how it makes sense of our lives and provides meaning. On the other hand, we have larger, other experiences in which we know ourselves to be connected and resonant with a larger body of people, perhaps and even including the livingness of creation itself.

At the heart of the paradox is the human need to love and be loved, to know and be known and thus, to live a meaningful life. To be chosen and beloved of God might be described as the sheltering embrace of secure love or attachment that grounds our self worth and value as unique individuals. And it is from this specific relationship that we are called into community with others, and then beyond to live and work in other circles of community.

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<sup>3</sup>Ann Belford Ulanov poses the situation in psychoanalytical language. “Are we like a good plant making oxygen? And the oxygen each of us makes is breathing space for the rest of us. We desperately need every citizen making his or his share of oxygen, for the planet, for the creation of social space that can hold opposite views, and create enough room to find and construct peace. When one part of us seeks dominance over the whole, we have fallen into identification with one point of view, and split off and projectively identify any opposing view with the enemy out there. Such tyranny makes for deadness.” See Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*, 8. We might say further, that what is at stake is the interplay between cohesion and coherence, which is to say the ongoing unfolding of truth or processes of integration. These processes are overlapping constructs. See Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 98f.

The integrative impulse of IPNB may open up this human paradox of tension – exclusivity and universality -- particularly with regard to the experience of *koinonia*. Chapter One introduced and examined the definition of *koinonia* from a Neo-orthodox understanding of Karl Barth with an emphasis on the interconnectedness of the human and divine spirit where the person and work of Jesus Christ is integral. *Koinonia* was defined as reconciliation, understood further as the essence and *telos* of the church in its role within God’s ministry. Its interdisciplinary method was asymmetrical critical correspondence, and personhood was understood as unitary with an emphasis upon the Spirit amidst *ontological insecurity* in the globalized world.<sup>4</sup> Latini’s work on *koinonia* helps us think through ecclesiology in precise ways.

Other chapters presented *in vivo* themes of *koinonia* that emerged from a phenomenological perspective and further interdisciplinary analysis that privileged the body. This view of *koinonia* is indebted to a practical theological perspective that privileges liberation theologies, as well as insights from postcolonial theory, interpersonal neurobiology, and psychoanalysis. Its interdisciplinary method was relational integration, and personhood was posited as the multiple self with an emphasis on the emotional body. The resulting focus of *koinonia* then is more concerned with thinking through theological anthropology of the multiple self with attentiveness to human joy amidst bodily suffering.

Both perspectives of *koinonia* are needed, and dialogue between the two contributions emerges at this point, guided by the integrative emphasis of IPNB. Thus, the distinctiveness of each vision of *koinonia* is respected and at the same time, linked in conversation so as to allow something new to spring forth that allows the whole

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<sup>4</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 23.



conceptual reality and experience of *koinonia* to become more efficacious in a world beset by violence wrought by chaos and rigidity. Necessarily then, the notion of *koinonia* becomes more complex as distinctive but complementary ideas are brought together in (un)conscious play.

### Conversation as a River of Integration

What is exciting is that generally speaking, *top down* notions and *bottom up* experiences of *koinonia* are engaged. Such a conversation so constructed evokes Siegel's image of a harmonious flowing river (of the prefrontal middle cortex) that is the picture of integration.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this image suggests this integrative conversation is more than an external dialogue between two bodies of knowledge inhabited by two female theologians. It is also an internal dialogue that speaks from and to different parts of the neo-cortex that may allow for integration, should the interplay of these thoughts and what is evoked emotionally be held mindfully and lightly.

We have seen that integration generally is understood to be the linkage of differentiated elements in an emerging complex system. Relational communication and connection with others is central to emotional self-regulation in forming our minds and developing our embodied brain. *Cohesion* and *coherence* of positive emotional communication *open* us up to *joy* and to others.<sup>6</sup> There is the spirited harmonious flow of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 263. It is interesting to note that my experience of *working-through* my thesis has been an integrative experience of *top down* and *bottom up* processes. I understand this process energetically from my foundational CPE work on aspects of my Myers-Briggs personality typology of E/INFJ. In other words, it has been a matter of drawing intentional awareness to when I draw upon my secondary capacities of ST and when I draw upon my primary processes of NF.

<sup>6</sup>See Volf and Crisp, *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture, and the Good Life*. This recent collection of essays links joy with themes of creation, theodicy, politics, suffering, pastoral practice, and eschatology. Contributing authors include Jurgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, and Mary Clark Moschella,

life that we experience from time to time and which we desire to experience more constantly as the expansive ground or wellspring from which to live. And we know that practices of mindfulness meditation and iconic play create and keep opening up generous space in which to dwell relationally with one another. Might we imagine then, that we are called to integrate the exclusive and universal claims of the human need for *koinonia* in our own bodies and relationships? Can we imagine playing with particular concepts from each view of *koinonia* for the sake of enlarged and enriched resonant intersubjectivity that is simply human and also divine? Can we sense how we, in our desire, long for *koinonia*?

Each of us has the particular experience of *koinonia* in the congregation even as we also experience *koinonia* in other relational experiences in the world.<sup>7</sup> We recognize and know *koinonia* from within congregations even as that experience is associatively conditioned by and opens us up to other experiences of *koinonia* beyond the congregational setting and its relationships. In other words, we recognize various realms of *fellowship* that mark us and shape us as subjective bodies who suffer joy and sorrow.

Furthermore, we participate in traditions of *koinonia*. In the context of community we inhabit traditions even as they inhabit us. Mary Clintock Fulkerson pointedly notes the importance of thinking through the normative identity and memory of tradition, in our case, notions of *koinonia*.

The very idea that Christian communities are shaped only by normative biblical and post-biblical stories of redemption and not shaped by habituations into

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<sup>7</sup>It is important to remember that even our congregational experience is itself influenced trans-locally and trans-temporally by the relational connections the congregation has globally and ecumenically throughout the world. In other words, and drawing upon the imagery of Paul in Romans 12 and 1 Cor. 12, as the body of Christ, the local congregation is just one of the members of the world-wide body of Christ. To recall this sense of gifted and spirited diversity is to remember the socio-political and economic factors that render more complex both the multiple self and the practice of hospitality at the Lord's Table.

socially located bodily proprieties is docetic at best. At worst it continues to reproduce the false notion that what really matters is what we believe, not the various inheritances that shape our bodily wisdom, our social relations, and our bodily knowledge about who merits our full attention.<sup>8</sup>

Fulkerson goes on to say, “We cannot remain satisfied with defining the tradition as content; nor is it sufficient to say that tradition is content and process, at least without attention to a broad spectrum of experience.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the importance of the ensuing conversation about *koinonia* as we lean into the role that embodied memory plays in that experiential reality.

As we have seen, the analysis of the *in vivo* themes renders more complex the concept of *koinonia* as understood by contemporary practical theologians in the Neo-orthodox tradition of Karl Barth, notably Theresa Latini. The spirited paradox of human-divine presence, action, and agency joins with relational insights of the emotional body in community. Of particular importance in this particular conversation is how new understandings emerge around embodied and conceptual realities of *trust* and *truth*; *witness* and *participation*; *time* and *power*, and *freedom*.

We begin this conversation by focusing more specifically on *koinonia* of the ecclesial body from the Neo-orthodox perspective as it is innovated by the research of Latini. From that (churched) body of knowledge we will engage highlights of the

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<sup>8</sup>Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “Theological Reflection and Theories of Practice: Rethinking Normative Memory as if Bodies Matter,” in *Pastoral Bearings: Livde Religion and Pastoral Theology*, ed. Jane F. Maynard, Leonard Hummel, and Mary Clark Moschella (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2010), 35.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 36. How to consider a broad spectrum of experiences is to wrestle with how to understand and engage culture as a Christian. Chapter one notes the ways in which Latini and I understand that task through the domain of interdisciplinary dialogue. Here it is important to note my resonance with the work of Mary McClintock Fulkerson, and its alignment with my liberation theological approach. See also

phenomenological insights of the emotional body. In the dialogue that ensues, implications for the tasks of practical theology will emerge.

Latini highlights the *koinonia* of the church in three modes of *participation*: being gathered, upbuilt, and sent by God's Spirit. Each mode of *koinonia* is correlated with a doctrine. The church's *koinonia* with Christ is justification; *koinonia* among church's members is sanctification; and the church's *koinonia* with the world is vocation.<sup>10</sup> Generally, we have seen that *trust* and *truth* have to do with the ontological reality of *koinonia* or reconciliation in Jesus Christ. Doctrinal explication specifically spells out that this is so. So does the pattern of *coinherence* and *correspondence*. It is even a truth that is witnessed to in *secular parables*.<sup>11</sup>

In what follows, each doctrine orients and thus describes the *witness* of the church as justified and sanctified and therefore called into a certain vocational identity in Christ. The faith that is witnessed to necessarily speaks of *action* and *agency*, both divine and human. Action and agency are particular ways in which we notice realities of *power* and *freedom* enacted in historical *time*. Remembering the earlier emphases of Neo-Barthian practical theology in chapter one, this discussion necessarily leans toward *practices* of the church.

### ***Koinonia: Participatory Mode of Gathering of the Church***

The truth that we gather around at weekly worship in church is the remembrance and celebration of our baptismal identity in the ritual of the Eucharist. Mediated through Christ, justification is the gift of our right relation to God. This objective reality,

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<sup>10</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 99.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 200.

perceived through the eyes of faith, is the heart of our Christian identity. We understand this most clearly in the sacraments. Following Barth, “baptism is a judgment against socialization” and “the Eucharist is a judgment on kinship.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, this reconciliation to God also involves our neighbor in a specific way. Our personal identity in Christ necessarily involves us in the life of the neighbor. “Members of the church discover their identity first and foremost in Christ, in whom all dividing walls of race, gender, nationality, and socioeconomic status are demolished.”<sup>13</sup> Faith trusts in and lives from the truth of this affirmation.

We might say then, that trust and truth are fleshed out in the life of Jesus Christ, and so then, are trust and truth in our individual and corporate lives. We might further say that trust and truth are Spirit-ed because it is the Holy Spirit who binds us to one another and to God. Not only are this Spirit-ed truth and trust embodied personally, they also define the congregational body and its specific space. “*Koinonia* is more definitive than biology; *koinonia* is the *locale* in which we belong. It comprises the people we are bound to ontologically.”<sup>14</sup>

This personal re-centering of human identity in Christ as new creation is further defined in the four historic marks of the church, the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” body. The relatedness of these marks is such that each mark makes sense of the other marks. The emphatic *oneness* is considered the objective work of the Spirit who binds together believers throughout all time and space. In that binding we are united with Christ

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 104.

“who exists in the present tense of reconciliation as one body.”<sup>15</sup> It is in light of this confessional affirmation that division is posited. “Division in the church is a contradiction of the church’s identity: it is scandalous, perverse, and distressing, a tearing asunder of Christ’s body.”<sup>16</sup> The other marks may clarify how division is further inflected and understood in the church tradition of reconciling unity.

The second mark of *holiness* reminds the church that its vocation is that of serving God. The third mark of *catholicity* affirms continuity in the midst of difference. Latini notes,

The church’s essence, its *koinonia*, remains constant in its manifold expressions. It discerns whether or not its various activities reflect its invisible dimension. In this way it upholds its identity in Christ. It resists definition by, alignment with, and dependence on alien social, historical, or political categories.<sup>17</sup>

Catholicity so understood however, does not preclude the church as a body that accompanies people gathered together socially for the purpose of activities that enlarge the reality of multidimensional *koinonia*. The fourth mark is *apostolic*.<sup>18</sup> Through the lives of the prophets and apostles the church witnesses to Christ.

The participatory mode of gathering together as the *justified* church contributes to an understanding of *witness* that links together the Holy Spirit with humanity, Scripture and Jesus Christ. Latini emphasizes the Spirited work of seeing with the eyes of faith in this particular *koinonia* with Christ. Seeing is action itself that enables further active agency. The activity of the Holy Spirit links with the work of human eyes and agency as

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 101-102.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 102.

*power* that creates the *freedom* in which to move and live. We see and are seen by the eyes of faith. Not only do we stand justified, we also are given a path to tread as righteous people of God that contributes to our ability to see in a particular way. She notes,

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the church recognizes and acknowledges its *koinonia* with Christ, each other, and all humanity. It turns to Scripture as a witness to Jesus and his work of reconciliation. At the same time, it recognizes the vastness of Jesus Christ. It opens itself to seeing Christ anew again and again.<sup>19</sup>

While it is a present reality in time, the justified church exists also and at the same time in the company of those who have gone before. We might think of this communion of saints as a relational space of *freedom* that provides depth and dimension to our present life together in community. *Time* has relational depth as does freedom.<sup>20</sup>

It is these relational aspects of time and freedom that make sense of how “[w]e participate fully in Christ, even though Christ is not fully formed in us.”<sup>21</sup> Our (in)complete formation is Christ testifies to the Christian experience of the three tenses of time. “Faith trusts in the completed work of *koinonia* in the past, anticipates its future coming, and prays for its present in-breaking.”<sup>22</sup> This is the public confession we embody

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Moltmann writes of the relational depth and breadth of time that links the activity of remembering the communion of saints with ethical urgency and imperative. Our historical *now*, individually and communally, must needs take account of the past future of lives not lived because of violence. As disciples we are called to recognize, honor, and respond to the trajectory of unlived lives as they condition our present and ongoing experience of historical freedom. See Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, 128-129. See also Jurgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl, 1st Fortress ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press paperback, 2004), 287. Therein, he writes about the remembered past and expected future. “In the human mind, past and future are therefore present through the force of remembrance and expectation. That is a simultaneity of what is non-simultaneous. In the human mind, Being-that-is-no-longer and Being-that-is-not-yet are present through the force of remembrance and expectation. These are creative ways of making-present what is absent. The *simultaneity*, however fragmentary in kind, of past and future in the present is a *relative eternity*, for simultaneity is one of the attributes of eternity.”

<sup>21</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

whenever the church gathers together around Word and sacraments. This confession expresses the freedom created by the interplay of time and trust in the truth of the vivifying effects of Christ's life and ministry, death and resurrection. It also creates a disposition of joy and confidence, according to Barth.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Koinonia*: Participatory Mode of Upbuilding of the Church**

The *koinonia* among church members is understood doctrinally as sanctification. As we have seen in other *koinonia* relationships, it is the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ that provides for intimate connections in the congregational body. It is this divine presence and power that nurtures fruitful growth within the church and church members for the sake of unity, and thus impels ongoing (re)formation of church practices.

Latini discusses sanctification with a threefold focus on the nature of church growth, mutual integration, and formation of ecclesial practice. Foundational to the discussion is the nature of church growth in its inward and outward dimensions. One might understand such growth of the congregational body as an expression of historical *freedom* that by nature is limited because it is provisional, contingent, and contextual. Relatedly, we might wonder about the nature of human *action* and *agency*, or in other words, *power*. The experience of *time* is implicated also in this historical experience of freedom. Latini quotes Barth in this regard:

[I]t is not ordained to give a perfect but only a provisional and therefore imperfect representation of the new humanity, God having reserved the definitive and perfect representation for His kingdom which comes in the final manifestation."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 106.



It seems the time of provisional and imperfect growth is in the historical *now* of present time and by the grace of God's power. In other words, it is the "already but not yet" reality of eschatological time wherein God's power may not clearly be visible, tangled as it were, in the imperfect action and agency of human witness in its participation in the church body. Furthermore, as part of the imperfect representation of humanity, the spiritual growth of the church may be, in the words of Barth, in "the appearance of the opposite."<sup>25</sup> Just so, and in the present eschatological time, the cross defines *power*, both human and divine. It is strong enough, yet also weak in its witness.

The cross of Jesus Christ shadows over the church, and necessarily defines the power and presence of *agency* that leads to *action*. Latini notes, "By the power of the Spirit, we live in correspondence to his death and resurrection (i.e., in the present). In so doing, we practice *koinonia* with Christ."<sup>26</sup> The content of human activity and agency may be defined by the pattern of dying and rising seen in Jesus' life and ministry. At the same time, this correspondence is empowered by Christ's risen Spirit. This is the new humanity in Christ, imperfect though it may be.

She goes on to note some of the many forms of the cross under which people bear up and which "may serve as a kind of pruning for future growth. Death and loss may precede significant flourishing."<sup>27</sup> Implied in this garden imagery is a certain kind of growth toward God's kingdom that is preferred and thus, ordered and shaped by cutting

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. 107-107.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 107.

so as to bring life from (violent) loss and death. The way of the cross is not life lived alone in singular bodies but is lived communally in and as the body of Christ.

It is in and through the capacity to share in the bearing of one another's burdens that church members *indwell* one another. This relational indwelling is a *participatory witness* to the power of the cross. Such indwelling further leads a diversity of people to worship and is so doing, reminds us of our common ground and welcome in God.

Latini notes this other dimension of sanctification as *mutual integration* and meaning, in the words of Barth, that people are "brought together, constituted, established and maintained as a common being – one people capable of unanimous action."<sup>28</sup> The act of common worship is literally a common and therefore, shared *activity* of unity. A diversity of people finds unity in their *common dependence* upon God as manifested in worship. Furthermore, there are "special practices of *koinonia*" that include "but are not limited to confession and forgiveness of sin, bearing on another's burdens (or mutual forbearance), praise, prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession, service, and theological dialogue."<sup>29</sup> The unity of these activities, centered in Jesus Christ, provides for integration and growth, and thus serves as a normative guide for ecclesial practices.

To be clear, Latini states "[t]he church's integration and edification in worship determines its entire life-act, all its relationships and practices."<sup>30</sup> And again she notes, "*Koinonia* is the origin, *telos*, and content of the church's life-act. All its work is fundamentally a *koinonia* of divine and human action."<sup>31</sup> While the church is built up by

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

the practices of *koinonia*, it is also the witness of the edified body as it is sent into the world and engages in other relationships. Such is its action and agency in the present moment.

The importance of ecclesial practice cannot be overestimated for Latini as influenced by Barth. He posits three norms that intentionally order church ministry: *diakonia*, *leiturgia*, and dynamic excellence. *Diakonia* is service to Christ that also and at the same time is service to the world and, as highlighted by Barth, “[church] members serve one another by mutual liberation for participation in the service of the whole.”<sup>32</sup> Notably, all aspects of church ministry must serve this larger integrated whole of church members, world, and Christ. Such is the universal aim of ministry even as it relies on the unique and differing gifts of individual members. Service then, witnesses to and participates in *integrated* action and agency that is both human and divine.

*Leiturgia* is the centering work which orders and from which all ecclesial practices emerge. Necessarily then, church practices support or body forth the real presence of Christ in worship. The elements of worship so understood include confession, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer.<sup>33</sup> Presence is the actuality of Jesus Christ in these elements. The presence of Jesus Christ demands human presence: *public confession* is the response to God’s Word, not only in the context of worship but also in other contexts such as the public square. *Prayer* is also such an occasion but also understood more mystically. Latini describes it this way: “In the common prayer during worship, church members constitute the body of Christ. They are ‘taken up’ into the prayer of Jesus

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

Christ, and through him, they commune with God. In prayer they participate in the work of the triune God, specifically in the in-breaking of the kingdom.”<sup>34</sup> No only is prayer a Christ-centered activity, it also witnesses to the reality of *koinonia*.

The sacraments “confirm this twofold belonging to Christ and to one another.”<sup>35</sup> Significantly this doubled presence acknowledges the reality of human sin and brokenness and in the face of that, acceptance and reassurance as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all found equal and valued, standing at the foot of the cross. These elements of worship highlight that *presence* with and to one another is predicated on the *truth* of and *trust* in Jesus Christ as the risen Lord of all. Such an affirmation of faith also makes clear that the action of worship might be evocative of and witness to such resonating and spirited presence.

Resonant presence so understood in all the church practices might be described by Barth as *dynamic excellence*. Resonance is not just attractional in its power; it is also forming and re-forming from an attitude of faith. Latini states, “church practices that faithfully reflect *koinonia* are dynamic. They are reformed and always being reformed according to the Word of God and the work of the Spirit. The body listens continually to its head in an attitude of openness.”<sup>36</sup> Contextual awareness is part of the dynamic livingness of the church as is the openness to its own not-knowing, incompleteness, and brokenness. Even so, this dynamic of excellence is a witness for exemplary practices in and beyond the church. “According to Barth, the church models *koinonia* to other

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

communities in its mutual service, trust, and commitment; in its differentiated unity; and in its fluidity and openness to change.”<sup>37</sup> This provisional representation of sanctified humanity becomes more focused as the sent church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, bodies forth the *vocation* of all humanity.

### ***Koinonia: Participatory Mode of Vocation of the Church***

The *koinonia* of church in the mode of sending has a twofold nature of coinherence and correspondence with Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The church practices *koinonia* with the world. The sent church *lives in solidarity with the world* and, in so doing, it acknowledges the reality of sin and suffering. At the same time, this participation in the world’s brokenness is the context in which the missional church *confesses and witnesses to its beliefs and actions in Jesus Christ*. The church practices *koinonia* with Christ. The action and the agency of the church as a community with and for the world is a revelation of God and humanity in the light of Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup>

The nature of this *koinonia* recalls the earlier biblical emphasis on fellowship as sharing and in so doing, also draws attention to suffering. The sent church is the provisional representation of humanity’s call to share in one another’s sufferings. Such solidarity is the witness to God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ. Hunsinger describes this activity:

The special vocation of the Christian is to share in the living self-witness of the Crucified. This sharing results in a fellowship of action and a fellowship of

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 118-119.

suffering. The act of witness will lead to suffering, and the suffering will function as an act of witness to the cross.<sup>39</sup>

The human experience of being present to others and the suffering nature of our historical time may be deepened by this intimate connection to the cross of Jesus. *Trust* in *truth* of Jesus Christ's reconciling work calls us to see clearly the nature of the world in which we live and at the same time, to see the world as reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. We see the world and all of creation with this doubled vision.

What is notable is the *intention of attitude* that is brought to this activity of seeing, witnessing, and sharing. This attitude is born from the shared nature of both church and world. Latini writes, "the church takes a generous posture toward the world, for it belongs to the world: like the world, it is creaturely. In other words, generosity is the church's normative disposition toward the world and central to its own life-act."<sup>40</sup> We might say then that the vocational attitude of *generosity* is the activity of the church in and for the world. This generosity is embodied as *hospitality*. Just as Jesus bodied forth radical hospitality, so the church is called to do so, trusting in the power of the Spirit. The pattern of correspondence and coinherence continues when the church is faithful to its Shepherd. Latini notes, "It cannot close its eyes to suffering or its ears to cries for liberation. If it fails to live in this kind of solidarity, the church denies its *koinonia* with the incarnate one."<sup>41</sup>

The church's *koinonia* with the world is also pointed and particular in its work of confession and witness in the world. The church confesses what it sees and in so doing,

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 117, footnote 11.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

acknowledges sin and suffering, as has been discussed. In light of that first confession, the church makes a second confession: what it believes and thus, what it intends to do based on who Jesus is. Jesus Christ is the revelation of true God and true man. This confession affirms God's work in and through Jesus Christ and thus expresses God's solidarity with humanity. "The church confesses God's affirmation of humanity in the incarnation, God's negation of human sin in the cross, and God's re-creation of humanity in the resurrection."<sup>42</sup> Confession takes the form of witness. The church, in its awareness of the contextual nature of the gospel, and in the words of Barth, also trusts that Jesus Christ "penetrates each specific historical situation with a specific intention to be specifically received and attested by the community."<sup>43</sup>

By the power of the risen Christ and through the activities of proclamation, explanation, and application, the church witnesses to the gospel message. Application is the form of proclamation and explanation. Barth deems witness as the sum of ministry, and claims the importance of speech and action in the ecclesial practices of ministry. He notes six ministries each for speech and action. Speech is action by word and such ministry includes "praise, preaching, teaching, evangelism, mission, and theology."<sup>44</sup> Action is speech by deed and such ministry includes "prayer, the cure of souls, development of exemplary lives, solidarity with the helpless, prophetic action, and the establishment of fellowship."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 119.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 121, footnote 13.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

The intentional attitude of the church in its faithful engagement with and for the world is a stance of hope. This is an eschatological perspective that conditions the activity of the church in its *koinonia* with the world. “Hope determines the church’s knowledge of, solidarity with, responsibility for, and witness to the world. Hope means that the church expectantly awaits the final coming of Christ, when multidimensional *koinonia* will be completely manifest.”<sup>46</sup> We trust this hope will not disappoint us “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” (Rom.5:5) This hope is manifest in all of the church’s modes of participating in *koinonia* because it is the substance from which it lives.

**Doctrine and Desire: “What kinds of people do these doctrines make us?”<sup>47</sup>**

We have traced specific notions of *koinonia* from a Neo-orthodox theological perspective with its emphasis on the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Now we are on the cusp of highlighting how the bodily emphases of interpersonal neurobiology and liberation theologies in conversation with *in vivo* themes further shape psychoanalytical understandings of *koinonia*. Implicated in the previous and also following discourse of the (in)visible dimensions of *koinonia* are notions linked to ecclesiology such as Christology and pneumatology as well as theological anthropology and eschatology. These doctrines are connectional and thematic ways of thinking biblically and theologically about the meaningfulness of life. They reflect ongoing generational

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>47</sup>Serene Jones, “Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law,” in *Feminist and Womanist Essays in Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Amy Plantiga Pauw and Serene Jones, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 24.



traditions of the church. Doctrines shape the church in their expression of the will and intent of the ecclesial body. In so doing, they order individual bodies and lives.

Doctrines are forms of discursive power that therefore contribute to the subjective formation of the multiple self. Just as there are varieties of doctrines, there are numerous theological ways of understanding any one particular doctrinal focus. Doctrines are mutable.<sup>48</sup> Their interpretive tenor changes throughout time. Church history and systematic theology testify to that reality. So does the discipline of practical theology. Furthermore and throughout our lives, we may find more resonance with one doctrine or another as they help us make theological meaning of our lives in certain contexts, situations, or episodes.

Practical theologian Serene Jones and her approach of feminist theological aesthetic analysis reminds us of how we are drawn to doctrines, which is to say, that we have an *affective response* to them. Jones notes, “Asking about the desirability of a doctrine like law forces us to be aware of dense emotional reactions that the topic evokes in us, including reactions that are unconscious and nonideational.”<sup>49</sup> She goes to say, “This awareness includes taking our bodies into account, for our feelings and our physical actions and reactions often tell us more about what we believe than do our openly expressed convictions. It also makes us aware that our affective desires are not one-dimensional but thickly layered and complex.”<sup>50</sup> The formation of Christian belief is complex. So is the practice of belief. Yet “what we *do* is profoundly affected by what we

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<sup>48</sup>As a congregation gathered in worship, we sing hymns, each inflected with a particular doctrinal emphasis. Singing hymns is one faithful witness to how we encounter and engage differences in doctrinal understandings.

<sup>49</sup>Serene Jones, “Glorious Creation, Beautiful Law,” in *Feminist*, 23.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

*desire*, and that what we desire is deeply determined by our perceptions of what is *beautiful*.”<sup>51</sup> These observations are helpful in our discussion at this juncture.

We are reminded that however human the need is for *cohesive* and *coherent* (doctrinal) narratives, the power of emotion is also at work in our storied lives. Hence, it is important to notice where our emotional investments are in certain doctrinal emphases as people of God. This noticing takes in the personal as well as the social. It is cognizant of the relational connections in, among, and between doctrines. It recognizes the web of life inherent in these connections. It furthers the question of “what kind of people do doctrinal connections make us?” This question is about the corporate identity and memory of tradition or, in other words, it is about the emotional body and its relational knowledge that is bone deep as flesh meets flesh.

### **Another Dimension of *Koinonia*: Emotional Coinherence of Relational Bodies**

Yes, *koinonia* is connectional and multidimensional. *Koinonia* is reconciliation.<sup>52</sup>

As Latini has described, *koinonia* is rooted in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Koinonia*, in all of its various dimensions, is reconciliation, empowered by

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 24 Jones’ assertions about doctrines and desire connect well with Mary McClintock’s proposal of how to understand culture. She notes, “A liberation theology of culture must take seriously the fact that culture is a dynamic and circulating reality in the late-twentieth-century global capitalism; it is the production of everyday realities that cannot be escaped. Out of its specificities persons carve out identities and projects. They do not do this as a neutral making of choices, but through a priori cultural meanings that produce desire and pleasure; culture creates the things that matter for subjects — mattering maps.” See Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “Toward a Materialist Christian Social Criticism: Accommodation and Culture Reconsidered,” in *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection and Cultural Analysis*, ed Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 53.

<sup>52</sup>In the liturgical season of Advent we sing about with longing about the differentiated unity of the body, reconciled or, in other words, *koinonia*. In the words of Geonyong Lee, “Come now, O Prince of Peace, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people. Come now, O God of love, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people. Come now and set us free, O God, Our Savior. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations. Come, Hope of unity, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations.” See “Come Now, O Prince of Peace” in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pew Edition*, 247.

the Holy Spirit. Her proposal is theological and yet hints at object-relations theory as an interdisciplinary partner that makes further sense of her construal of *koinonia*.<sup>53</sup> In the main however, her work reflects the normative task of practical theology as she seeks to understand *koinonia* from the perspective of practices: divine, ecclesial, and societal.<sup>54</sup> Latini's view of action is mediated through these dimensions of practice with a "goal to reform current church life and ministry (ecclesial practice) according to the life-act of God (divine practice) for the sake of the world (societal practice)."<sup>55</sup>

If Latini's perspective of *koinonia* is centered in the Word (of God), my proposal is cognizant of the power of ordinary words, meaning conscious and unconscious aspects of communication, with further attention to the contextual situatedness of discourses (of power). If her view privileges enfleshed Spirit and the person of Jesus Christ, my regard is for the role of embodied emotions in ordinary personal lives. Her interest seems to be about enlivening the doctrine of ecclesiology and my thesis is interested in exploring new dimensions of relational personhood that impact theological anthropology. She is normative in her account of *koinonia* whereas I am descriptive and interpretive. She is interested in practices and I am interested in lived-through experiences.

#### Memory as Foundational to *Koinonia*

What is clear, if implicitly common, to both perspectives of *koinonia* is the importance of *memory* in dynamically shaping lives and relationships. Memory fosters the emotional wisdom of knowing and becoming, interconnected processes that are

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<sup>53</sup>Latini, *The Church and the Crisis of Community*, 206, footnote 22.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 7.

dearly intrinsic to our shared mutual interest of what it means to be created human. Furthermore, these processes address how we might live faithfully as we grow and develop within the fold of the congregation for the sake of our neighbor. Latini privileges the doctrinal traditions that honor the living memory of Jesus Christ as central to *koinonia*. I affirm emotional, embodied processes of memory as constitutive of *koinonia*.

The intersubjective reality of countertransference describes psychoanalytically the reality of right-brain processes as understood from an interpersonal neurobiological perspective. In so doing these related interpretive accounts privilege the unconscious, which is to say, bodily emotional processes of memory. It honors intense and amplified emotions that arise in feelings of sorrow and joy, which is to say the livingness of life. This proposal therefore understands *koinonia* as emotional coinherence of relational bodies; in other words, countertransference as *koinonia*.<sup>56</sup>

My dissertation articulates many facets to understanding the emotional body dimension of multidimensional *koinonia*. The reader has already been introduced to the *in vivo* themes of the pastoral leader's lived-through experience of *koinonia* with theological and psychological analysis in previous chapters. At length we have leaned into the insights and integrative tasks of interpersonal neurobiology to make sense of theological emphases of the relational and multiple self in the lived-experience of community. Now and in light of the aforementioned *in vivo* thematic analysis of

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<sup>56</sup>My proposal is indebted to the work of Theresa Latini and furthers her foundational assertions through my interest in exploring the unconscious aspects of *koinonia*, especially for the life and ministry of the pastoral leader. Recently it has come to my attention that there is a book that more directly extends her themes with a slight nod to interpersonal neurobiology and some research in empathy. See Andrew Root, *The Relational Pastor: Sharing in Christ by Sharing Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013). Each author is indebted to the work of practical theologian James E. Loder.

*koinonia*, my thesis simply highlights the unconscious aspects of memory as the emotional dimension of *koinonia*.

In so proposing, we understand *koinonia* from the lived-through experience of right-brain-to-right-brain processes that are understood psychoanalytically as countertransference. *Koinonia* is the emotional coinherence of relational bodies. Because memory processes are so important to the emotional body of lived-through experience, it is helpful to review and build upon aspects of memory as a way into the conceptual reality of countertransference.

#### Implications of Memory for Understanding Countertransference as *Koinonia*

Emerging principles from differing disciplines engage the complex concept of memory. To speak of memory is to speak both of remembering and forgetting. It is also to speak from and of the suffering body. Working models of the embodied mind emphasize dissociation and multiplicity as has been discussed in earlier chapters. Movement between mental states is normative. Recall that trauma studies have been significant in reclaiming the notion of splitting so as to understand the reality of forgetting as part of memory processes. Positively then, we understand that various areas of the mind – cognitive, affective, sensate, and behavioral -- may not be accessible to conscious awareness for differing modes of time and have differing permeability to consciousness. Memory itself is multiple and layered in its mutable dynamics that span personal and collective history(ies).

Foundationally, dissociation is the background from which to understand a few notions of memory. First, memory is not singular but multiple, because it is grounded in state-dependent affect regulation. The second principle follows then, that in severe

trauma, the encoding of memory occurs simultaneously in separate domains of affect, sensation, and cognition. *Safe enough* external environments and *secure enough* attachment patterns are what is at stake here. As people we need a variety of such relationships throughout our lives. We also are called to be that for others in their life journey.

Also important is the reality of multi-modal encoding, storing, and retrieving of memories such that various mental states have differing memories permeable to our conscious awareness. The emotional capacity and competency for *intentional border crossings* within our inner landscape become important not only for generous self-knowledge but also for spiritual formation and development that is cognizant of the external other, meaning our neighbor. The reality of state-dependent affect regulation is what grounds our (in)capacity for wide and generous welcome for the stranger within and also without. We can learn to stretch our window of tolerance for each mental state through practices of mindfulness meditation. This practice might be envisioned as an inward setting of the welcome table so that we can draw upon our own agency to move robustly in this world toward others with the active engagement of open hands, a welcoming presence, and roomy hospitality.<sup>57</sup>

Thirdly, the difference between explicit and implicit memory processes means that some memories are not accessed or understood symbolically or narratively. Yet our bodies remember, and in this regard, we meet the personal limits of our agency and action. These limits are the liminal or threshold space of encountering our emotions, of

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<sup>57</sup>See the Derek Walcott poem *Love After Love*. Cited in Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner, eds., *Teaching with Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 109.

meeting sorrow and joy in our own flesh. We *witness* more than we know so there is always an *excess* of meaning, even and especially if we cannot experience memory other than as a haunting sensate experience that veers into a void. This empty space becomes the condition for the possibility of openness -- open mind, curious heart, accepting body -- if and whenever we are met by others who can stay with us in the intensity and amplification of felt bodily emotion without the coherent narrative of a story. It is here that “[o]ur nonconscious mental modules may be revealed as narrative themes.... Narrative enactments can be seen in the patterns of behavior, relating, and of decision making that steer the course of an individual’s life.”<sup>58</sup> It is here that enactments link past, and future with the felt present. It is here that there is the possibility of interface between multiple storylines and the active agency of our own ongoing authorship in the lived experience of our life story.

It is here that resonant presence is, at the same time, cohesive presence that helps hold body and Spirit together. Shared moments become a dance of presence and absence, held together by the present and therefore, cohesive awareness of people simply being together. Hence, it is importance to tend to unconscious and thus bodily dimensions of memory in countertransference enactments that constitute intersubjective reality.

Fourthly, there is the interpenetration of fantasy and reality when memory is elaborated from a nugget of actual lived-through experience. We might say that illusion creates reality and that reality draws upon illusion in this regard. Strong is the will to make narrative and thus a coherent sense of life. Stories testify to the human need to live and fashion a life that is meaningfully lived. Poems become a provisional storyline, an

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<sup>58</sup>Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 87.

incomplete and fragmented yet welcoming space in which we can dwell. Precisely because of their very incomplete nature, poems provide breathing space and imaginative freedom in which to enliven and so live the very questions around which we orient our lives. Songs (or hymns) become a way to breathe in and out of God's desire as it meets our incomplete yearnings. These forms of words are the found things in liturgy to which we give ourselves over in the play of memory.<sup>59</sup>

In a related and final principle, memory itself is not separate from meaning. Importantly then, meaning is co-constructed as relational persons. Our ever-mindful bodies find and play, consciously and unconsciously, with what is present in the relational space of togetherness. This is the *third space* wherein something new might emerge, rupturing us with new insights. This is the reality of the intersubjective field of encounter. Memory means then that we are always meeting resident otherness in ourselves and in the people we encounter. We indwell worlds of alterity, daily.

We *are*, in the heart of imagination as well as in responsiveness to the socio-economic and geo-political realities, wandering migrants in search of a better land or at the very least, a landscape that makes sense of our own inner geography. So alterity and difference in terms of otherness is a common and thus shared, human dynamic in our lives. And we need the emotional resources of memory to make sense of life as we journey on together. This journey takes in new perceptions as well as memories, and so we know ourselves as both remembered and remembering people. Thus, "as we accumulate lived moments across time, we are capable of recalling not as one self, but as

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<sup>59</sup>See Appendices A for poems.



the many types of self that have existed in the past. Narrative recollection, then, is the opportunity for those varied states to be created anew in the present.”<sup>60</sup>

There is a rich biblical witness to the human reality of remembering and forgetting who we are as people in relation to God. The Bible is also a source book for our ancestral identity as heirs of *wandering Arameans* – or, exiles and immigrants -- for that is who our ancestors were in relation to the God who calls us, forms us, and is our steadfast companion in our journey through this world. (Deut. 26:5) Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg reminds us that “[t]he complex interplay of forgetting and remembering, the traumatic departures from our own experiences, all leave traces in our movements of conversation with one another. By the same measure, they leave traces in the biblical accounts of what is transacted between people, between people and God, and between parts of the self.”<sup>61</sup> Such are the inner and outer dimensions of our journey in which memory plays such an important role in our formation and growth.

Memory, personally and collectively, operates covertly and overtly in the shifting and multiple storylines of both testaments. In the Bible, memory made consciously aware becomes a moral compass with direct ethical imperatives. Remembering the Exodus passage from slavery into freedom because of God’s mighty hand, the covenantal relationship is codified in the Ten Commandments and ritually celebrated in the Passover. Memory binds us and at the same time frees us. “It is not the memory *of* past suffering but the memory of *God’s deliverance from* past suffering that underwrites the

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<sup>60</sup> Siegel, *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*, 88.

<sup>61</sup>Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious*, ix.

command to be just and generous toward the weak,” notes Miroslav Volf.<sup>62</sup> The communicative force of memory is written in words and exists in the void between words. What might it be to regard the Bible from the perspective of traumatized people who survived with some memories intact and with other memories only just able to be bodied forth by the lived-through possession of their very lives?<sup>63</sup>

To ask this question is to render more complex the notion of ethics and moral theology, doctrinal history and church rituals, and to wonder about the bodies that tell (or not) sacred stories. To ask this question is to query and read the Bible from the perspective of human memory. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza writes about Scripture as a site of memory, struggle, and vision, contrasting those notions with the ideas of commemoration and monuments. “Scripture as a site of memory can be understood in hermeneutical terms as a reservoir of a multitude of often contradictory meanings that need to be interpreted and that mean differently in different social-religious cultural contexts. It is ancestral memory, evoking ever new meanings in different times and contexts.”<sup>64</sup> This assertion is resonant with notions of the biblical unconscious. She goes on to say to talk about Scripture functioning as a *monument* when it is understood from a fundamentalist literalist point of view. Then, “Scripture is no longer understood as

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<sup>62</sup>Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, 106.

<sup>63</sup>For a communal perspective from the Hebrew Bible see O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*. For an individual person's experience from a gospel perspective see Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*.

<sup>64</sup>Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 13.

nourishing bread for the community in struggle but as hard stone that cannot be changed by interpretation but must be obeyed whether it makes sense or causes harm.”<sup>65</sup>

These notions of Scripture as a site of memory naturally lead to Schussler Fiorenza’s related emphasis on Scripture as a contested site with regard to meaning and interpretation that is then further intensified and amplified by discourses inherent in “sermons, religious instructions, and publications, as well as the diverse cultural images and mandates internalized through education, religious celebrations, and personal readings.”<sup>66</sup> Scripture however, is also a site of vision. “Its images of justice and well-being, of calling and love, of hope and survival encourage us to see Scripture as the rich table of Divine Wisdom who invites all without exception to her table and to *walk in the ways of wisdom*.”<sup>67</sup> Scripture feeds memory with its images and narratives even as Scripture itself is a product of memory that is projected forward as a narrative of God’s shalom.

As Christians we trust in the Bible. We engage its wisdom with our very bodies as we wrestle with how to respond to its foundational witness. Its truths interact with our personal truths.<sup>68</sup> We are called to live within a storied purpose or a coherent narrative

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid. Memory seems to be related to the witness of everyday objects in their home setting. Orhan Pamuk has written a compelling manifesto for modest museums in homes. Home museums stand in contrast to monuments and imperial discourse. For his compelling visual perspective on objects and their role in memory of his beloved city of Istanbul see Orhan Pamuk, *The Innocence of Objects*, trans. Ekin Oklap (New York, NY: Abrams, 2012).

<sup>66</sup>Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders*, 13-14.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>68</sup>The location from which we, as individuals, read the Bible is perspectival of course. Cultural perspectives from a variety of women’s conscious awareness and creativity are reflected in this book. See Choi Hee An and Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, eds., *Engaging the Bible: Critical Readings from Contemporary Women* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006). For another meta-cognitive perspective on the fundamental importance of the Bible in terms of biblical interpretation see Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority*

that makes sense of our individual human agency and action, and at the same time, be cognizant that the Bible witnesses to multiple and contradictory truths that are formative ancestral memories.

How then are we to live reliant on biblical memories in conversation with our personal or even communal memories that seem to have a life of their own? To live this question is to wonder about *unctuous courage* of black women and to venture into the heart-space of *jeong* and *han* of Korean women's experience as part of our communion of saints.<sup>69</sup> Foundationally, it is remembering that we are together on this journey. We are not alone. Walking in the ways of wisdom is to listen to other personal voices in their reliance on biblical witness and to learn from their bodily wisdom. The role of personal experience and the consciously reflective person interact in the recollection of the past with the present, open to the experience of others in conversation with themselves. The suffering bodies of women yield an ethical wisdom that is at odds with dominant imperial culture; and yet we do well to listen to those voices.<sup>70</sup>

Zornberg reminds us that “[f]or the survivor, the one who *lives past death*, communication becomes both impossible and essential. Because of an impossible history, the traumatized are possessed by an experience that only belatedly they can begin to

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*Biblical Criticism*, vol. 57, Semeia Studies, edited by Gale A. Yee (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

<sup>69</sup>See Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006). Her foundational book is Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of Black Community*. See Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. See further Joh, “Love's Multiplicity: Jeong and Spivak's Notes toward Planetary Love.” See also Poling and Kim, *Korean Resources for Pastoral Theology: Dance of Han, Jeong, and Salim*.

<sup>70</sup>Sheppard, *Self, Culture, and Others in Womanist Practical Theology*.

possess, to register.”<sup>71</sup> She goes on to say, “The gap at the very heart of memory eliminates simple knowledge and communication; it threatens a collapse of witnessing. Yet, witnessing is essential, since it is only in the process of testimony that the trauma is for the first time recorded.”<sup>72</sup> Jesus’ Passion, death, and resurrection are just such a traumatic witness.

It is women who followed Jesus along the way, who gathered at the foot of the cross in the event of crucifixion, and who went to the tomb with spices to anoint the body. These women encountered the risen Christ in the garden. Women, the first disciples, testify from the place of grief. Women witness as those who remain alive and living in the wake of death. It is here that attention to memory processes significantly alters how we understand theological emphases of witness and abiding in unity. Conventional notions of Spirit and discipleship also change in light of death persisting into life.<sup>73</sup>

### **Countertransference as *Koinonia*: The Relational Space Defined**

Countertransference is a subjectively objective experience that creates and is created by the emotional flow of energies in and between bodies. As relational people

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<sup>71</sup>Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious*, x.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. See also Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*.

<sup>73</sup>The human sensorium highlights the role of emotions in memory, recognition, and abiding (in the Spirit) as it relates to the discipleship task of witness and testimony. See Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. For other theologians who also rely upon the Johannine account of the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene for women’s experience that condition discipleship and leadership consider the following voices. See Sandra Schneiders, “Encountering and Proclaiming the Risen Jesus,” in *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016). See Teresa Okure, “The Significance Today of Jesus’ Commission to Mary Magdalene,” in *In the Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016). See also Joy Ann McDougall, “Rising with Mary: Re-Visioning a Feminist of the Cross and Resurrection,” in *In the Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, ed. Elizabeth A. Johnson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016).

when we encounter one another there exists a continuum of transference and countertransference. As we greet one another we are also met by thoughts, feelings, fantasies, impulses, and body sensations as they arise within us and occupy the space between us. This emotional flow of energy is substantive and materially real in our body, consciously and unconsciously. It is a direct and felt experience in the moment that can also haunt us further, depending upon our emotional capacity and capability to interact consciously with that which flirts on the edge of our conscious awareness.

Countertransference is an experience of embodied minds and relational bodies engaged in processes of reification and de-reification. In other words, it is a relational space that offers the possibility of taking in and letting go of *affective insight*, thus dwelling more secure in our self-knowledge as it connects with other bodies and their lived knowledge.

Therefore, it is a co-constructed place of meaning that is contingent, provisional, contextual, and patterned in its complexity that is at the edge of and beyond shifting layers of conscious control. The enactments of nonverbal cues and communication tug at cognitive, affective, and somatic awareness. Cognition may be oscillating, thoughts flowing in and out, back and forth, open and mutable. There may be the empathetic emotional stance that takes stock of feelings and needs. More than likely it is standing in various mental states of *the unknown thought*.

This concept of Christopher Bollas marks the split between what we think we know and what we know but cannot think. We cannot ever be in full possession of our knowledge; there will always be knowledge that is beyond cognitive awareness. Zornberg remarks,

Our sense of a person is registered in wordless and diffuse ways, in body knowledge, in relationship. Our sense of ourselves, likewise, of our own basic idiom, our true selves, our inherited disposition, is constantly developing, before it is ever thought. Some parts of this unthought knowledge will become thought; others will never be transferred to consciousness.<sup>74</sup>

We are mysteries whose existence needs to be and is addressed by the irreducible presence of the otherness, inherent to our multiple self as well as external Others. We are addressed emotionally by our affective responses to the Other(s). The limits of our own self-knowledge and that of the Other poses responsibilities and obligations, and in fact, creates the boundaries of relational space in which we experience countertransference.

Therefore, countertransference as *koinonia* must be known as the intersubjective reality that is the condition of life. Furthermore, it is the condition of life that is well lived. Yes, there are dimensions of this emotional embodied wisdom that cannot be known fully; yet there is still the imperative to live authentically with integrity from otherness and alterity for the sake of multidimensional *koinonia*. Emmanuel Lartey describes such relations well, in speaking of difference in the intercultural world. He comments that the heart of intercultural encounter is “the difficult, respectful, dangerous and enigmatic encounter between autonomous, different but integrated persons self-aware and vulnerable in their full humanity.”<sup>75</sup> Countertransference as *koinonia* describes well what is at stake in living with integrity and freedom in this globalized world.

Countertransference as *koinonia* reminds us that the contextual nature of theology has intimate personal depth that stirs us in its intensity. We body forth both creative

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<sup>74</sup>Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious*, xvii.

<sup>75</sup>Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press), 137.

insight and painful blind spots in who we are as members of the body of Christ in a world that swirls with religious pluralism.

#### Significance of Countertransference as *Koinonia* for the Church

If indeed *koinonia* is reconciliation, following the work of Latini in its meaning of mutual but *differentiated indwelling* of relational persons through the Spirit of the risen Lord, then my thesis can help us to understand from an emotional bodily perspective the *koinonia* of Jesus Christ with the church, among Christ's members, and between the church and the world. Harkening back to earlier assertions of interpersonal neurobiology, my thesis is an objective way to make descriptive and interpretive meaning of subjective experiences of spirituality.

Becoming cognizant of the community within, its barriers and possibilities, allows the witness of our lives to engage with thoughtful imagination the anxieties and the desires of difference and newness that we embody and that we sense in the lives of others. This focus makes clear that our call to discipleship is radical hospitality that welcomes our own multiple, co-existing, and changing identities in its inner and outer dimensions that we sense in others and ourselves. It demands a new openness to plurality in all its forms: religious, race, class, gender, sexuality, immigration status, ability, age, education, etc. Countertransference as *koinonia* strengthens incarnational theology and the role of memory in Christian tradition and practice for the sake of joy and human flourishing.

Foundationally, *koinonia* so understood brings to the fore the person of Jesus Christ and our human bodies. It helps us understand the complex relationality of our embodied *vulnerability* and *power, action* and *agency* as suffering bodies in historical



*time* and *space*. We learn how to inhabit *freedom* from a relational perspective of past, present, and future. *Trust* and *truth* are understood less from cognitive and rational perspectives of belief than from experiences of being present to others and ourselves, perhaps even God. Ultimately, to understand the claims of ecclesial dimensions of life together, it is helpful to understand the complex and emergent nature of our incarnation as emotional, relational, and embodied persons. We are carnal emotional beings. The church as the body of Christ is an emotional body. Personally and collectively we suffer joy and sorrow in this world. We re-member the truths that once were spoken and also the truths we still tell ourselves. We body forth these memories, brokenly. And we gather as a congregational body so as to become more whole, to be held together by the liturgy.

In the congregational setting, individual and collective memories emotionally charge the subjective-and-objective object-images that are found and discovered in the play of worship. We trust and orient ourselves around these images in liturgy, investing them with emotional energy and also allowing them to lose their potency so a larger and more transcendent presence can make sense of the memories and stories of our lives. “Aliveness happens in the space between what we find and create.... and simultaneously non-attaching from them.”<sup>76</sup> The sanctuary is a social space of play where we see and are seen by one another, even as there is a larger sense of being beheld as beloved children of God. And it is through the activity of seeing and being seen that we are bread and drink for one another, that we enliven the conscious and unconscious emotional energy in one another. “To come into our own aliveness, we depend on another’s interest in us, seeing

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<sup>76</sup>Ulanov, *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness/Deadness in the Self*, 3.

us come alive to the power of livingness in us.”<sup>77</sup> The congregational welcoming space is dependent, vulnerably so, on how we see and thus honor that difference *is* constitutive of personhood.

When we so offer hospitality to the strangers resident inside and among us, then the congregational space is made more roomy. In that expansiveness of welcome, human agency is active, subjectively and objectively both. However in constricted space where welcome is limited, life does not flourish. Rather, “[w]e make it dead by that space not holding, and thus we lose our subjectivity, our self agency; or we make it dead by that space contracting to fixate on one point, and thus we lose the objectivity of shared consciousness with others.”<sup>78</sup> The outer work of being called into the world for the sake of others depends on the inner work of strong hospitable connection with our own wild diversity. There needs to be enough ego strength to encounter the inner community in conversation with the external others. “If there is no conversation with others, then there is not enough conversation going on between ego and Self. If there is no conversation between ego and Self, then there isn’t enough conversation with others.”<sup>79</sup> Charged emotion that leads us to approach others intimately funds human action and agency. Those encounters in turn renew and refresh our own emotional energy. Such is the play of memory and countertransference in creating a congregation that holds people in tender embrace where all are welcome. Such is the witness of hospitable love for the stranger.

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 8.

### Significance of Countertransference as *Koinonia* for Theology and the Academy

My thesis raises strong questions and stirs long held assumptions operative in the church and the academy. These questions were repeatedly evoked by consideration and interpretation of my data. The questions themselves became *lightly held* lenses through which I wondered about conceptual realities.

Theological concepts that value unity in association with related conceptual practices of reconciliation and forgiveness become more complex, for example. My description of the multiple self offers interdisciplinary perspectives from which to consider anew doctrinal affirmations that we are a “new creation in Christ Jesus” and “all things hold together in Christ.”<sup>80</sup> (2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:17) The role of alterity in the formation of people and the faithful desire for unity among strangers assumes a different imperative when we learn that the psyche does not begin as an integrated whole but rather, as an embodied mental structure that begins and continues as a multiplicity of self-states throughout the length of our lives.<sup>81</sup> What might it mean to privilege difference as we behold others and seek to love them as well as our own dimensions of otherness? What might it mean to hold, value and relate to *incommensurable differences* within others and ourselves in larger circles of community as a primary way toward unity? How might the connections and conflicts of *koinonia* be understood and negotiated in ways that open up and move people toward one another with an intention of acceptance that is

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<sup>80</sup>Recall the multiple self is formed by the process of splitting or dissociation that creates mental states, each with differing levels of permeability to cognition, affect, feeling, thought, and behavior. Just as there are multiple neural firing patterns or mental self-states, so too are there multiple gaps among these self-states.

<sup>81</sup>See Leon P. Turner, “First Person Plural: Self-Unity and Self-Multiplicity in Theology’s Dialogue with Psychology,” *Zygon* 42, no. 1 (2007). He addresses the reluctance of theology as a discipline to recognize the formative and ongoing multiplicity of the self. For more recent theological perspectives see the essays in Huyssteen and Wiebe, *In Search of Self: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Personhood*.

curious and flexible? At the very least, the domain and practice of theology might recognize, even celebrate, that interfaith and intercultural realities are constitutive of the discipline in the twenty-first century.<sup>82</sup>

In a related and intrinsic way, the role of the Spirit is also questioned in light of emotions, their presence and dynamism. Might some personal transformative movements that have been ascribed to the Holy Spirit be more properly described and understood as the emotional capacity and competency to move easily between changing mental states and so provisionally be a felt sensate experience of altered oneness with self and others, to include God, creation, and the cosmos? Or perhaps it might be the role of the Spirit to facilitate that process? Thus, some questions present themselves: What might it mean to interpret human agency and action as that which has hitherto been ascribed solely to divine action and initiative? How might we inhabit spiritual or even ecclesial practices from this emerging location of human responsibility and accountability, which is to say from a new locus of power that is emotional energy? How might emotion change the way we view power in terms of divine and human relations? This set of questions opens up notions about God's immanence and transcendence, the classic ways that have defined conversation about God's experienced power in presence and absence.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>A helpful way into thinking about intercultural realities from a liberation theology methodological perspective is the first two chapters in the following book. See Peter C. Phan, "The Experience of Migration as Source of Intercultural Theology in the United States," in *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003). See also Peter C. Phan, "A Common Journey, Different Paths, the Same Destination: Method in Liberation Theologies," in *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003). For an overall recent perspective on Asian theologies see Peniel Rajkumar, ed. *Asian Theology on the Way: Christianity, Culture, and Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015).

<sup>83</sup>Seemingly concurrent with notions of the multiple self are emerging theological notions of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. See Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology*. Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God*. Mercedes, *Power For: Feminism and Christ's Self-Giving*. Betcher, *Spirit and the Obligation of Social Flesh: A Secular Theology for the*

We can see that the proposal of *koinonia* as the *emotional coinherence of relational bodies* sets us on a trajectory to listen intently with curiosity and openness to the fluid and changing nature of global conversations in theology and biblical studies. Each discipline is becoming more transparent and self-reflexive about its task and the nature of the church and its people. Western European-influenced centers of theological learning continue to be disrupted and de-centered from their prominence, challenged to map and negotiate new terrains of thinking and learning in collaboration with other spirited people of God. Intercultural reality as the global church demands not only awareness as such but also an intention to value theology as contextual, and thus, intercultural.

Intercultural dialogue that is collaborative and competent, and open to and accepting of the other, is an example of emotional coinherence of relational bodies. Intercultural dialogue at all levels of the church but especially at the academic level enacts biblical emphases of God's wide hospitality that welcomes all people and nations to the city of peace. Considering the emotional role of desire, anxiety, and trauma as formative for embodied memory prompts further evaluation of how to engage across substantive and material difference that honors the lived-through experience and wisdom of all people. In that regard, this thesis proposal has much to offer in the working-through of differences of cultural and contextual realities inherent in church partnerships and in seminary educational coursework.<sup>84</sup>

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*Global City*. Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. From an interdisciplinary perspective see Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective*.

<sup>84</sup>Of recent publication and significance see Mark Nickerson, ed. *Cultural Competence and Healing Culturally Based Trauma with Emdr Therapy: Innovative Strategies and Protocols* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2017). This book addresses the impact of social identity so it connects quite well with my emphases. On page xiii, he notes, "EMDR therapy is well grounded in neurophysiology,

## Indwelling: The Sociality of Countertransference and Memory in the Multiple Self

The *inseparable intimacy*, or coinherence, of embodied emotion is just another way of stating that as persons we indwell one another, sharing in the flow of emotions, body-to-body, flesh-to-flesh. There is *differentiated regard* for self and other even as that shared indwelt reality is also open, fluid, ambiguous, and complex. To speak of differentiation is to affirm that emotional energy *moves*, or is transferenceal.

“Transference in its broadest sense refers to the unconscious transfer from one interpersonal or environmental context to another; it results in the experience of reliving one’s past interpersonal relations in current situations.”<sup>85</sup>

We move from the sanctuary of the gathered church to the world of the sent church and then back into that familiar fold of worship. We oscillate in our inner being: observing and experiencing aspects of our self; one mental state merging into another; fording gaps and crossing boundaries of feelings and images. We travel through time, sifting through memories, feeling our way into the present, and imaging our future from the past. Sometimes we are able to lean into the past that is projected forward and greet its vision and ethics. At other times the future impinges on our present experience with transcendent power. We lean into people and conversations and also walk away from other discourses and people.

We learn and grow from all of these movements, inner and outer. We discover that freedom is dynamic and relational, always. Might we wonder then about

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so it works with our human brains and our adaptive information processing system to facilitate healing, regardless of the language or local customs. With little modification, it is effective across cultures. At the same time it can be used to address past events, current circumstances and inaccurate beliefs that create and maintain divisions between cultures and social groups.”

<sup>85</sup>Jr. Borg, Mark B., “Community Analysis: A Case Study Examining Transference and Countertransference in Community Intervention,” *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 14 (2005): 6.

transformation? Could it be about feeling, noticing, and working with the emotional wisdom of our bodies in relationship? Might it be true that transformation is like the yeast in leavened bread? Could we trust our embodied emotions as wisdom that leads, sustains, and guides us, intimately and ultimately transforming us?

The emotional space of each present encounter in and among us is always haunted by previous lives, other times and places, and crowded with bodies. We have many shifting boundaries to cross, always. The borders and edges are never the same. And with that embodied haunting, the present moment is *indwelt* simultaneously with the past and future dimensions of *time*, which is to say, that there is also the condition of *openness* to the largesse of time. This is the dynamic and interstitial space of memory. Certainly in memory, there is *vulnerability* and *dependence* and all that is entailed in relationships: *connection* and *conflict*, *centering* and *tuning up*, even *joy* and *movement* toward one another amidst *challenge* and *honesty*. Memory and the present moment each evoke the many *tables* we gather around, *hospitality* given or refused, and the *diversity* of *love*. Memory therefore, cannot be separated from meaning, which is co-constructed in intersubjective space.

A community personally *indwells* each and every one of us. We share inner and outer space with others, with those who have gone before as ghosts or ancestors. Dependent upon our capability to be vulnerable to our inner depths of feelings, emotions, images, and bodily sensations, our conscious awareness is informed to some degree or another by our unconscious lives. We can live from intentional awareness of our ancestors. Or we can live from unacknowledged recognition of ghostly presence. Our consciousness is shot through with threads of unconscious lived-through events fleshed

out with others. We may forget but our bodies remember. Such is another *indwelling* – embodied mind, mindful body -- that shifts and changes in and with the passage of time. We act out of this indwelt reality; hence, the power of *enactments* in every day encounters.

And thus the importance of understanding *countertransference* in the emotional processes of memory: this intersubjective field is not just recurrent and repetitive ways of interacting, but also offers the condition for the possibility for new and changing ways of constructing and navigating relationships.<sup>86</sup> “Transference allows the past to be relived under better conditions, in ways that rectify problematic decisions and expand future possibilities.”<sup>87</sup> The immediacy of present-moment encounters is always a moment of conscious reckoning, a possibility of hope enacted and fleshed out. It is a cohesive moment wherein the past and future impinge on that present moment. It becomes another moment that contributes to the movement and coherent sense of our life story. Or it becomes a place of stuck despair. Whatever is the felt experience, the fact is that we *indwell* all three tenses of time in the transferential moment.

The intersubjective reality of countertransference is holy ground within, among, and between us. It is as if we are standing looking into the Promised Land with the words of Moses ringing in our ears. The intersubjective field is a sacred landscape where we come close to others and in so doing, the otherness that is the multiple self. We remember those who have gone before. We wonder about future generations. The past and future are gathered in this present moment. We feel the truth of life and death in our flesh. We

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 8.



also can choose life or death: both are set before us (in the company of strangers, friends, and family). Each conscious option lives in us as experiences of emotion, enlivened or deadened.<sup>88</sup> And oftentimes we respond instinctively in habitual patterns of behavior. Sometimes we do not even know what is at stake. We are moved from within; prompted, urged, nudged into action of some sort, positive or negative. Other times we are more deliberate, consciously so, wanting and hoping to be fruitful in our actions, graced agents toward others and also our very selves. In our yearning to be more conscious we are present, attuned, and resonant with self and others. The emotional dynamics of countertransference enliven and deaden *koinonia*. Such is the abiding witness where death is at work within us even as life is too. We might consider this as the indwelling of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord of life and death whose truth encompasses the negative and positive aspects of charged emotional energy.

Emotion is both dynamic and substantive in community because it is the energy that (in)forms our bodies and lives. Emotional attachments matter: they form bodies with certain dispositions, attitudes, and character; shape relationships; and create relational space. Emotional attachments are the condition for the possibility of *action* and *agency* in historical freedom. Emotional attachments help us consider what *truth* is and whom to *trust* in the ongoing swirl of subjective discourses. The intersubjective reality of countertransference is, in some ways, performative identity that is always in motion. We

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<sup>88</sup>The starkness of blessing or curse, life or death characterizes obedience to Torah as understood in the Book of Deuteronomy. Echoed in the lectionary reading of that same Sunday, in the gospel of Luke, (14:25-33) is the demand to *hate* one's family as part of the call of discipleship. This expression of detachment from family is an expression of turning towards life. The idiomatic expression asks that we wonder about the impact of relationships. Do they allow us to say Yes to God? Or do we need to renunciate their claim on us as we seek love that is loving, liberation that is freeing, and mercy that is kind?

act even as enactment happens in and through us. We act out from emotional wisdom of our bodies even as we are acted upon by our emotions.

Recall that we began the conceptual reality of *koinonia* in descriptive and interpretive modes with the goal of working through the *in vivo* themes that emerged from one pastoral leader's lived experience of community within the fold of the congregation. Not only were Thomas Weston's experiences those of *koinonia*. They were also and at the same times experiences of countertransference. He moved back and forth in time as he remembered. Memories surfaced and submerged, only to re-emerge again in a later conversation. His shared recollections in the moment became the shared space of associative memory, an intimate fellowship of laughter and tears, a present re-ordering of life and emergent insights. Memory reigned and flourished amidst (in)visible bodily sensations, images, emotions, feelings, and thoughts.

Memory allows us to know who we are, who we have been, and who we can become. Memory allows us to learn from the past, anticipate or at least be open and freshly curious about what is coming at us from the future in the present moment. Our personal memories *join with* collective memory. As the gathered church we *indwell* memories together: those of the Bible and of congregational members as we enact rituals of memory in celebrations of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Our life together thus becomes a bright strand of woven memories that is bread enough for the journey. And in so dwelling together in this holy communion of embodied emotions that are mutable memory, we are also joined with the body and Spirit of the risen Lord. Body and spirit, mind and emotions come together, integrated and full. As the people of God we are enfleshed present joy. Thanks be to God. Blessings be.



## EPILOGUE

*Perhaps the World Ends Here*

--- Joy Harjo

*The world begins at a kitchen table.  
No matter what, we must eat to  
live.*

*The gifts of earth are brought and  
Prepared, set on the table. So it  
has been since creation, and it will  
go on.*

*We chase chickens and dogs away  
from it. Babies teethe at the corners.  
They scrape their knees under it.*

*It is here that children are given  
Instructions on what it means to be  
human. We make men at it, we  
make women.*

*Our dreams drink coffee with us as  
they put their arms around our  
children. They laugh with us at our  
poor falling-down selves and as we  
put ourselves back together once  
again at the table. This table has  
been a house in the rain, and  
umbrella in the sun.*

*Wars have begun and ended at this  
table. It is a place to hide in the  
shadow of terror. A place to  
celebrate the terrible victory.*

*We have given birth on this table,  
and have prepared our parents for  
burial here.*

*At this table we sing with joy, with  
sorrow. We pray of suffering  
and remorse. We give thanks.*

*Perhaps the world will end at the  
kitchen table, while we are laughing  
and crying, eating of the last sweet  
bite.*

## APPENDIX A

### Love After Love

The time will come  
when, with elation,  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror,  
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

All your life, whom you ignored  
for another, who knows you by heart.  
Take down the love-letters from the bookshelf

the photographs, the desperate notes,  
Peel your own image from the mirror.  
Sit. Feast on your life.

--- Derek Walcott

### What We Want

What we want  
is never simple.  
We move among the things  
we thought we wanted:  
a face, a room, an open book  
and these things bear our names--  
now they want us.  
But what we want appears  
in dreams, wearing disguises.  
We fall past,  
holding out our arms  
and in the morning  
our arms ache.  
We don't remember the dream,

but the dream remembers us.

It is there all day  
as an animal is there  
under the table,  
as the stars are there  
even in full sun.

--- Linda Pastan

### Fully Alive

I will not die an unlived life.  
I will not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days,  
to allow my living to open me,  
to make me less afraid,  
more accessible,  
to loosen my heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.  
I choose to risk my significance;  
to live so that which came to me as seed  
goes to the next as blossom  
and that which came to me as blossom,  
goes on as fruit.

--- Dawna Markova

## APPENDIX B

### Implied Consent Form

June 2014

Dear Colleague in Ministry,

I am a minister member of Presbytery in my third year as a doctoral student in the congregational and community care program of pastoral theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. You are invited to participate in a study of the experience of community between a pastor and their congregation. I hope to learn what the pastor's experience of *koinonia* is within a congregation. The purpose of this study is to explore life together from the pastor's perspective in light of other important relationships and past experiences. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are active on the rolls of The Presbyter of the Twin Cities Area as an ordained congregational minister.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed nomination form. Your return of this form is implied consent. The form is designed to elicit a nomination of an ordained colleague in ministry whose pastoral leadership within a congregation is *fruitful and effective in that specific setting*. You may also choose to nominate yourself. Those ministers nominated become possible candidates for a series of three interviews.

It will take about ten minutes to complete the nomination form. No benefits accrue to you for answering the form, but your responses will be used in the selection of ministers to interview for the research question. Any inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the form.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area or Luther Seminary. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact Karin A. Craven  
651-247-4334  
[kcraven@luthersem.edu](mailto:kcraven@luthersem.edu)



Thank you for your time.  
Sincerely,  
Rev. Karin A. Craven, PC (USA)

APPENDIX C

**Nomination Form**

11 July 2014

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Thank you for your willingness to nominate a colleague(s) in ministry as a candidate(s) for further interviews about the pastor's experience of *koinonia* within a congregation. As a third year doctoral student in the Congregational Care focus of practical theology at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN this study is part of my PhD thesis.

I am interested in identifying local Presbyterian ministers whose pastoral leadership is *fruitful and effective within their own congregation*. Please consider your colleagues and identify a minister(s) whose congregational leadership invites closer consideration.

Please fill out the following information, put it in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope and mail it as soon as possible. The nominations need to be received by me no later than 25 July 2014.

Minister's Name:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Name of Congregation:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Church's Telephone Number:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Street Address:

\_\_\_\_\_.

City:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Zip Code:

\_\_\_\_\_.

Are you willing for the minister(s) to know that it is you who nominated them?

- Yes

○ No

Your name and congregation:

---

Thank you for your consideration and participation!

Regards, Rev. Karin A. Craven

## APPENDIX D

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### Pastor's Experience of *Koinonia* within a Congregation

You are invited to be in a research study of the experience of community between a pastor and their congregation. You were selected as a participant because your Presbyterian colleagues in ministry nominated you as a fruitful and effective congregational leader. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Rev. Karin A. Craven as part of my doctoral thesis project in Congregational Care at Luther Seminary. My advisor is Professor Theresa Latini, professor of practical theology and pastoral congregation care at Western Theological Seminary.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the pastor's experience of *koinonia* in their congregation so as to gain a more rich and complex understanding of fellowship between a pastor and the congregation. In other words, it investigates how a pastor makes sense of present particular actions within his or her congregation in light of other important relationships and past experiences.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to participate in a series of three interviews about your lived experience of community within the congregation. The interviews circle around the question of "What is it like to experience community between a pastor and the congregation?" The first two interviews are scheduled within the span of a week. The third interview takes place three weeks later. Interviewees need to allow for two to three hours of uninterrupted time of listening for each interview. The interviews take place in the pastoral office at the church. Each interview is audiotaped and the researcher will also take notes.

#### **Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There are no direct benefits of payment by your participation in this study. However, there are indirect benefits to yourself, primarily the interview experience itself which is an experience of deep listening that may result in new insights for you about your lived experience of fellowship. Sometimes we don't know what we know until we hear ourselves saying it to others! More generally, your specific experiences contribute to a more rich particular understanding of *koinonia* that is helpful to the church's understanding of life in the congregation.

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in Minnesota; only my advisor, Theresa Latini, and I will have access to the data and tape recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. Raw data will be retained but all identifying information removed by June 2017. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary or with The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Rev. Karin A. Craven. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at [kcraven@luthersem.edu](mailto:kcraven@luthersem.edu).

Phone: 651-247-4334.

Advisor: Theresa Latini.

Phone: 616-392-8555

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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