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# The Benefits of Integrating an Assistance Dog with Military Chaplain Corps Services at the 169th Fighter Wing, McEntire Joint National Guard Base, South Carolina

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THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING AN ASSISTANCE DOG WITH  
MILITARY CHAPLAIN CORPS SERVICES AT THE 169<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER WING,  
MCENTIRE JOINT NATIONAL GUARD BASE, SOUTH CAROLINA

A RESEARCH PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF THE M. CHRISTOPHER WHITE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY  
GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY  
BOILING SPRINGS, NORTH CAROLINA

IN FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

CHRISTINA PRYOR PITTMAN

MAY 2021

APPROVAL FORM  
THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATING AN ASSISTANCE DOG WITH  
MILITARY CHAPLAIN CORPS SERVICES AT THE 169<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER  
WING, MCENTIRE JOINT NATIONAL GUARD BASE,  
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My God who is relentless to keep chasing after me and lovingly redeems me.

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## ABSTRACT

The ministry project is addressing the spiritual resiliency of service members in an intentional and innovative approach through the presence of an assistance dog in an active military Chaplain Corps setting; specifically, through South Carolina Air National Guard. The issue is to reach service members on a level beyond the efforts of human contact. The research shows support in positive effects or no effects of engagement with an assistance dog. The participants are service members engaging with and without Avalon, a current Assistance Dog for Ministry, with a Chaplain providing warrior care. The research data collection is a survey presented to each service member responding to questions about her/his experience with chaplain engagement. Additionally, the survey contains a critique question evaluating the chaplain handler, the content of the sessions and the modality in which the sessions take place. The desired outcome is a creditable document to speak to the resiliency tool provided through the integration of Service Dogs in the military organization.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **STATEMENT OF NEED**

This project was essential for the Active Military Service Member in all branches of service including state side and deployment settings. In the active military setting, there was a need for an increase in innovation in the area of applying spiritual resiliency<sup>1</sup> for service members. The increase in the military's operational tempo and decrease in personnel's ability to sustain longevity in the military reflects the decrease in our service member's spiritual resiliency. This project addressed the implementation of Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services to increase resiliency and the study and practice of the specific therapeutic intervention of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) which enhanced coping through increased application and awareness of individual resiliency.

Through-out this reflection and analysis the project process, in regards to the insertion of an Assistance Dog, into the military operations, was addressed through several sections. Theological review for project support was the ground work for the justification and drive to enact this project was revealed. A thorough break down of how the project unfolded to include the session topics, lesson plans, measuring tools and results were revealed. Finally, a study of the critical analysis and reflection concludes this paper. All measuring standards and references are included in the appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> In the USAF four pillars of resiliency are the focus in Comprehensive Airmen Fitness: physical, mental, social and spiritual.

Personal names and or written forms are not included to insure the anonymity of participants.

### PROJECT SETTING AND CONTEXT

This project takes place in the active military setting where the chaplain, Major Christina Pryor Pittman, participated with Avalon,<sup>2</sup> the Assistance Dog, in unit engagement, counseling, Strong Bonds relationship resiliency, commander's call and other crisis or ministry opportunities. Engagement is the formal and informal presence a Chaplain Corps member had with service members at the base or where ever a service member met a chaplain. In the day-to-day routine no service member was left out. Airmen and Soldiers are most common yet occasionally other branches of service are a part of the everyday mission of the base. McEntire Joint National Guard Base (JNGB), in conjunction with the South Carolina Army National Guard and Shaw Air Force Base, were the primary locations of engagement.

Furthermore, service enlivened the military member's body and soul, through the oath to her/his state and nation. This dedication to the oath carries her/him through the uncertain times in the future. Not only did the future bring unknowns, the uncertain weather and social unrest tries the resiliency of the National Guard. The rate of losses also increased in the stark reality of life's struggles and the rising suicide cases across the military. Leaders were scratching their heads searching for the right solution or missing link. If a cure for pain and suffering in this world did not exist, then innovation in how the military aids in coping with the high operations tempo, offered new pioneering roads of soft power to ease the journey when offered hope.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for photos of Avalon and the Chaplain Service Dog Handler.

Another setting in the military was disaster response. Service members helped accompany and served on the front lines working the event as they also were amidst personal crisis too. The following tools helped service members work in the strength of a process to being aware and combated Domestic Operations. Flow charts helped track the events and aided to increase awareness provided a course of action when the fog and friction of crisis intervention hit. The use of the severity scale in James and Gilliard's book, *Crisis Intervention Strategies*, the chaplain AAT team could adequately triage and diagnose a care strategies plan. This scale was an organized tool in which to frame the effects of the event and how the trauma was manifested in the service member.

The result of integrated variation of innovative approaches to resiliency care with military members ensured needs were met in a diverse force. A more hands-on approach brought a kinesthetic learning device to the military member as a unique resiliency resource. Simply having a conversation and referring out for treatment did not provide the resiliency tool necessary to sustain life and thus service members for the military mission. Societal concerns brought a layer of resiliency deterioration, as well as relationship strains in the culture of the military. The use of Animal Assisted Therapy, both formally and informally, was the approach in this project setting which derived the justification in addressing the above issues in this project and for years to come.

#### MINISTRY QUESTION

The ministry question was how the integration of Assistance Dogs were usable and to what effects on spiritual resiliency in the military. This project focused on impacting the Active Military Service Member in all branches of service including state side and deployment settings. In the active military setting, there was an increasing need

for innovation in the area of applying spiritual resiliency with service members. The increased operational tempo in our military and decreased ability in our service members to sustain longevity in the military reflected the decrease in our service member's spiritual resiliency. This project addressed the implementation of Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services and the study and practice of specific therapeutic interventions which enhance coping through increased application and awareness of individual spirituality.

Through development of specific therapeutic interventions for individuals, the chaplain's pastoral identity and philosophy of spiritual/pastoral care emerged. The chaplain found purpose and meaning in her practice as a shepherd to the shepherdless. In Matthew 9:36 it says, "Seeing the people, He [Jesus] felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd." (NASB). Walks on the flight line and talking with Airmen, heightened a sense for their distressed and dishearten spirits.

Predominantly, the stressors that were weighing them down were at work, in life, with family and faith. This AAT program directly represented the ministry of presence Jesus provided and duplicated in the unconditional love of an Assistance Dog. The use of therapy animals was nothing new, however the implementation for use in the military was a pioneering venture. Other examples, were equine therapies, such as Guiding Reins and Big Red Barn in South Carolina. These projects worked to progress military members and veterans through post traumatic growth. Even service dog organizations like National Education of Assistance Dog Services (NEADS) and K9 for Warrior's

Service Dogs like Molly,<sup>3</sup> provided a life-long match between a service dog and a veteran. All people needed sometimes, was to know the feeling of unconditional love and the desire for a safe presence in which to express her/himself at the point of need.

### PROJECT GOALS

The goals were to develop a foundation of exploration and innovation as the chaplain sought to engage her Assistance Dog in her everyday military work. Professionally, the culmination of education, research and development of an Assistance Dog program was the primary goal of this project. In conclusion of the Doctorate of Ministry project's end, was a wider awareness of the effects of Assistance Dogs in the military and an increase of understanding on implementation of this program in other installations outside McEntire JNGB. Ultimately, the project planned to be presented to various leadership in the military in hopes of increasing awareness. In this final document the paper described why and to what effects the Chaplain Corps should implement Assistance Dogs in the mission to make ready and resilient Airmen.

There were already discussions on how to innovate Airman care and bring the assistance dog modality into the active military setting. The hope of this program was to implement handler trainings and duplicate at military installations worldwide. This included a developing justification and implementation process to add to the provisions and support of Assistance Dogs in the Air Force Instruction (AFI) to ensure the programs official presence. Spiritually, the purpose for this project was to grow in relationship

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<sup>3</sup> Salley Hursey, *Molly to the Rescue: A True Story* (Landrum, SC: Three Dogs Dancing Press, 2017).

with God through self-discovery and research application as well as duplicate the same growth through relationship to those who engaged in this project's exposure and research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This project took place in a military operational setting using an Assistance Dog International registered Labrador Retriever, Avalon, and a United States Air Force Chaplain as the dog's handler. Over a period of approximately eight through twelve weeks the Assistance Dog and Chaplain made engagements both in the military unit and in private settings with service members (SM). From these engagements, service members were able to submit feedback through regular pre- and post-session surveys.

In addition, those also in close proximity, such as at commander's calls and roll calls, were included in the chaplain's reflection journal. The quantitative and qualitative data make up the research analysis and reflection establishing a foundation with the goal to present this research project to the United States Department of Defense. The purpose is to support a chaplain corps assistance dog program to the benefit of service member's resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from life's challenges.

As the chaplain progressed through this program, she applied and sought feedback on fine tuning research and exposure of Avalon, with military personnel and mentors. Other resources besides project-related research were Mental Health Integration for Chaplain Services (MHICS) faculty, Gardner-Webb Divinity School faculty, Emmanuel Baptist Fellowship church and professional peer groups. Finally, minimal expense was needed for this project outside of the care and maintenance of an Assistance Dog.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions such as "stop movement" in the military travel and Health Protection Condition of Charlie (HPCON-C),



adjustments were put in place to provide precautions for test participants. A comfortable and safe setting to engage SMs on the project process was essential to the overall outcome of this experiment. These measures include ones laid out in the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) regulations. One such factor is the restriction of gathering in groups.

As a matter of project execution, working with instead of against limitations, add to the situational reality of the research process while providing alternative means of functioning in a pandemic. Therefore, delivery means such as, one on one virtual platform and collaborative hybrid models, were initiated in this research project. The goal was to gain additional perspective on the outcome results and optimal delivery means in a restricted environment. The hope was that this project will provide a new framework to meet the needs of SM's resiliency through Military Chaplain Corps services in an uncertain world. The project above progressed for four sessions, with and without the Assistance Dog, described in the project sessions.

#### PROJECT LITERATURE REVIEW AND TECHNIQUES

The primary supporting book employed in the project was, *Spirituality, Health and Healing* by Caroline Young and Cyndie Koopsen. This text included a whole section on the value of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). It addressed the uses of AAT as well as wholistic and clinical benefits. "A Koopsen shared, "A visit with a therapy animal can evoke pleasant memories, reduce loneliness, and provide the opportunity for unconditional acceptance."<sup>4</sup> Though the use of Assistance Dogs could have an intentional

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Young and Cyndie Koopsen, *Spirituality, Health and Healing* (Sudbury Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, LLC, 2011), 193.

therapeutic function, for the purpose of this study the focus was on the benefits of the presence of an Assistance Dog for therapeutic purposes.

One point made in the book is how animals can help build rapport. This quality of rapport building comes from presence. She says, “Therapy animals are non-judgmental, offer unconditional love, and make it easier for individuals to talk with each other by providing a point of common interest, on which to focus a conversation.”<sup>5</sup> This quality of rapport building is present with Avalon in engagements with Airmen and families. Observation shows she also provides companionship and can lower stress level. In addition, the Assistance Dog modality can help service members open up to their own emotions and thoughts.

Another support for Assistance Dogs is with values-focus Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT). A common therapeutic approach in the military is Solution Focused Counseling (SFC) and Problem Solving Therapy (PST), which teaches skills to handle stressful life problems that lead to difficulties while helping people achieve important life goals. It emphasizes goals that are problem-focused (change a situation) and emotion-focused (change our emotional reaction to the unchangeable situation). *Problem-solving Therapy* said, “self-directed process by which individuals attempt to identify, discover, and/or develop adaptive coping solutions for problems, both acute and chronic, that they encounter in everyday living.”<sup>6</sup>

Another CBT engaging values and beliefs is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. The Assistance Dog is used in conversation to open up verbal expression of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>6</sup> A. M Nezu, C. Maguh Nezu and T.J. D’Zurilla, *Problem-solving Therapy: A treatment manual* (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co., 2007), 8.

feelings and what the counselee holds as sacred in her/his life. Kenneth Pargament's book *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, also points out the use of spiritually friendly therapies offer answers when there seem to be none and reinforce cognitive and behavior practices towards healing or coping. Michael White's book, *Maps of Narrative Practice* is useful in this case of the use of mindfulness with AAT in counseling an Airman with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The Airman finds practical meaning in revisiting conversations with others and definitional ceremonies in hopes of remembering his life and relationships prior to his injury through mindfulness techniques.

The pastoral care plan from the start of a counseling session setting with Avalon was to demonstrate my care and compassion for her/his situation. In addition to the demonstration of care and compassion at the start of a session, a formal or informal survey took place to assess the condition or diagnosis of the presenting issues. Furthermore, to establish trust, in conjunction with assistance dog, Avalon, while engaging and developing a platform of support and open communication. This example plan is outlined below and varies from the larger personnel unit engagements. Over a week and a half, I worked through Motivational Interviewing (MI) process resulting in evoking and early stages of planning at the session following an airman's meeting with his leadership on legal issues.

How often does someone strive to uncover the deep-seeded trappings of the soul? Genuineness of the heart is achieved when a person wrestles with her or himself. This examination of self happens best in a setting of redemptive presence which God can be empowering. In *Faith Seeking Understanding*, Migliore writes, "In solidarity with the

whole groaning creation, we await the consummation of God's redemptive activity."<sup>7</sup>

The case I share in this paper does not have to wait for end-of-life redemption, she can embrace it now in the presence of a chaplain and therapy dog, Avalon in her own acknowledgement that brokenness is welcome with God as the chaplain and Avalon portrays in a redemptive presence.

A description of this chaplain Assistance Dog team and airman relationship is in the book, *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care*, as a "skilled intervention which can facilitate the individual in a process of transcending the social/ cultural expectations of gender in general, to the discovery of the individual's inner and outer emotional, physical and spiritual needs."<sup>8</sup> One project objective is to enable the airman to loose expectations and discover wholeness in all aspects of herself, emotionally and physically through her interaction with the presence of Avalon and the chaplain.

The research financial need is under twenty dollars. Avalon is a certified Assistance Dog through the National Education of Assistance Dog Services (NEADS). The team with the chaplain as the handler is certified through Assistance Dog International (ADI). Her training and care prior to placement with a USAF Chaplain came through donations and grants for veteran support. Currently, her up-keep and care is less than three thousand a year. Finally, the expense of the evaluation tool is donated and for the investment of this project's success in the Department of Defense. Future online surveys are built under a domain name, avaloncares.org at the expense of twelve

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 163.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Roberts, *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Pub, 2012), 221.

dollars a year. Some of the survey and publicity products are fundable through an innovation cell program with the USAF. Research on the insight from other Doctor of Ministry dissertations on using Animal Assistance in the military ministry setting is not available.<sup>9</sup>

## PROJECT SESSIONS

In addition to the full session plans listed in the appendix, below is a synopsis of the four encounters. The first step with the SM was signing of group member's consensual covenant, which does not connect to an identifiable information in the surveys. Any identifiable information was kept under the Privacy Protection Act of 1974. The researcher or chaplain also acted as a privilege communication entity with subjects as a part of her constitutional role as military chaplain. All safeguards to protect this relationship was enacted. No list or recognition of participants was advertised. This process maintained participant confidentiality

Secondly, was the face-to-face engagement with Avalon in the unit or at a location of the SM's choice to casually collect informal spiritual assessment using acronym FICA: F (Faith and meaning), I (Influence and importance), C (Community of faith), A (Address/Actions), and record on the researcher's data or reflection form.

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<sup>9</sup> There are dissertation titles applying Assistance animals in the mental and physical health sector. I discovered titles that address the benefits of AAT on pediatric oncology patients called, "The child life specialists' perception of animal assisted therapy within a pediatric oncology population," by Doobrow, Becca, a skilled nursing facility titled, "The relationship between animal-assisted therapy and self-concept of residents who reside in a skilled nursing facility," by Troncoso, Yvette., and finally the benefits for older adults over 50 to include " 'Souldog,' " The Perceived Impact of Companion Animals on Older Lesbian Adults by Putney, Jennifer Meredith. In these dissertations the effects on the person receiving the animal contact experienced enhanced quality of life, increase awareness of surroundings, suicide prevention through animals in the area of psychological well-being as a deterrent for suicide.

Service Member fills out pre- and post-surveys. These sessions took place entirely face to face. Feedback from the participants disclosed great value in the FICA engagement. Some conversations meeting multiple needs through the personal contact with chaplain and assistance dog,

Thirdly, was an individual private setting with Avalon where the resiliency lesson, “Four Lenses,” a personality evaluation tool to aid in building personal awareness in relationships, is presented through Steven Covey’s *Speed of Trust* curriculum. Service member filled out pre- and post-surveys. Most of these sessions occurred in person however, two were virtual with Avalon present on the screen.

Next, was a self-directed reading on resiliency and trust in relationships from Steven Covey’s book, *Speed of Trust*, was assigned to the SM who studies the content and then a follow-up discussion (without Avalon) in various settings takes place. Service member filled out pre- and post-surveys. All these sessions occurred a part without Avalon. This option was beneficial since it provided an additional self-paced option to measure affects while it provided an opportunity for growth for the SM.

Finally, a resiliency video on extending trust in relationships was sent to the SM to view with the Chaplain (Avalon is not present) virtually. Dialogue on the topic of resiliency took place between the SM and chaplain. Service member filled out pre- and post-surveys. The new modality provided a quick vehicle through audio visual to deliver the message and gage the responses.

#### MEANS OF EVALUATION

This project was evaluated through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Service member filled out the pre- and post-surveys while the chaplain collected data on

various aspects of the sessions. An ongoing reflection journal was kept for historical and situational awareness through-out the process. This information was added to the overall observation process to evaluate any additional discrepancies or new findings from the project process. Finally, verbatim collection form was available to narrate specific encounters reinforcing the statistical findings. Survey data was compiled and analyzed using excel and the results can be found in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

#### INTRODUCTION

Research in psychology and spiritual care reveals justification for the practice of integration. The core essence of supported theory and practice lies within the very word, “psychology.” The origin and meaning of the word is simply, "study of the soul," from Modern Latin *psychologia*, probably coined mid-16c. in Germany by Melanchthon from Latinized form of Greek ψυχή (*psykhē*) "breath, spirit, soul" (see *psyche*) + λόγια (*logia*) "study of" (see *-logy*). Modern dictionaries, like Webster’s, define psychology as the study of the mind and body. Truer to form are the roots in origin as it brings to light the imagery of mystery with in the mind and body experience through the individualistic yet powerful being of the soul or spirit within all life.

#### OLD TESTAMENT

From the time of biblical record, the presence of animals and their use as instruments of God are evident. The Pentateuch includes the creation and naming of God-breathed creatures as well as the preservation of these creatures in the story of Noah. In Ezra 1:5-6, these animals preserved by Noah with God’s instruction are cherished as valued gifts necessary to sustain human life. In Psalm 148 and 150:6 the evidence of animals giving praise to God brings legitimacy to the intentional presence and purpose of God’s creation in relation to humankind. Finally, in Isaiah and Jonah animals are used in mighty ways to bring about God’s redemption. As instruments of God’s will the great



fish that swallowed Jonah is used to save Nineveh from destruction by leading Jonah to the right path.

From the beginning of the world, documented in Genesis 1-2, God created the heavens and the earth as well as every creature upon it. He fashioned humankind from the dust of the earth and breathed life into Adam. Miguel A De La Torre writes, “The breath of life god breathed into the clay creature’s *nos-trils* is referred to in Hebrew as *ruah*, a word that also means “wind” and “spirit.” God’s spirit is what gives us life and is what continues to dwell within us.”<sup>10</sup> From Adam a perfect match was formed from his rib and this life was called Eve, which means “to breath”. All God created was good. It was good because the human creatures were created in God’s image. In a debate between Hegel and Kierkegaard on the image of God the author notes in the book, *The Coming of God*, “[f]aith in God is a relationship, not mere knowledge, and it is an embrace of paradox, not the rational discovery of a system of synthesis of opposites.”<sup>11</sup>

As life began and new beginnings were formed, the relationship between humankind and the animals of the earth were intertwined as spirit filled creatures created by God. “...all human life, and as we will soon see all life, comes from God, who forms us and gives us God’s spirit. God is the source of life, and as such is the God of life.”<sup>12</sup> The connection between God’s creation is described more clearly in the exegesis of dominion or *radah* in Hebrew. Diane Lipsett points out the distinction in the *New*

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<sup>10</sup> Miguel A De La Torre, *Genesis. Vol. 1st ed. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press. 2011), 44.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Twentieth Century Religious Thought (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004.), 121

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, “Two different terms for rule or mastery are used in the Gen 1 creation account as God sets humankind over the animals (*radhah*, v. 26) and over the earth (*kavash*, v. 28).”<sup>13</sup> People had dominion over the animals and thus they were kept in humankind’s care. As creatures of God possessing knowledge in right and wrong, there seems to be a connection between nature and a relationship with God to care and protect the world the best as possible.

Knowing how to nurture nature is like knowing the essence of God. Francis Bacon, an English philosopher believed, “...the value and justification of knowledge, he believed, consisted in its practical application and utility. The function of knowledge was to achieve material progress by extending the dominion of human beings over nature.”<sup>14</sup> Debatably, this view is in contrast to Thomas Aquinas’s doctrine that knowledge of the supernatural was sought through the natural. The later line of thinking is more in the vein of the unity of all God breathed creatures as well as more modern theology that. Roger E Olson, *The Journey of Modern*, “God unleashes potential in himself by freely entering into reciprocal relation with creation.”<sup>15</sup>

Presence on this earth is not possible without the essence of a person’s soul embodied in the physical body, at least as we can know and tangibly experience. Presence is a powerful aspect to the study of the soul. In Genesis God “breathed” life into mankind transforming physical essence into the image of himself, soul or spirit-like. This

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<sup>13</sup> Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, ed. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006-2009), 155.

<sup>14</sup> Margaret Bald, *Literature Suppressed on Religious Grounds. Vol. 3rd ed. Banned Books* (New York: Facts on File, Inc, 2011), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Roger E Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), accessed August 29, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. 260.

is the same location of moving power found in spiritual experiences. The presence or spirit of God is a continual theme throughout scripture.<sup>16</sup>

After God breathed life into his creatures, he ordered them in rank of care-taking. Then God said, “Let us make humankind[a] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, [b] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth (Genesis 1:26 NRSV).” Other translations of the Bible, such as NIV and NASV, use the phrase rule over in place of have dominion. Olson points out, “The Hebrew word for “have dominion,” *radah*, connotes the absolute power held by the sovereigns of the ancient world. Historically, we have come to read this verse as permission to use and abuse creation, similar to how the ancient rulers used and abused their subjects.”<sup>17</sup> The variance does not distract from the essence of God’s intent in the over-seeing, which is to care for creation as a good ruler would care for and protect her/his subjects. Olson poignantly states, “To rule is to rule for the welfare of creation, not placing oneself over and above creation but rather remaining cognizant that one is part of creation.”<sup>18</sup>

When human kind chose to live against God’s purpose, he made plans to correct the ways of the wicked through a righteous man, Noah. Amy Plantinga-Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*, analyzed, “The righteous are devoted to their animals whereas the so-called mercy of the wicked is cruel. Both the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 25.

righteous and the wicked have power over their animals.”<sup>19</sup> The wrong power can lead to the destruction and so God wiped out the unrighteous and their unrighteous ways with God’s creation.

This relationship of God-ordained dominion humans have with creatures of the land, sea and air is seen most extraordinary in the story of Noah. Prior to the destruction of the world, God instructed Noah to build an ark. This large ship would house all the creatures of the earth both male and female. In the Bible, “...every kind of wild animal, livestock, crawling creature, bird, and winged creature. They came to Noah to enter the ark, two by two of every creature with the breath of life (Genesis 7:14-15 NIV).” The only humans on board were Noah and his family. They would carry on the life of the God-fearing family chosen as entrusted individuals. How the creatures knew to all pile on this ship is a miracle of God. This miracle may well be established in the orchestration of the creatures, both human and animal, which had the “breath of life” as noted in the fifteenth verse. The co-dwelling of human and animal was closest at this point in history.

Though consequences came for the inhabitants of the earth, God is just, holy yet merciful. In the book of *Jubilee* it further states, “For all his creatures he established a prescribed way or order which they are expected to honour” (Jubilee 5:13,19). From the beginnings of the world this struggle of creation and creature balance is on-going. Amy

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<sup>19</sup> Amy Plantinga-Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 77.

Plantinga-Pauw added, “God created a prescribed order for each of his creatures, and he requires that they obey the laws appropriate to their order.”<sup>20</sup>

The value placed on these animals and God’s plan for creation is evident in the tracing of God’s presence and love through the Bible. The diaspora and rebuilding of the temple is another example of consequences and reconciliation where animals are a part of the sustainment of life. Ezra 1:5-6 reads, “The heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit God had stirred—got ready to go up and rebuild the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. All their neighbors aided them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with animals, and with valuable gifts, besides all that was freely offered (NRSV).” As the king of Persia allowed, the rebuilding of the temple in Judah, all areas of life sustainment were met. Mark A. Throntveit’s commentary shared, “Ezra 7-10, will begin with God's prompting of the Persian king to act benevolently toward Israel...”<sup>21</sup> Treasures, animals and valuables for living inside and outside the temple.

In the book of Psalms, praising God and calling out to God in worship and prayer is a part of the relationship between God and his followers. All creation praises God is the sentiment found in the Bible as well as the dominion humans have over the earth. In Psalm 148, the psalmist commands all creation to praise the Lord. As well as in Psalm 150:6 where the verse states, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” (NIV)

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<sup>20</sup> James VanderKaM, *Book of Jubilees* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2001), 121.

<sup>21</sup> Mark A. Throntveit, 2012. *Ezra-Nehemiah : Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Vol. Pbk. ed. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.) 15.

Furthermore, in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, the categories of God's creatures are mentioned in the verses below. Within this order is the place of humankind; "...the psalmist expresses his wonder that creatures as insignificant as human beings should have been given dominion over all the rest of creation."<sup>22</sup> Psalms 8:5-9 reads,

“You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.  
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet:  
all flocks and herds,  
and the animals of the wild,  
the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea,  
all that swim the paths of the seas.  
Lord, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth.” (NIV)

The sense that humans have this great responsibility is reason to praise God, raises the value of nature to include the flocks, herds and creatures of the sea. *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* illuminated, “You diminished him a little lower in comparison with angels; with glory and honor you crowned him. And you set him over the works of your hands: you subjected all under his feet.”<sup>23</sup> There is a sense of glory in the balance of God's creation. A tranquility and peace when God's creation is finally at ease and as it is intended in the Garden of Eden. Isaiah 11:6-9 paints the ideal setting of balance when,

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,

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<sup>22</sup> John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2013), 370.

<sup>23</sup> Albert Pietersma, Benjamin G Wright, and Benjamin G., Wright, III, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint: And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title* (Cary: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2007), 550.

and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
 and a little child shall lead them.  
 The cow and the bear shall graze;  
 their young shall lie down together;  
 and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
 and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
 They shall not hurt or destroy  
 in all my holy mountain;" (ESV)

In the story of Jonah found in the book by the same name in the Bible, the symbolism of the instruments of God, animals, is significant to the saving of a city called Nineveh. Rabbi Steven Bob writes meaningful narrative commentary on the book of Jonah and its translation in people's lives. From the debate of whether the animal is a whale or a big sea creature to the saving grace of God, this book flows deep with the imagery to ultimately show what God will go through to save people. Even the surrounding books of the Bible such as Zephaniah 2:13-15 and Nahum 1:1, addresses the plight of Nineveh and how its neighbors feel about the people. James Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary*, shares, yet "God provided a big fish to save Jonah, we do not expect that God will provide a big fish or its equivalent to save us,"<sup>24</sup> however, also uses the big fish and Jonah to save Nineveh. Furthermore, Limburg said, "The Lord, who had called Jonah and who had sent the storm, acts again, this time designating a large fish to carry out a rescue operation."<sup>25</sup> A city of humankind and animals were saved because of several interventions from God to include an animal.

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<sup>24</sup>Rabbi Steven Bob, *Jonah and the Meaning of Our Lives: A Verse-by-Verse Contemporary Commentary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), accessed August 16, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d8h8w5](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d8h8w5) 91.

<sup>25</sup> James Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary. First ed* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 60.

The narrative of this story is evident through theological themes like in the people and nature around Jonah. James Limburg describes these themes in his commentary. He remarks, the “[s]torm has theological dimensions.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, like Jonah, when our lives take a turn in the wrong direction, we are in need of saving from the storms of life. This was also true for Balaam in Numbers 22:32-33. Also, in Limburg’s commentary, “As Balaam begins his journey to curse the Israelites, he gets on his she- ass (donkey), who has other ideas about this trip. The donkey has a vision of an angel blocking their way.”<sup>27</sup> God enables the donkey to see the angel and spare Balaam’s life even though all Balaam could see was a disobedient animal. “The angel of the Lord asked him, ““Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.”” (NIV) The donkey is able to speak to Balaam and question his conduct of striking the innocent animal as Balaam tries to lead them down a path of destruction; as he was doing with the Israelites. Jeffrey K Salkin enlightens his readers by stating, “It’s because the donkey sees the angel and has an understanding of God and the divine will” that Balaam’s life and that of the Israelites are saved.<sup>28</sup> God’s redemption of Israel came in humble and mighty ways.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey K Salkin, *Balak (Numbers 22:2-25:9) and Haftarah (Micah 5:6-6:8): The JPS B’nai Mitzvah Torah Commentary* (JPS Study Bible. Lincoln, Nebraska: The Jewish Publication Society. 2018), 2. accessed August 16, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1945765&site=ehost-live>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4.



The most significant story is our own and how God works in and through circumstances to lead people on the right path; to help humans recover after heading the wrong direction. There is great importance in what version of our journey we share such as what we portray and what is real. Jeffrey K Salkin's commentary stated, "Balaam, the Moabite soothsayer, is on his way to curse the Israelites. His mode of transportation is a donkey. God is not terribly interested in Balaam making his journey, and so God sends an angel to block Ba-laam's way."<sup>29</sup> God uses various elements to stir people and guide them on life's journey like big fish and talking donkeys. Weather, others, and animals are all a part of God's purpose. When we tell our story, "Our real goal is to bring those two versions of our narrative into alignment. When we use "big fish" with others and "whale" with ourselves, problems arise with our sense of self. When someone asks us, "Tell me your story, Rabbi Steven Bob shared," let us respond with a narrative that describes our core values and the actual direction of our lives."<sup>30</sup>

Old Testament theological themes are clear in the relationship human kind has with creation in divine relationship with God. The creation story in Genesis marks the first recorded record of God-breathed creatures which are instruments of God's will and blessing. As cherished creatures, humans, a little lower than the angels, are entrusted to have dominion over the animals of the earth. Not to abuse this power but to cherish it as a treasure used in the mutual sustainment of one another. God has provisions for the animals and human kind is a part of the provisions. Likewise, animals are a part of the provisions for human kind. This is true in biblical sacrifice, sustenance and direct

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>30</sup> Bob, 96.

guidance such as in the story of Jonah. The strength and understanding of the spiritual realm can be known through the relationship humans have with nature.

### NEW TESTAMENT

The creation account described in Genesis 3, God's presence is intended through all creation. The Garden of Eden reflects this in the communion of nature, animal kingdom and Adam, human kind. Since the fall of humans in Genesis 4 revealed is, the journey and plan to redeem humans back in right fellowship with God for eternity. In the Old Testament with the premonition of the birth of a Savior found in the New Testament and the birth of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's presence is at work. Not so much sin however, suffering from sin or moral injury, can sever or separate a person from the feeling of being present and having accessibility to God.

The redemptive message culminates in the life and death of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of God.

“Therefore, our redemption is that supreme love in us through the Passion of Christ, which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but gains for us the true liberty of the sons of God, so that we may complete all things by his love rather than by fear. He showed us such great grace, than which a greater cannot be found, by his own word: “No one,” he says, “has greater love than this: that he lays down his life for his friends.”<sup>31</sup>

When life is viewed as all living creatures that are God-breathed, then Jesus' death not only sets human beings right with God, all creation and creatures are set in order through a relationship of loving care. “Christ's life and death are thus

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Abelard, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. The Fathers of the Church. Mediaeval Continuation (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press. 2011), 168. accessed August 12, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=500937&site=ehost-live>.

demonstrations of divine charity.”<sup>32</sup> All of creation, even the least of these, reap the healing power of redemption through Jesus Christ. Sarah Heaner Lancaster’s commentary on *Romans*, stated, “This willingness to die for the low and unworthy when most people would not even die for someone good demonstrates love that cannot be shaken.”<sup>33</sup> Even if one believes that parts of creation are unredeemed this idea does not negate the significance of the redemptive act of Christ on all creation. In the relationship between creation and humans, the Roman’s commentary says, “having the Spirit does not isolate the believer from the unredeemed creation; rather, it reinforces the believer’s solidarity with the creation.”<sup>34</sup> This life of Jesus came into this world and exited this world with the accompaniment of a humble animal, a donkey.

In the Christian faith belief in Jesus’ death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins is pivotal for the very foundation of this redemptive faith. The fact this significant life was traditionally and foretold as carried many miles in Mary’s womb while she rode on a donkey to Bethlehem is a foundational image in the Christmas story. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9, ESV).” This humble entry into a fallen world returns on the back of a donkey as Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem, as King David, upon a beast of burden.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Heaner Lancaster, *Romans: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Vol. First edition. *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 2015) 93. accessed August 12, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1081934&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

“Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,  
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt,<sup>[a]</sup> the foal of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them (Matthew 21:1-7, ESV).”

David L. Turner’s, *Matthew* commentary talks about, “Only Mathew mentions two donkeys; Mark and Luke state that Jesus rode a colt that had never been ridden previously.”<sup>35</sup> The other donkey being its mother and ridden before. This can also, represent the parallel between, the old has past behold the new has come. God’s presence is everywhere and the spirit Jesus left on earth at Pentecost is significant in the realization that presence is important to God as well as to humans in relationship with God. For this reason, the loving redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus was necessary.

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<sup>35</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 496.

## A HISTORICAL THEOLOGY OF ANIMALS

God's presence is significant in the beginning of time, now and in the end as written in scripture. From Revelation the picture of the ending sanctuary is possible here on earth as we live in the precept of heaven on earth. God offers eternal relation now just as we are. Through a chaplain and assistance dog intermingling with service members, this presence enables enlightenment of the coping with suffering through representing heaven on earth.

Throughout history, to include the beginning of the world, there is a tracing of a significant relationship between humans and animals. One impact that is recognized today is the ministry and example of Saint Francis of Assisi. The model St. Francis exhibited is evident in the deeper meaning of relationship God intended for humans to have with his creation. The root of this relationship is the ethical managing of creation.

One such development of animals in relationship to humans stems from the biblical theology. In the journal article, "A Trinitarian Theology of Creation: An Ethical Perspective," the relationship is described through the lens of how the perspective and practice of reverence for creation tunes us to the center of God's purpose in creation. His includes an eschatologically and environmental sensitivity to Christian practice in harmony with God's redemptive promise.<sup>36</sup> For centuries humans lived in a push and pull scenario with nature to both reap the bounty of its benefits and not over tax the earth and creatures of their resources.

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<sup>36</sup> Ramathate T.H Dolamo, "*A Trinitarian Theology of Creation: An Ethical Perspective.*" Hts: Theological Studies 75 (1): 1–8. 2019, doi:10.4102/hts.v75i1.5421.

Abelard's commentary analyzes these verses in light of God's redemption and ultimate demonstration of God's love. Furthermore, Abelard shares, "This demonstration actually achieves the remission of sin through the human response of love. Redemption is thus a divinely initiated act that kindles hu-man love."<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, Jesus' life and death for humankind is the source of the love which springs from the relationship people have with other creatures, the world and with God.

Another historical account, which likely fueled Tillich's philosophical theology, is found in St. Francis' teachings. The second section of *Animals in Tillich's Philosophical Theology* by Abbey-Anne Smith, undertakes a critical analysis of Tillichian concepts and their adequacy in relation to nonhuman animals, addressing topics such as Tillich's concept of 'technical reason' and the multidimensional unity of life. The fact that Tillich has a "technical reason" of the multidimensional unity of life eludes to the idea God intends the relationship for a theological and personal purpose in his creation. The author concludes by discussing the positive concepts in Tillich's systematic theology with respect to nonhuman animals and creation, including the concept of universal salvation and Tillich's interpretation of nonhuman animals and the Fall in Genesis.<sup>38</sup>

In the early 1800's, a comprehensive book was developed detailing the various species of animals and their function in creation in light of God's comprehensive purpose and plan. "The Scripture expressly declares that the invisible things of God may be understood by the things that are made; and if we may have recourse to the works of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>38</sup> Deborah M Jones, *The school of compassion: a Roman Catholic theology of animals* (Leominster, Herefordshire, England: Gracewing Ltd., 2009).

creation as well as to the revelation to lead us to the knowledge of the Creator, we, may, on the other hand, by parity of reason, without meriting any reprehension, inquire into what God has revealed in Scripture concerning the physical world and its phenomena.”<sup>39</sup> His concept of reason and phenomena is undergirded in the expressed precepts in scripture discussed earlier in this paper as well as the mystery of interpretation lived out in the life of St. Francis.

At the heart of St. Francis’s practice was his biblical belief that, “The Scriptures contained the divine truths necessary for the redemption of God’s creation and they should be respectfully heard and obeyed. For this reason, Francis was prepared to rebuke both human beings and animals when their conduct left something to be desired.”<sup>40</sup> He knew the intent of God’s creation to care for the creatures of the earth and help even the least of these. He had a special affection for them, “...especially those which reminded him of the virtues of Jesus Christ”<sup>41</sup> proclaiming God’s love was a practice of Christ in both physically in his sacrificial body and spiritually in his saving grace.

Just as Christ preached to the people in the region of Galilee, St. Francis preached to the animals. He set aside his human need for recognition and rejoiced in the fulfillment of communing with nature. *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi* pointed out, “He fled expressions of human adoration so he would not incur vanity.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> William Kirby, *On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God as Manifested in the Creation of Animals and in their History, Habits and Instincts*, Vol. 2 (London: W. Pickering, 1835), 18.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Robinson, *St. Francis of Assisi: The Legend and the Life* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2002), 243.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Dalarun and Timothy Johnson, *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (Ashland: The Franciscan Institute, 2016), 15.

Through his preaching the animals obeyed him and found refuge in his spirit. In the book, *St. Francis of Assisi: The Legend and the Life*, Michael Robinson points out the practice of all creation praising God. It shared, “His respect for the created order was such that he placed a literal interpretation on the closing words of St. Mark’s Gospel (16:15) that the disciples should preach to every creature.”<sup>43</sup> Robert H. Stein’s commentary of *Mark* added, This passage, though held as a standard in St. Francis justification for preaching to every creatures is actually an additional verses not in the original biblical text.<sup>44</sup> “The shorter ending is found essentially in four uncial MSS dating from the seventh, eight, and ninth centuries.”<sup>45</sup> None the less this verse holds true to the essence of the connection between God and creatures as portrayed by St. Francis actions.

This relationship with God does not just benefit the redeemed, however those who come into the presence with the redeemed. A blessing passes on as love grows when passing from one creature to another. In 1 John 4:12 the scripture reads, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another. God lives in us, and his love is made complete in us.” (NIV) The measure of the impact of God’s presence in a person’s life is difficult to calculate. However, taking the time to acknowledge our personal need for the presence of others through psychological spiritual care, the access to powerful transformational presence is attainable. “The love for a person expressed in action is seen as the sole proof of the unseen and unknown God. 1 Jn 4:20 It is the act of love

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<sup>43</sup> Robinson, 242.

<sup>44</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Mark (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)* Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 734. accessed August 16, 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=477230&site=ehost-live>. The best two Greek MSS of Mark end at 16:8 and thus strongly favors this view.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 725.



which makes the presence of God real.”<sup>46</sup> The love mentioned here is found in the God-breathed humans and animals.

The transformational presence is realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus. “And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” (NASB) “Wondrously when God both indwells human life (the immanence of God) and human life is held in God (the transcendence of God) the new creation of all things begins.”<sup>47</sup> In Isaiah 57:15, this presence is reviving and healing of spirit and heart to those broken or needy. What occurs in transforming power of love through a God-breathed presence is powerful.

In life this power is in all creatures. In Mark Buchanan’s book on life he notes the transformative life in all creation. Buchannan mentioned, “What emerges from this cocoon is true metamorphic change, new possibilities for every person and for all of creation.”<sup>48</sup> The effects of life interacting with one another brings about the hope of making all things new, of growth and the lasting effects of God’s redemptive love realized in all God’s creatures. Like Buchannan, Moltmann also presents the connections and interactions of life not just with God, yet in a “[s]hared Trinity source of new creation.”<sup>49</sup> As mentioned earlier in this section, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are sources of presence from the beginning of time marked in Genesis through Pentecost to

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<sup>46</sup> Segovia, Fernando F., and R. S. Sugirtharajah, 2009. *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. The Bible and Postcolonialism. London: T&T Clark. accessed August 29, 2020. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=378229&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>47</sup> Mark French Buchanan, *Embraced: Many Stories, One Destiny* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015), 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 61.

this present moment. Quite frankly, Moltmann sums it up in the following phrase in *The Coming of God*. Moltmann said, “It is possible to experience God in all things and all things in God.”<sup>50</sup> This was and always will be the manner in which God intended his essence to be known, in and through all things. Now the goal is to live in that manner to intentionally be open to God’s presence and effects in nature and all creatures.

#### CRITICAL RELIGIOUS SUPPORT

The use of Chaplain Corps Assistance Dog is meaningful and impacting in the spiritual resiliency care in crisis or domestic operation support. Some areas to find AAT are as follows: activities for military personnel and families, advising the commander, impact of religious operations, moral leadership, activating and managing Religious Support Team (RST) resource, collaboration with local clergy, nurturing the living, maintain daily denominational awareness of service members within the Joint Operation Center (JOC) to provide adequate religious support, rites & sacraments. Monitoring morale, suicide awareness, combating stress management. Care for the wounded through Traumatic Event Management response (TEM), hospital visits, and religious triage. Honoring the Dead through memorial ceremonies, funeral services. Support for families with emotional support group meetings, providing support for spouses, children and parents. Priority of Religious Support with Next Of Kin (NOK) death notifications, worship services, nurturing service members. And finally, providing ministry of presence and pastoral counseling to bring hope in the midst of hardship and stress caused

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<sup>50</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. *Twentieth Century Religious Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 471.

from leaving family members behind during disasters as well as home and foreign deployment.

Relationships forged in the setting of crisis counseling and care are fired by the synergy of events, people, emotions, and setting. In Switzer's introduction he shares about the bond of a trusting relationship between counselee and pastor. "This invitation is to bring for discussion their hurts, pressures, crises, decisions, the great variety of difficult experiences which as human beings they so often need to share with someone they trust."<sup>51</sup> However, in crises time does not allow a person to build a trusting relationship. It is more like the description by Dykstra of an "Intimate Stranger" in his book, *Images of Pastoral Care*. An immediate emotional and sometimes physical nakedness that dictates, I need someone and you are the closest one to me and can link lives together in an instant for eternity. This bond and the power in the relationship at the point of need and in the longer journey is a beautiful thing.

This project will test whether or not Avalon's presence is deemed to offer unconditional relationship. Her ministry is another layer to engagement with others. *Pastoral Care Emergencies* emphasizes, "Most people who care do communicate it [genuine caring] in a number of ways to many people. In addition, it supports there is something to 'being there' with another."<sup>52</sup> Due to observations of Avalon with service members, I am proceeding with this project to further support future opportunities for service members to have more encounters such as the one which follows. In the Spring of 2019, Avalon gave an enlisted student at Senior Non-commission Officer School a

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<sup>51</sup> David K. Switzer, *Pastoral Care Emergencies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

moment of ministry only she could provide. Stepping out of the Enlisted Museum at the Maxwell AFB Gunter-Annex in Montgomery, Alabama, a man noticed Avalon as we passed by one another over the threshold of the front door. The pause in his body language and countenance on his face told me he was overcome with emotion. Avalon looked his direction and I took that cue to step back in and ask the airman if he would like to pet her. He said, “can I?” “Absolutely,” I said. He then fell to his knees and placed his two hands on either side of her head as she leaned into him kissing his face and wagging her tail. He then looked up at me with tears in his eyes and remarked, “I had a dog just like her. He died a few days ago before coming to this class.” My heart sunk as I watched him and Avalon share an immediate intimate connection. Lastly, he then kissed her head as if he was kissing his dog good bye and walked away. Because of encounters like this one, Avalon is an instrument in this project.

This encounter opened the door to a pastoral response in a passing moment to bereavement from Avalon and I.<sup>53</sup> This and other crisis encounters are everywhere people are no matter the context we serve. The locus of impact is to keep messaging our inner self and increase knowledge of quality pastoral care and counseling. *Pastoral Care Emergencies* shares, “The future of creation is the future of creatureliness; and constitutive of the creatureliness of the human is the creatureliness of ecological nature.”<sup>54</sup> When humility of presence births flourishing and post traumatic growth is likened to an invisible wall of resistance crumbling and the aura of crisis surrounding a

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 93.

counselee is like meeting a new person birthed from the ashes of life like a phoenix rising from a blazing fire triumphant.

## CONCLUSION

Observing the work of Avalon, it was evident she offers a presence which transcends the human understanding that is visible to the human eye. She seemed to show the person she encounters unleashed genuinely unconditional love of God. In Patricia Faith Appelbaum's writings in, *St. Francis of America* she states, "For many people, too, pets are the closets and most immediate contact with nature that they have. Many of the liturgies connected with animal blessings say as much about the natural world as the do about St. Francis."<sup>55</sup> Due to the evolving of humans and their relationship with their pets more intentional remembrances are evident. Appelbaum shares further, "Authorities at the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi, a Roman Catholic church in San Francisco, proposed in 2013 to build a formal repository for the cremated remains of pets and service animals. The response was enthusiastic."<sup>56</sup> Recognizing the impact of these animals' lives at death and honoring their lives and meaning opens doors to the significance their presence brings in their lives. Now more than ever the integration of assistance dogs in institutions, service dogs for disabilities, therapy pets and emotional support animals are thriving.

In the use of Assistance Dogs in spiritual care with chaplains can play a significant role in a person's redemptive journey. The chaplain can travel parallel with

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<sup>55</sup> Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *St. Francis of America: How a Thirteenth-Century Friar Became America's Most Popular Saint* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015; 2016), 154.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

the sufferer to meet them on the other side of recovery or through coping. God similarly accompanied Jesus Christ in his crucifixion and dissention to hell. The spiritual presence of God was still evident just as the presence of a chaplain and Assistance Dog has with one who is traveling through her/his own struggle. God still existed however was paralleling Christ's journey through a forsaken state in route to an eternal reign in heaven. This presence of spiritual, mind and physical change is evident in a triangle relationship with the chaplain, Avalon and the service member. It is not a replacement yet a vehicle of transformation in which God can influence and empower the service member. The overarching effect is communion with others in a place where her/his story is sacred and accepted.

Redemptive presence is a significant theme the chaplain and Avalon as a team offers. The striking difference which conflicts a soul is the pluralistic setting where God, in a person's realistic present moment presence, is as close as some service members will get to God. There may be a continual rise and fall of peace and suffering with no eternal gain. The church in community is an important part of what the Chaplain Corps Assistance Dog team can offer those who struggle in their own church community or do not have a community of faith. A redemptive community of presence is a place of safety where strife and transparency are revealing and unconditional love is given.

The presence of love, hope or joy may not be sustainable with a chaplain assistance dog team encounter, yet the belief is happiness in the presence of Avalon can carry a person far in her/his pain. Getting back to engaging with life is significant and overall a full visit is possible with the offering of God's presence through my partnership with Avalon. Furthermore, this existence is real and transformational in other's lives.

The effects of hope create a bridge on which every person can cross the gap between our imperfect practice of faith and the perfect promises of faith, between our weakness and the strength through weakness on which God has established the future. Scripturally, God manifests his presence in others or creation to include animals. This presence is so empowering it is inescapable and redemptive.

This space where a person can feel free to transition to healing or coping is offered through the Assistance Dog and the chaplain without changing the characteristics of God. Roger E. Olson in his book, *The Journey of Modern Theology*, states, “That which changes is not God’s essence but his free activation of life in creation and reciprocal relation with creatures.”<sup>57</sup> Avalon brings a present moment relationship connection offering an accepting redemptive presence sharing the heart of God to those she engages or those who engage her. In Olson’s analysis of other modern theologians, he says, “Moltmann’s purpose is to emphasize the importance of all life. The kingdom of God is life abundant.”<sup>58</sup> The unconditional space Avalon and a chaplain offers can help others feel they are not too far gone by the reminder of the holy a chaplain team embodies.

A modern-day application of spiritually recognizing animals as a reason to praise God is found in ceremonies like blessing of the animals; much like St. Francis demonstrated in his honor and respect for creatures. Appelbaum reflects on the blessing of the animals through history to say, “It built on well-known cultural conceptions of St. Francis, on the environmentalist movement, and on a rising cultural interest in animals,

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<sup>57</sup> Olson, 260.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

and it went on to generate a widespread practice. Recently, Jews, Buddhist, and secular charities have also offered animal blessings-often detached from reference to Francis.”<sup>59</sup>

When Avalon began her Assistance Dog for Ministry with the South Carolina National Guard, she too had a blessing ceremony at church. Olsen agrees that if “...we are to speak of God at all, must be recognized in the face of the neighbor in need and not in traditional religious ceremonies.”<sup>60</sup> Her work is indeed a blessing to many outside of typical means. The presence of creatures, such as Avalon, are evolving in our culture as nature continues to evolve.

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<sup>59</sup> Appelbaum, 136.

<sup>60</sup> Olson, 425.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

Assistance dog integration into the active military setting, for the purpose of spiritual resiliency, can provide the mechanism to raise morale, positive personal engagement and desire for interaction with an assistance dog chaplain corps team. Scripturally, the support for the spiritual benefits of creation and God's creatures is narrated through-out the Bible.<sup>61</sup> From the Creation account in Genesis, to the New Testament story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem prior to his death, all point to the use of animals for God's purpose. The earth was essential to the survival of all as God brought the creatures in the Garden of Eden before Adam to identify. Animals need humans directly and indirectly while people need God's creatures; thus, was the purposeful provision of animals in the story of Noah in Genesis.

The source of animals in Christian history depicts bonds and effects humans testified to experiencing for centuries. Francis of Assisi felt one with nature as he prepared homilies in the presence of the birds and other wild animals. This harmony of humankind and the lowly creatures of the earth speaks to the God-breathed spirit unifying all living creatures. Through time, animals assisted with sustaining farmland, fulfilling needs for companionship, to health benefits as an alert mechanism and post-traumatic stress through service dogs. Some of the present-day benefits can be difficult to measure; however, this project attempts to derive quantitative and qualitative results from an active

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<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 3 above.

military setting where intentional integration and research takes place. Cupelled with the research data are case studies with strategic means of applying Animal Assisted Therapy.

## PROCESS EVALUATION

The project's evaluation was achieved through assessment tools and feedback from the Department of Defense's organization's group of participant's assessment surveys and the evaluation of findings from reflection journals, data gathering forms and verbatims. The Chaplain handler's awareness and regulation of the present moment are also key to the development of the findings. Quantitative results are calculated through Excel which generated data charts and percentages. The results produced graphs for visual ease in comparing the two phases of exposure both before and after a Chaplain Corps Assistance Dog for ministry encounter. Qualitative narrations show the human living document experience with Avalon. This story telling includes the randomly divided diverse group of military community's account of her presence to include all personnel both enlisted and officers.

The project surveys and data gathering were the main material analysis for the test group. At certain points in the experiment, Avalon was not a part of the session, which shows the contrast to the intentional addition of resiliency tools delivered with or without the Assistance Dog. Data from the participant's surveys is compiled in a graph to demonstrate the outcome of engagement with the Chaplain. The Chaplain reflected and reported in the narrative section of the chapter through various tools shown in the appendix. Through this strategy blind spots, interpersonal or group dynamics were revealed. When appropriate the Chaplain consulted professional peer groups for the purpose of reflecting on findings both personally and from the research process.

The other area of feedback came from the organization and colleagues. The extended group engagement also helped in illustrating how the project was, or was not, successful. Not just in the area of proving the theses, yet in the overall objective gage of success in knowing the goals were met. The outer community offered support through this project as well. As stated in *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook*, “Certainly our experience of group supervision suggests that the opportunity to be part of a group for those who spend their working lives seeking to be a resource for others, can be an important reminder that it is not necessarily expert advice we need, but the restorative experience of genuine community in which the members receive from and give to one another.”<sup>62</sup> The importance of interpersonal relationships within this project was significant not just to the organization, however to the investment of each person to the effect of Assistance Dogs to the military mission and personal growth of the chaplain handler. The effort was well worth the many difficult conversations, productive critique both personally and professionally to this new work.

Though the atmosphere was more settling, the group did not suppress all expression of negative affect in the service of cohesion. The best approach in the evaluation of the project was through a technique much like Thomas and Gioia’s article, “Strategic Sensemaking and Organizational Performance: Linkages among Scanning, Interpretation, Action, and Outcomes” in addition. They also say that the way “...one-way organizations compete is by acquiring strategic information via decision makers’ effective scanning of the internal and external organizations environments and interpreting that information into a form they can use to implement appropriate actions

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<sup>62</sup> J. Leach & M. Paterson. *Pastoral Supervision: A handbook*. (2009), 157.

that will lead to effective performance.”<sup>63</sup> The evaluation process required a continual adjustment and flexing to one another’s feedback to set the group and organization apart. Being able to perform at a high level and with positive effects raised the standard of the organization and kept the military personnel feeling motivated and fulfilled as shown in the resiliency quantitative section to follow.

The intentional presence of an Assistance Dog brought mindfulness to the human aspect of our military mission and considered the soft power, the spiritual resiliency of service members in the group. As a result, this presence empowered the human force behind the hard power, the machines that equip the success of the military mission. When the focus was on the people as the greatest asset, the mechanics of the mission strengthens in the shadow of caring for service members’ resiliency through personal dignity and respect.

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

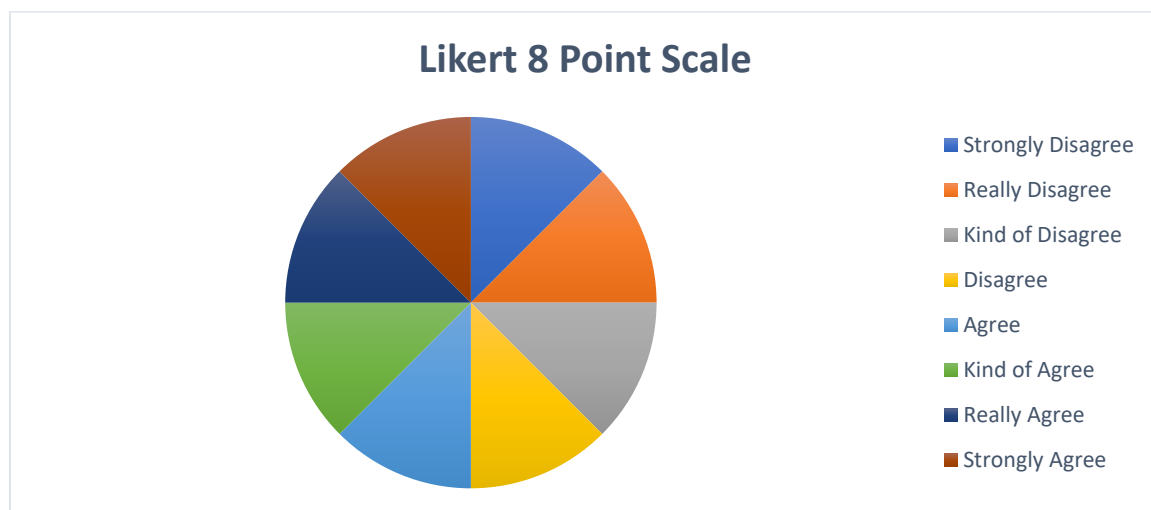
The demographics that made up the experimental group were randomly selected through volunteer interest. A wide range of diversity was utilized. Four officers ranging from Lieutenant through Major and six enlisted members ranging from Senior Airman through Master Sergeant were included. A total of six males and four women varying in ages from two twenties, three thirties and five fortyish year-olds. A majority were married with children while three were single or dating.

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<sup>63</sup>J. Thomas, S. Clark & D. Gioia. (1993). “Strategic Sensemaking and Organizational Performance: Linkages among Scanning, Interpretation, Action, and Outcomes.” *The Academy of Management Journal*, 36(2), 239-270.

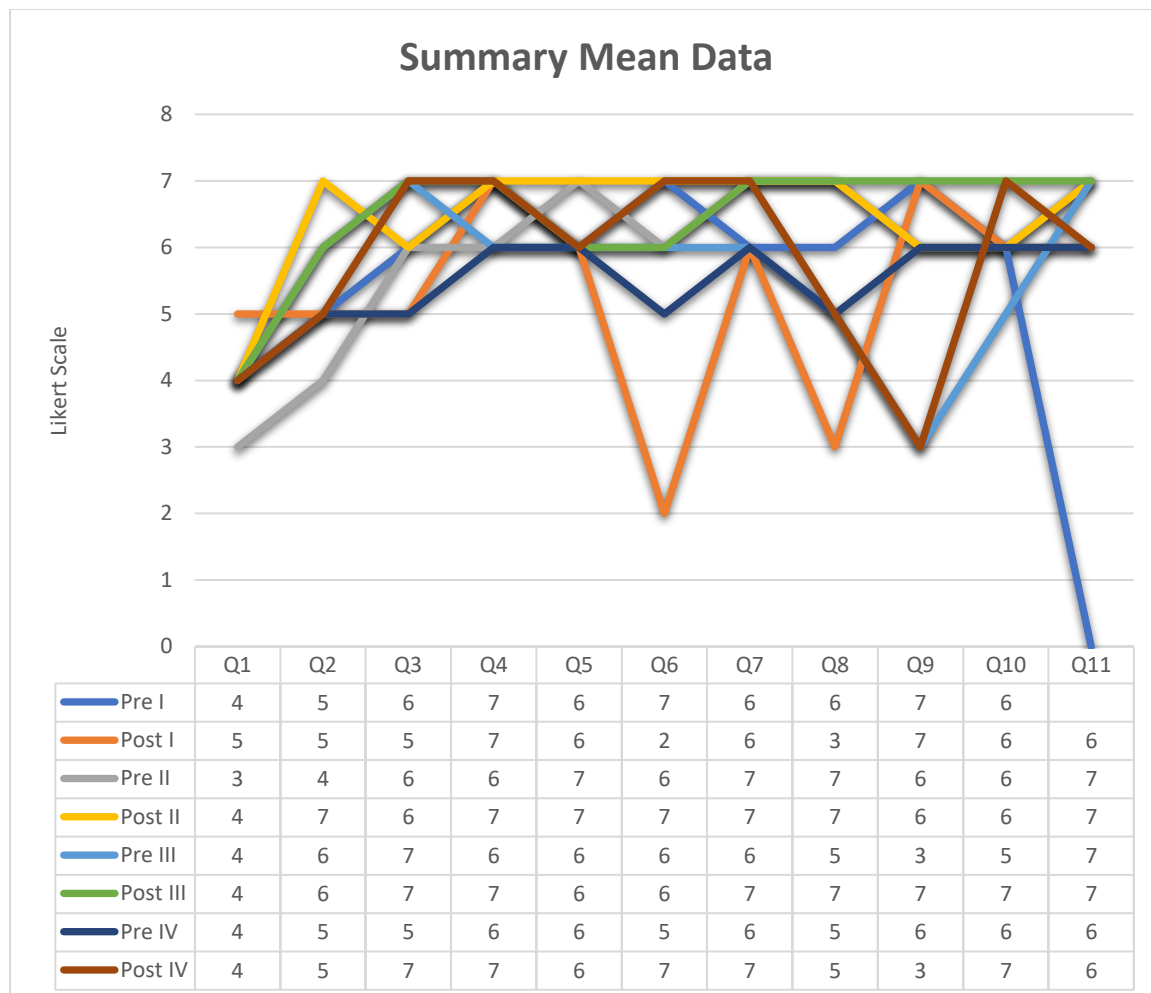
The career fields varied consisting of crew chief, avionics specialist, operations support staff, joint forces, fighter wing staff and medical were utilized. A variety of military status' made up the group; three active duty, one fulltime reservist, army guard technician, one air guard technician, and four drill status air guardsmen. The active duty, fulltime reservist and military technician participants had an increase interaction with Avalon due to their fulltime status in the military. Drill status guardsmen had a less frequent yet concentrated engagement with the assistance dog, Avalon.

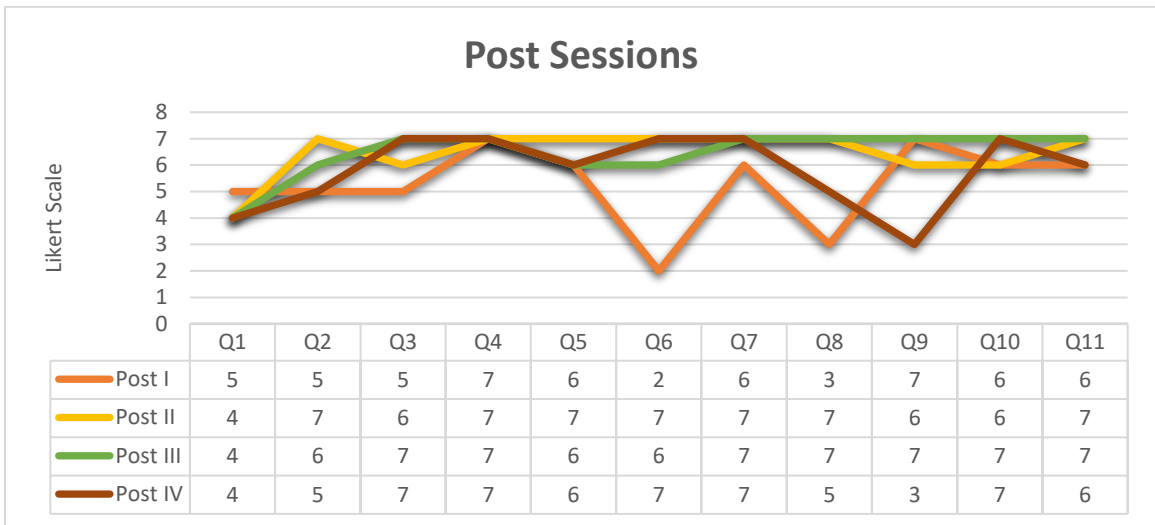
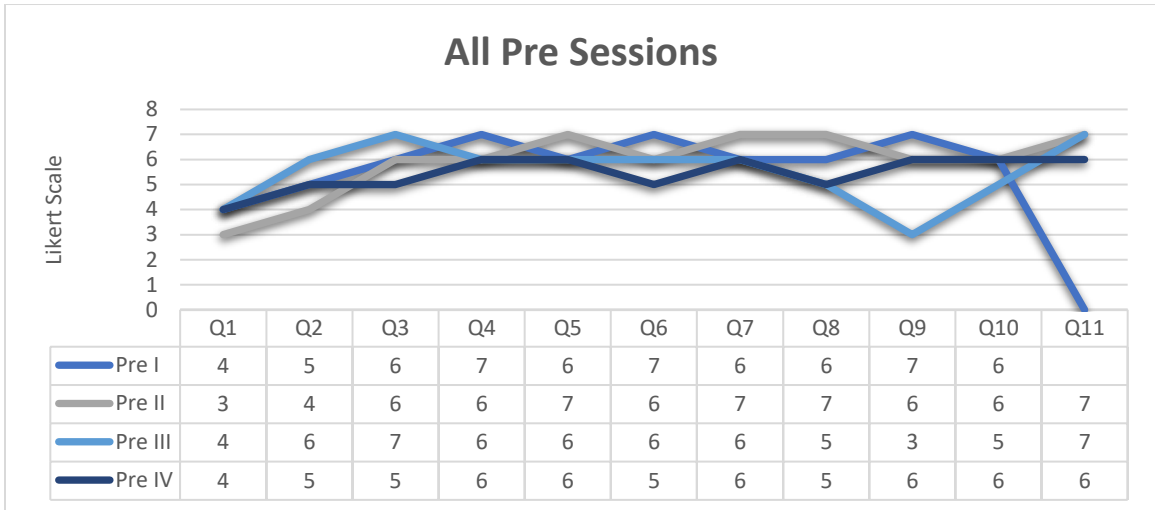
Participants contributed to four sessions. Two were in person, one self-paced, and one virtually. There were three variables addressed, engagement with Avalon, the chaplain evaluation, and the modality in which the material was delivered. The Likert eight-point scale was used to gather data comparisons of range and change.



The scale numbers reflect one strongly disagree to eight strongly agree. Positive results are numbers five and greater. Graph analysis below shows the various rates of change between the pre-exposure to the Assistance Dog team to the post results after exposure or no exposure post session. Finally, the total average of change between pre and post-session results was analyzed.

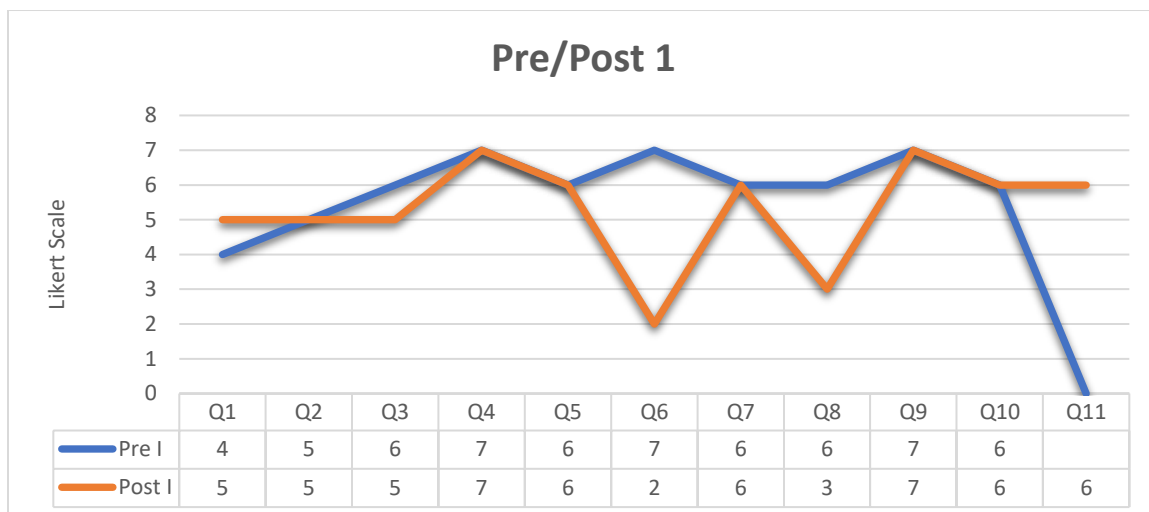
Feedback both directly in surveys and observable through the data and reflection forms supported the finding represented in the graphs below. The means of six and seven show the range in the areas of agree for preference of having an assistance dog present and it increasing resiliency. The chaplain observed this through several interactions recorded in the observable narration evaluated in the anecdotal section to follow.



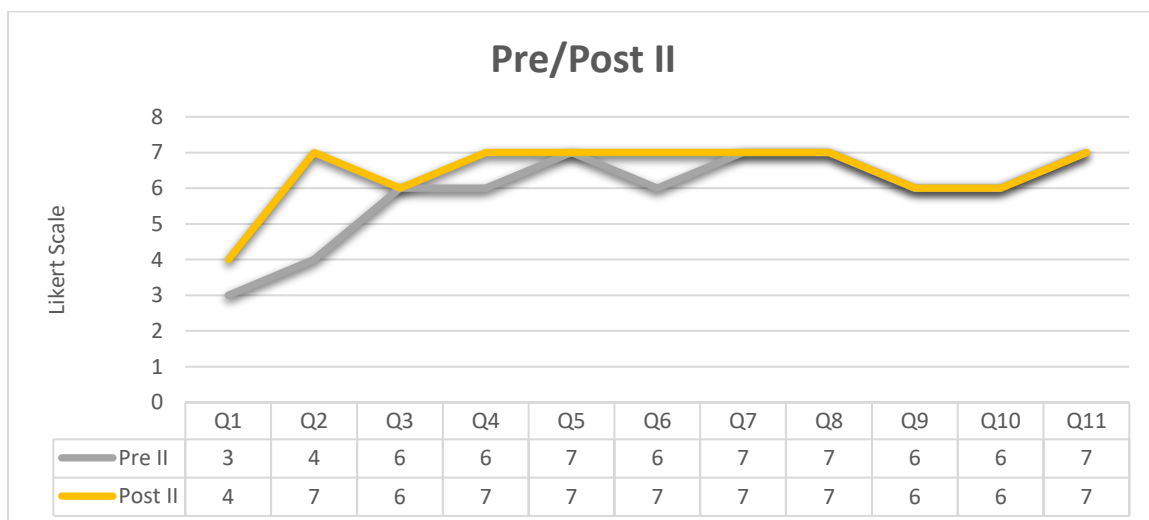


### AVALON EVALUAION

The variable of the engagement with Avalon shown in pre-session I question eight (I would like to have an assistance dog in my military setting.) had a mean of six or 70%. In the post-session I survey questions five (I wish I had more time with Avalon.) and seven (Being around Avalon increases my resiliency.) had a mean of six or 70% of participants.



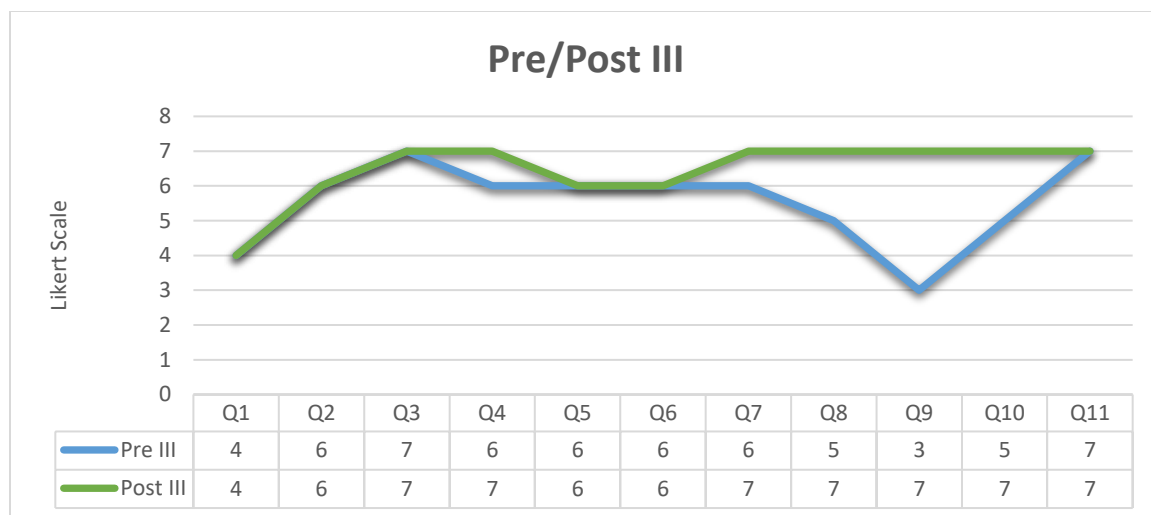
In session II the mean of questions analyzing general contact with animals in general or in a military setting is seven towards strongly agree. The post also has a highly agree mean of seven for questions four (50%), five (80%) and seven (50)% (Engaging with Avalon helps me feel relaxation in my work setting.), (Having Avalon lay at my feet helps me feel calm.) (Being around animals improves my temperament.) positive exposure or presence of animals. See graph below.



On the pre-session for III had a mean of six or 90% positive on question six (I feel purposeful when a domestic animal trusts me for her/his well-being.) and five on question



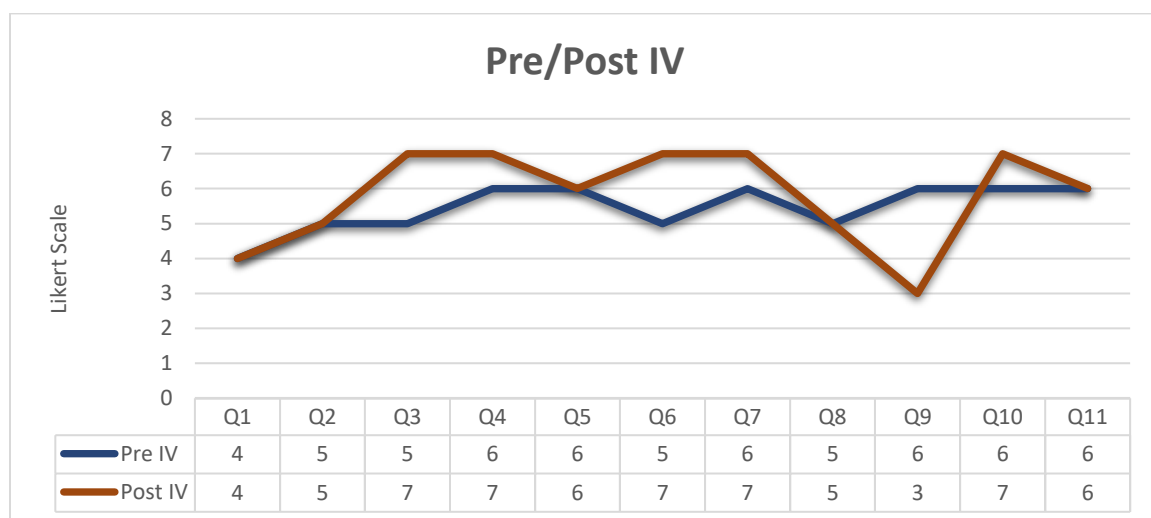
seven (Being around animals helps me be resilient in my relationships.). On the post the mean for questions six (I miss not having Avalon present during my session.) the mean was six or 60%, seven (I believe having Avalon next to me helps me feel more open to the lesson.) and on eight (I believe having an assistance dog in military work place can help build trust.) the mean for both was seven or 60% of SM.



Finally, in session IV questions regarding Avalon or animals in the pre-session totals for number four (I have the awareness that animals affect my mood positively) had a mean of six and 90%. Questions five (I believe animals help me be in tune with the world around me.) and seven (Being around Avalon increases my interest in the sessions.) also had a mean of six (80%) and question eight (If I can see an animal and not touch it, helps me feel calm.) was a mean of five or 100%. This question I would possibly throw out since it is not in line with the trend of positive responses to animals.

I believe participants read this question as if I can see an animal and not touch it, helps me feel calm. The transverse of this question for the virtual setting of session IV supports having animals or Avalon on screen during the session even if the viewer cannot pet it. In the post-session the animal exposure questions three (I know Avalon helps me in

the sessions where she is present.) and four (I wish Avalon could interact with me today.) had means of seven (60% question 3 and 4, 70% positive) five (I believe I will include animals more in my life.) had a mean of six or 80% and question seven (Being around Avalon increases my interest in the sessions.) had a mean of seven or 70%.



In the questions referring to Avalon with the Chaplain engagement the following results showed positive effects. Session I pre-survey question ten (My openness to talk with the chaplain increases when the assistance dog is present,) had a mean of six and 60%. In the post-survey question eleven (My openness to talk with the Chaplain increases when the assistance dog is present.) had a mean of six 70%. Both responses reflected positive results in favor of having an Assistance Dog with the chaplain. In Session II pre-survey question ten (My openness to talk with the chaplain increases when the assistance dog is present.) and the post survey questions numbers nine (Avalon's presence helps me talk to the chaplain more easily.) and ten (The chaplain's presentation is more engaging when the assistance dog is present.) all had a mean of six (70%, 80% and 80% respectively).

In post-session III question ten (Avalon enhances the chaplain's sessions.) had a mean of seven toward strongly agree. In post-session IV question eleven (Seeing the chaplain without Avalon seems out of place.) had a mean of six or 60% showing a favorable image of the assistance dog team by the end of the four sessions. In session IV pre-survey question six (Knowing I will not see Avalon today makes me feel down.) had a response of 50% / 50%. There was not as much of a shift with this question than first thought.

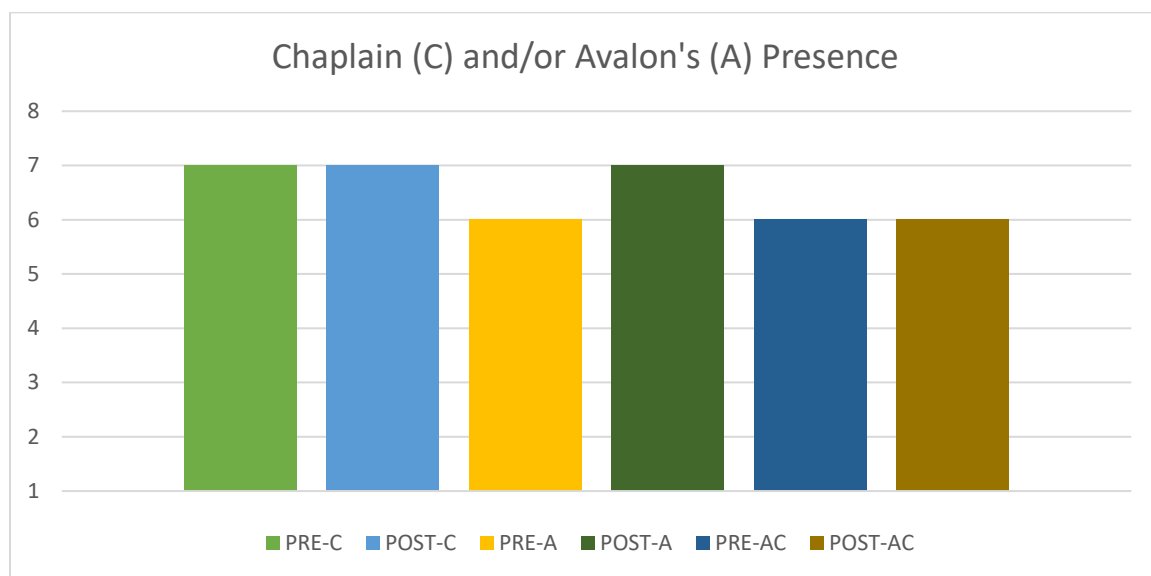
### CHAPLAIN EVALUATION

For the chaplain evaluation, the following results were gathered. In pre and post-session I surveys question nine (This setting helps me talk to a chaplain more easily.) was a mean of seven and question ten (Talking with the chaplain increases my resiliency.) was a six 80% agree. The pre and post-session II survey questions eleven (The chaplain presents an approachable personality.) and (The chaplain presented the material in a manner I can understand.) were both a mean of seven and both at 90% agree. In session III the pre-session question number eleven (The chaplain provided enough information to do this reading.) and post-survey question eleven (I believe the chaplain and I are getting to know each other better.) both had a mean of seven or 60% towards strongly agree.

In the data evaluating the chaplain, journal reflections and data forms supported a favorable response consistent with the level of seven really agree, as seen in the graphs below. The chaplain experienced engagement at the level of excitement from the participants and general unit engagement. There were no visible or remarkable obstacles to the chaplain as a deterrent in either session instructions or interactions. In fact, by session III, the chaplain relationship was getting deeper as revealed on the survey as

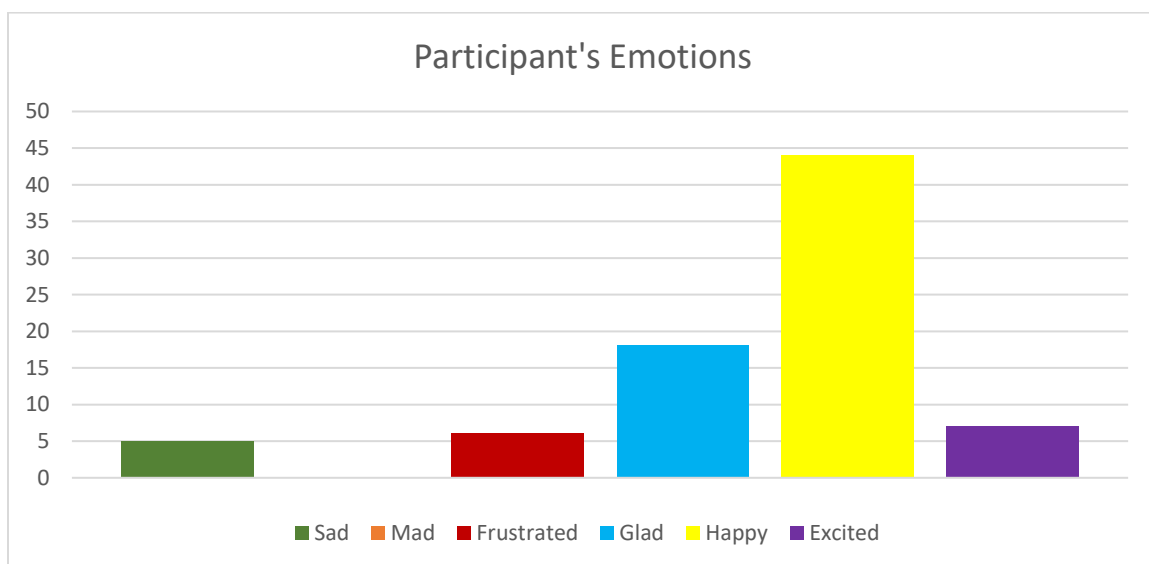
really agree by 60% of participants. And the overall calming effect the chaplain had in session IV had a really agree response from 70% of participants. The familiarity and connectedness recorded in the reflection forms mirrored the stronger relationships. One Airman asked me to do his reenlistment, another, sought me out for mental health and crisis counseling as well as increased communication and referrals by SM in the research group.

Finally, in session IV the pre-survey question eleven (My sessions with the chaplain are helping me.) was a mean of six with 70% agree. The overall post-survey question ten (When the chaplain talks with me, I feel calmer.) was a mean of seven in the range of strongly agree. The results between the Assistance Dog and chaplain's engagement, with or without the other's presence, were consistent with a mean of six or seven. However, in the virtual session IV question ten (Knowing I would see the chaplain made me happy.) had an 80% positive agreed result. This may be a worthwhile topic of a future study. See chart below summarizing analysis above.



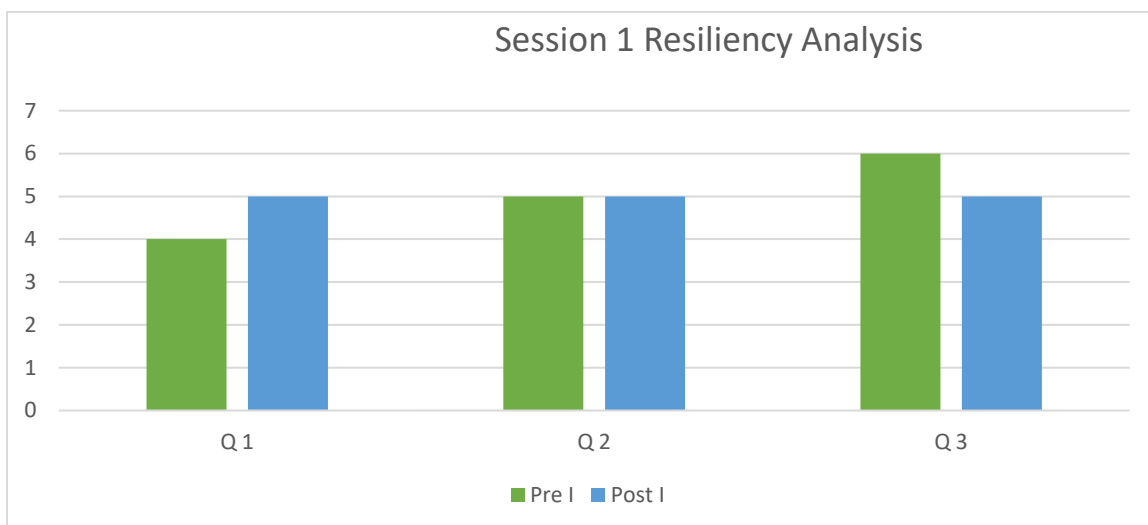
## RESILIENCY EVALUATION

Before delving into the resiliency aspects, it is notable to reflect on the feelings before and after the sessions of the participants. Below were the results which showed the resounding total emotional response of “happy.” This graph points to the positive emotional state of the participants. Overall, this contributed to the resiliency level depicted in the sections below.



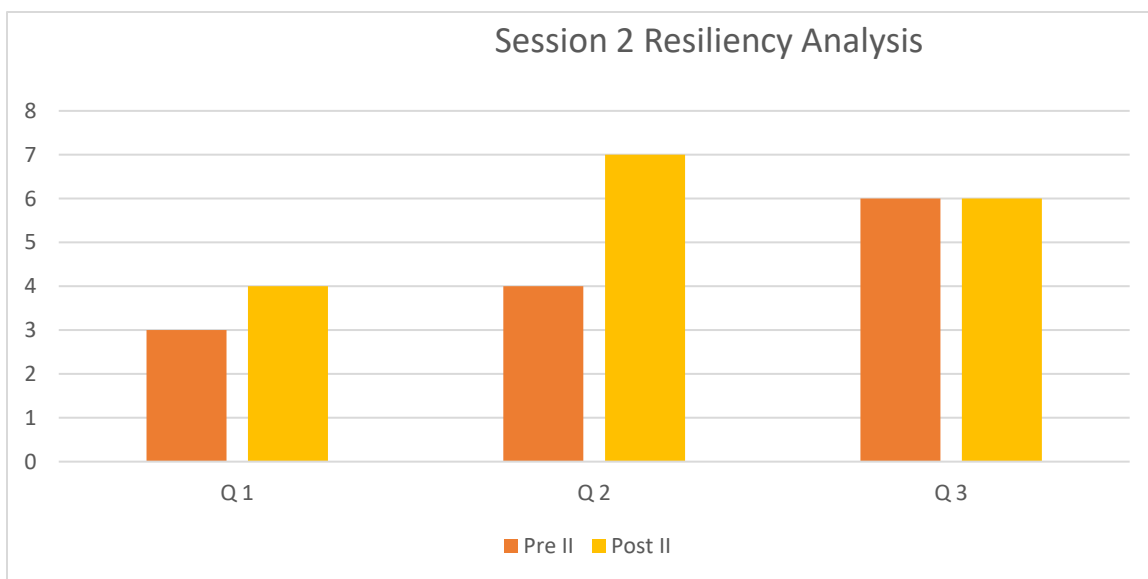
The last section evaluated was the resiliency, trust curriculum to include perspective or outlook of the service members. In addition to per session question analysis to follow, there are isolated questions with results to add remarks. Pre-session I survey question four (I have a hopeful outlook on life.) had an over-all mean of seven or 80%. In relation to the overall outlook on life, pre survey III poses a similar question to hope which is number five, I have a trust in God/ higher power. This question resulted in a mean of six with 70% agree. These two showed a source of higher resiliency amongst the service members. Finally, pre-session IV number three the participant was asked, I consider myself to be more resilient than when I first started these sessions, had an

overall mean of five or 60% agree. This points to the fact the participants already had a higher level of resiliency yet with a response of five showed an increase to an already favorable level of hope and positive outlook on life.

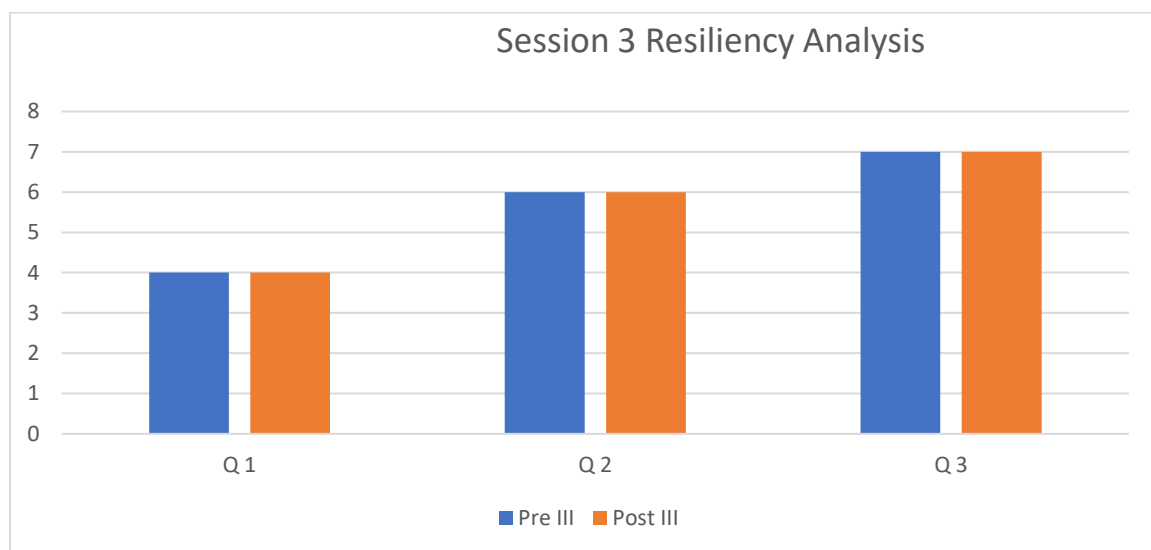


Session I graph above analyzes pre and post-responses to the following questions:

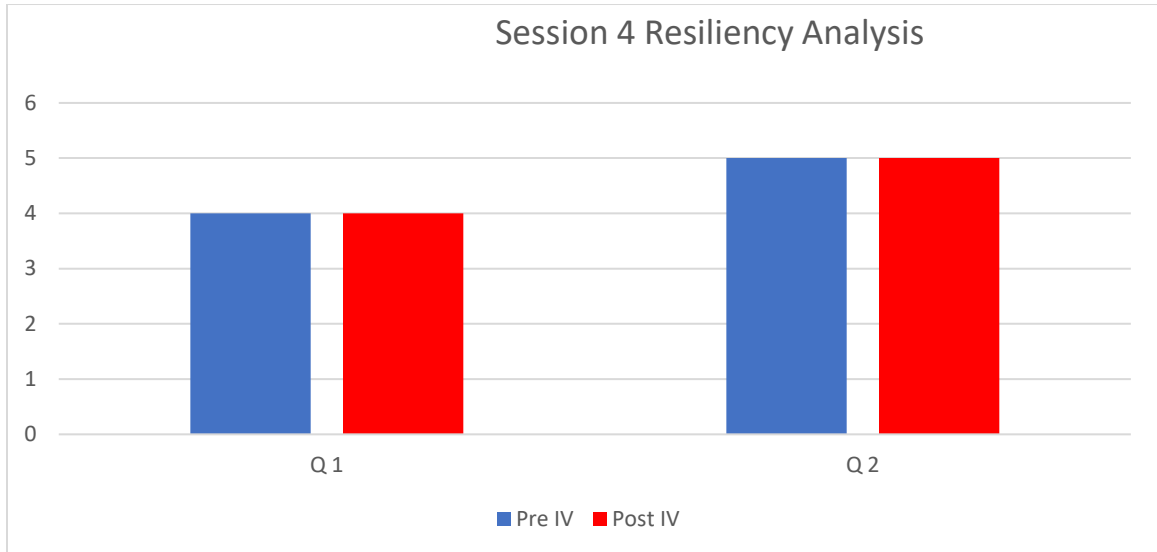
1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. 2) I believe I can be in a better place than I am right now. and 3) I consider myself to be resilient or more resilient than before the session.



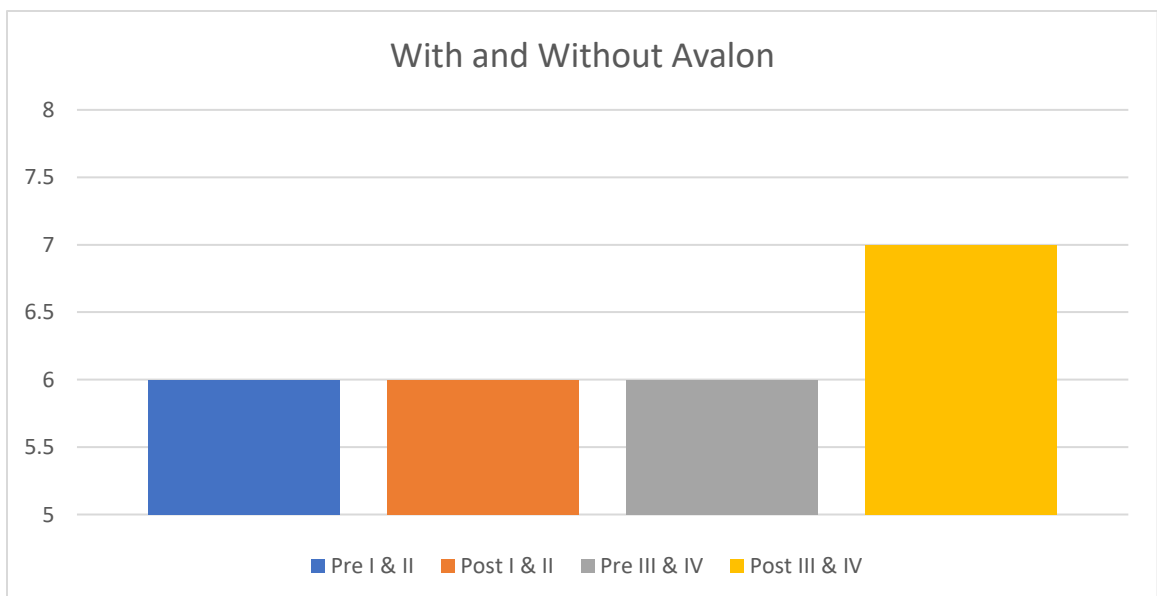
Session II graph above showed results from pre-session questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. 2) I believe I can be in a better place than I am right now. and 3) I consider myself to be resilient in my relationships. In comparison with Post-session questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. 2) I believe this experience offered me satisfaction today. and 3) I consider myself to be more aware about my resiliency in my relationships.



Session III graph showed the following results to questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. 2) I believe I can trust myself to change my perspective. and 3) I consider myself to be trustworthy in my relationships. With post-survey questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. 2) I believe I can trust myself to change my perspective. 3) I know more about how to build trust in my relationships.



Session IV graph analyzes per-session questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. and 2) I believe I have more trust in others to help me be in a better place emotionally. For post survey questions: 1) I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety. and 2) I believe I have more trust in others to help me be in a better place emotionally. In summary sessions I and II where Avalon was present showed a 10% shift in the pre and post-graphs. Sessions III and IV where Avalon was predominantly not present had less change of < 10% between the pre and post-surveys.





Finally, was the chart comparison between sessions I and II with and III and IV without Avalon. The graph above seemed to show no effects to Avalon's presence; however, the participants generally started off fairly resilient with a pre session rating of 83% happy and 17% sad. This transpired into a post rating of 90% happy and 10% sad which resulted in a 7% shift toward a positive more resilient emotional state. The high score of seven points on the graph reflects the over-all effects of the study. For instance, session IV question nine had a mean of three due to the slant towards the negative in the question, I prefer the virtual setting to talk to the chaplain. This showed a response on the side of disagree.

Overall, service members preferred the in-person modality as opposed to virtual. In session IV post-survey number nine (I prefer the virtual setting to talk to the chaplain.) had a negative response of 70% disagree. During COVID pandemic there was an increase in virtual engagements. This study showed the potential of negative preference effects to long term virtual outreach without the option to do a face-to-face session. The result was anticipated from the comment responses given by the service members recorded below. In a pandemic this information was valuable.

#### QUALITATIVE ANTECDOTAL COMMENTS ANALYSIS

One such visit included a counseling session where a participant was dealing with a work place issue. When she walked into the room she immediately went into a heavy emotional state where Avalon gravitated to her and positioned herself up against the Airman. The expression from the Airman was that she stated, she was glad Avalon was

there for her to pet while she talked about her grief. She mentioned how much it meant to have Avalon as a part of the meeting.<sup>64</sup>

Other instances recorded in the journal were during commander's meetings. One was the ability of Avalon to maneuver through the room greeting each person. She was welcomed like an old friend. Her previous encounters were more engaging than the new personnel she was meeting. At one point when the Wing Commander greeted her, she was able to crawl in his lap and give him a hug. Situations like this are not common; however, within the right relationships, more fluid and intimate doors are opened for engagement. There was another personnel Avalon had a close relationship with and was able to recognize her on and off base. In particular, Avalon would get very excited just pulling up to the building at which this Airman worked. Upon entering the building, from any door, Avalon was able to find her direction to the cubicle of the Airman or follow her voice and find where she was working.

At the end of each survey, the SMs wrote additional comments of their choosing. These ranged from remarks about the visit, application of the lesson to her/ his life, and the process feedback. Below is the synopsis of the remarks. Some even wrote about their current struggles and life transitions.

### Pre-Survey 1

#### Question 11

When I encounter a dog, I tend to:

- Reach out and pet
- Pet it
- Pet the dog

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<sup>64</sup> Session on November 17, 2020.

- Get on their level/floor and pet them
- Show it love
- Pet/show attention
- Give them love and smile
- Smile
- Engage with it
- Be joyful

All ten participants had a favorable response when encountering a dog. This question was integral to discovering any underlying trauma for an encounter with a dog.

### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- I am feeling burnt out lately and need to find a way to energize and fill my tank.
- Frustrated with job but loving my personal life.
- Overall, I am happy with life as it stands now. I may have some changes coming my way in the near future, but it's nothing that the Lord can't see me through.
- None at the moment
- My "spirits" are lifted with canines. Doesn't matter size, breed, or where I am at that time or moment. I find that people are more approachable with dogs.
- Avalon is a great dog who brings joy into the room.
- The assistance dog creates opportunities to talk over a variety of topics. This last comment reinforces the prior varied comments which span a variety of topics. Work place stress and how an animal makes them feel seems to be the predominant topics.

### Post Survey I

### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- Have always seemed to be pretty resilient but rely on social interactions (very often) to overcome difficulties. Having an assistance dog has made the chaplain even more approachable when resiliency/social interactions are needed.
- Chaplain Pittman/Avalon always helps me see things in a different light, which helps me understand even more so what others might be feeling.
- Avalon was a calming presence during the session.
- None at the moment.
- It was nice to walk and talk with chaplain. It was calming to be outside with Avalon and friend. Nice to be heard and valued.

Personal impact was voiced in the responses above. They were touching while providing valuable feedback. The last comment mentioned a walk outside. Various settings were sought out. This particular SM found great value in the combination of the chaplain and Avalon's engagement outside. Often times SMs are stuck at their desks and are unable to step away from a work center or secure vault.

### Pre-Survey II

#### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- Currently I am looking forward to big personal/professional changes, which excites me.
- It's Friday heading to a holiday weekend.

### Post Survey II

#### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- I enjoy visiting with Chaplain Pittman.
- Avalon's presence both breaks the ice and breaks tension. Discussing temperament and other personal issues can be challenging/stressful. However, the dog definitely helps defuse any wants our discussing such personal topics. Not sure why she does, but she does.

- Love having Avalon around!
- Enjoyed the kitty! [A kitten joined the session inadvertently.]

### Pre-Survey III

#### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- Feeling partly content but I'm always sad.
- I am excited for my new role as a traditional guardsman. I am a bit stressed with my current full-time position and all of the projects I am responsible for.
- I can change my perspective, true, but it's really God doing the changing. (Q2)
- Taking time off to catch up on work has been helpful. The minimal staffing let me complete training and work on for the next quarter.

Comment three brought out a faith perspective from the session even though this was a reading and the chaplain and Avalon were not present during the lesson.

### Post Survey III

#### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- I enjoy reading the Speed of Trust. Competency and character are important parts of building trust.
- It's great to have trust in your significant other which was lacking for 28 years with my ex-husband. There is so much weight lifted off your shoulders. It allows you to feel and experience life in a completely different way full of hope, peace, and happiness.
- I suppose to truly answer the questions, I would have had to sit down with Chaplain Pittman and Avalon. However, that is not the case, so I answered the questions as best as I could.
- I always miss having a dog with me. My pup was present while reading the requirement.

The self-paced lesson seemed to strike a chord with SMs in relation to trust in relationships. Some still preferred to answer with the chaplain and others gravitated to their own pet.

#### Pre-Survey IV

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- Q4: Avalon, yes. My dogs, yes and no.
- I enjoy visiting chaplain. Visiting is a nice break from email.
- 3 days out from stating a new assignment is full of excitement and anxiety. Knowing I'd be doing this helped to ease the level of anxiety and me on getting transition right.
- Frustrated with new position, waiting for training dates, which keeps me from being hands on in this new role.

In this section once again the remarks about work are evident. This openness to the work environment of transitions and frustrations provided valuable examples to the effects of purposeful engagement and meeting an emotional need toward resiliency. Work place productivity could possibly be correlated to ops tempo and resiliency balance.

#### Post Survey IV

##### Question 13

I offer these additional thoughts/comments:

- Great work on putting these sessions together.
- That I had this opportunity to work with the Chaplain and Avalon.
- It's always better in person. Its late and I am tired. Again, J\_\_\_\_\_ [SM's dog] is with me as I fill out this last survey.

The last comment supports the resiliency preference to have the chaplain present as opposed to self-paced or virtual.

The comments above were in line with my observation data forms that noted the predominate topics or thoughts on the minds of the service members were not the lessons on trust, however what were the extenuating circumstances around their life at the time. Open doors to discuss what marital relationship problems were going on in the life of one SM over took a session and counseling took its place. Avalon proceeded to nestle up against the airman as she shared about a conflict in her marriage. It was a relaxed and very natural engagement with Avalon unassumingly comforting the airman by lying up against her leg. I could see the safe space Avalon and I provided to care for this airman. It was like a team in tune to each other for a common goal, unconditional presence.

Also, the emotional state of the participants was more tender and often times brought out by the presence of Avalon. In one particular incidence following the death of an airman, the friend could not open up and seemed motionless. Avalon was welcomed into the lap of this shocked airman and instantaneously broke through the emotional wall, bringing the airman to a sobbing state as Avalon pressed against him and licked his face. The encounter was extremely moving and brought me to a state of amazement. I had never witnessed her have that overwhelming response on a person. She senses the emotions of others and will respond by positioning herself next to the person.

### QUALITATIVE ANECDOTAL EVALUATION

Below are cognitive behavioral therapy practices of integration with spiritual care used in sessions with Airmen. These examples highlight the nuances of intentional interventions versus casual engagements. The encounters described are from the chaplain's journal and data forms. Some sessions took place in person with the planned

curriculum described in this paper while others were gathered from the reflection of crisis interventions or casual encounters. The section below shows the potential of future opportunities of implementing assistance dogs in the active military setting.

Engaging- When I first met with an airman following an arrest, I focused on showing care and empathy. He was struggling for a very long time. I was told he is keen on others intent and may not open up to sharing his true feelings. While he talked, I used non-judgmental presence and listened. I listened to his words and unspoken words. With Avalon in our midst, he seemed to be closed off initially then opened up verbally and in his physical stance. I believe I was reading his guardedness he was also manifesting in relationship to her. I clued in on his feelings through emotional intelligence in order to break down any barriers and assumptions he may have about me and Avalon; “Gordon’s Process of Communication” around active listening and communication roadblocks was helpful at this point.

Focusing- Initially I had to gain the assurance I was not a one-time visit. Instead, I was committed to accompany him through this journey with his permission and engagement. We established trust as I followed through with what I said I would do. This trust also grew through mine and Avalon’s non-bias engagement which was different than what he experienced with other personnel at base in areas of leadership and psychological support.

Evoking change talk – In listening for change talk I discovered a deep drive to have a different relationship with his children and a helpless view of resolving his legal issues. He had a need to resolve his current circumstance yet could not see how to get out



of his dilemma. He became indifferent to outcomes as though he was defeated before the fight even began. Set-backs kept coming his way and the arrest was the biggest one yet.

Using techniques to elicit change talk- As I sensed his stance around his desires and options, I found he was open to change by taking additional feedback and guidance from a person he respected. I felt his openness to share with me was not a final resolve to his circumstances; he seemed to explore extremes in such a way as to challenge the idea that with guidance he could find another path to correcting distortions and disputing faulty beliefs so as to not give up.

Using EARS (elaborate, affirm, reflect, summarize) on change-talk. When I offered questions of clarity to his feelings of ambivalence his responses began to map a parallel diagram of two pathways in my mind. The sustain talk was powerful and almost argumentative like a challenge to find any other perspective or path. I took this challenge with risk he may not change as a result of this method. I used elaboration to understand and draw out his verbalized unrealized options in a map on paper. This visual was powerful and brought into focus his need to incorporate his faith practically and in a matter consistent to his personal value in God's eyes.

Planning- As I graphed the parallel map, he seemed to settle his spirit and reflect on the points of review to move toward his values of taking care of his children and working with youth in his retirement. The map was a balance of two options which I summarized neutrally and without bias. I could see his visual affect open up to options as he moved from indifference or ambiguity to seeing change. He began to talk about changing to care for himself and look at what others were offering to provide through

counsel and support. Although, he did not fully get on board with a plan until after our meeting. I saw his decision unfold through various follow-up encounters and sessions.

He began a spiritual and practical plan of action as Avalon and I affirmed him in his story and encouraged his commitment to change through aligned to his values and caring for others and himself. As he cared for himself, we journeyed through his grief and guilt as well. He grinned like he knew and believed what I was affirming yet was shy to acknowledge the realization. He knew he would be ok as he began to see how he could move in the direction of hope by incorporating the use of spiritual practices of his faith with Avalon's presence of support and genuineness.

I did a suicide risk evaluation to determine his stability until he could reach his primary care manager (PCM) and follow-up with mental health (MH) support. I did this by encouraging him to see his counselor and psychologist for oversight due to stopping his medication suddenly. I was concerned this may affect behavior adding to the complications of his apprehension. I tracked his progress verifying his follow through and updating his records in regards to his recent arrest and coping skills.

I noticed change in his perspective through acceptance and action toward change talk follow through. He saw his children and was communicating regularly with them. He was using a mediator to communicate with his wife. He engaged his spiritual sources of strength and initiating application of faith to his coping. He attended church and shared scripture as well as sought scripture to guide, strengthen, and help him through his struggle.

I know he made progress because his demeanor and language were less somber and more hopeful to the future and his options. I know there was a difference with verbal

affirmation like, “I love the non-bias talk” and “our talk the other day did wonders for me.” He continued to meet with me again and sought a plan for applying his passions constructively the next few months to a year while he waited for his circumstance to resolve. I heard from him a few times in the months that followed his counseling.

One of the key aspects that shifted his perspective from ambivalence to an invested and self-caring plan; it was his reality God is still at work as I and Avalon’s care and attention reflected. He transformed a deferring approach to spiritual incorporation into his issue to a more self-directing and collaborative inclusion of God. Pargament shared about this spiritual integration measure in chapter eight page 163. I endorse the combination of using SO-CBT in this case due to the movement of SM in mental and spiritual revelation and practice. I was amazed at the emotional mirroring Avalon offered in this setting resulting in a full acceptance of her through touch and verbal interactions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this closing section, reflection analysis of the pros and cons of this study and conclusive data are addressed. Analysis of raw data and reflection forms contributed to this analysis and evaluation. Survey response forms with charted means showing the trends both prior to sessions and following make up the quantitative evaluation. The anecdotal evaluation came from real accounts of counseling and engagement formally, such as in commander’s meetings and informally, such as in focused warrior care in the units. Also noted in this section are hurdles with the project. For instance, the struggle to meet and track the ten participants during deployment cycles and COVID measures was more than anticipated. This was in addition to personal life events and communication

issues. In the future, some project adjustments would benefit the research. If this was duplicated in the future, I would implement the following suggestions.

The one-on-one sessions taking place would benefit from a tracking chart. Since the surveys were handed in anonymously, it was difficult to manage who remained to meet with the chaplain. One benefit to the two in-person sessions and two separated sessions was the ability to mix up the encounters depending on the situation of the SM. Some had COVID or were quarantined. During these times it was helpful they had the material to do the book reading and the virtual video. At the first session a book and surveys III and IV were given to the participant. Finally, the SMs did not complete all the surveys in the work place; some were done at home. In this case, the surveys were sent electronically.

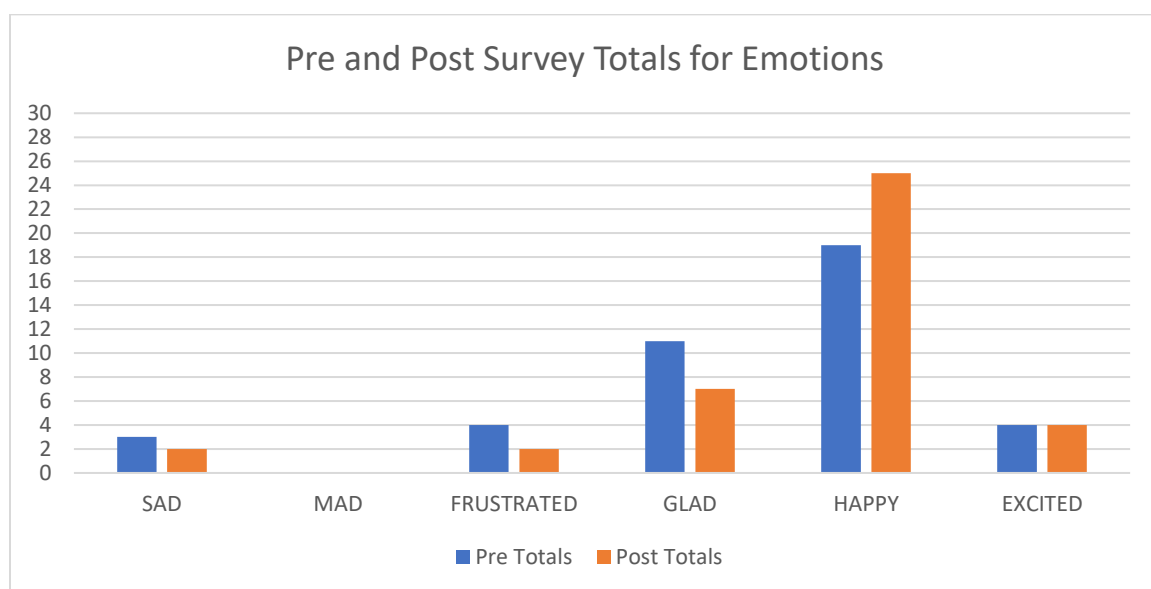
Overall, the counseling opportunities increased by simply initiating meeting sessions. This opened conversations for SM to bring up relationship struggles, work place issues, and military operational concerns. What I found not as helpful was the verbatims. This was a great tool to have as a reflection item, however, it did not contribute to the overall statistics of the study. I was able to have the opportunity to organize my thoughts and CBT tools application in an ongoing counseling experience. This approach yielded material to reflect on with my professional group. The tool was more of a personal growth analysis in counseling approaches and dynamics in isolated SM engagements.

One of the peer group discussions was on the subject of my roll to keep accountability with the SM participants.<sup>65</sup> Personally, I found the constant contact to

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<sup>65</sup> Session on December 8, 2020.

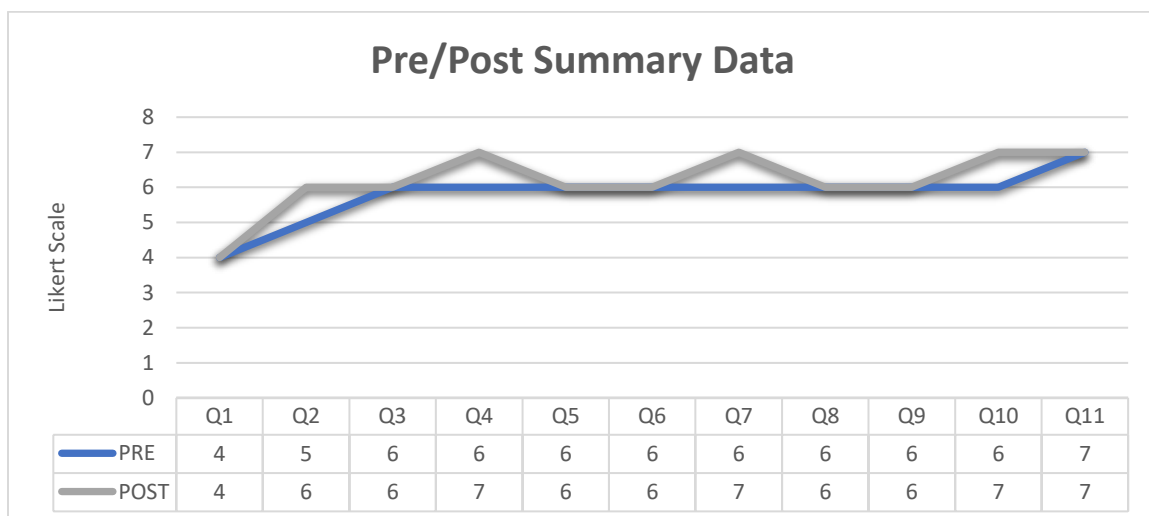
keep up with SMs was outside my comfort zone. I typically do not press others for what I need. It takes a conscious effort to reach out and keep asking for surveys or if a participant finished or will complete the sessions. A couple SMs were unreachable for an extended period of time in which I feared I would have to restart with a new participant. This was discouraging at first; however, it all worked out and the project provided valuable feedback and data. Although, these sheets helped me find any trends in the sessions. The only tendency from the SMs noted was the fact that military work was tough and Avalon brought relief from difficult office dynamics and work place issues; reflected in the chart results below.



Overall, my evaluation of the sessions resulted in a positive shift of movement towards a more resilient optimistic emotional state of mind. The pre session surveys showed a higher total of sad, frustrated and glad results. In contrast, the post-surveys resulted in an increase to a happier emotional state. Due to the analysis above, this seems to support the findings of increased, resiliency through the engagement with Avalon and the chaplain through the set of trust curriculum sessions. No extenuating positive effects

came from the curriculum however, this is an area that could improve with increased data gathering not presented in this project.

In the future one suggestion was to write the survey questions in the same language in order to properly chart for change rates. The dips in the post summary data below shows this effect. A question on a negative tone creates the supporting data yet is not evident when placed up against the total mean and percentages. There was no prior experience with this process, however, it was beneficial as a trial and warranted experimental dividends.



In closing, the results proved a slight graph increase between the pre and post-sessions. Also, movement was evident from a stagnant pre graph to a more variant upward swing post graph. This variation helped to reinforce data driven effects of engagement with Avalon, trust lessons and chaplain. The session data and reflection journals pointed to this movement of engagement effects as well. Poor weather and military operations tempo did not negatively affect the sessions; however, it is believed the encounters strengthened the service members resiliency. Follow up counseling and continued relationship with the Chaplain Corps Assistance Dog team continued past the

scheduled sessions. Furthermore, these results proved to expose the SM to a resource for a more resilient life or coping tool.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

For years the military has sought to find means of addressing the resiliency of SMs. This is not an easy endeavor as battles continue to rage and enemies both visible and invisible war across the world. Innovation is a buzz word applied to the military work-around to combat some of these obstacles. An innovative mind-set is present in various platforms to improve production and pioneer new initiatives to harness the diverse personnel force. Toward these ends, I was inspired to seek a tangible modality in which to reach our weary military members. From the implementation of Mental Health Integration in Chaplain Services, to combining this work with a professionally bred and trained Assistance Dog, the groundwork is now laid.

The combination of human and animal mutual benefits is not foreign to purposeful dividends practically, mentally, and spiritually. History as early as biblical times and beyond, narrate the resounding theme of deep bonds formed between animals and humankind. In this research project I discovered conclusive evidence that supports the integration of assistance dogs in the active military operation. Through the justification of quantitative and qualitative anecdotal analysis and evaluation, supportive data offer a convincing argument to integrate assistance dogs into the chaplain corps or other helping agencies. For the past two years, Assistance Dog for Ministry, Avalon, has paved the way for more of her kind.

She has deployed with me to Colombia, South America, has been on military trainings to Washington State, Alabama, Texas and Washington D.C and of course, South



Carolina assigned to the 169<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, McEntire JNGB and on Activation to 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Shaw Air Force Base. Her care for SMs includes the South Carolina National Guard in service of Post Deployment Support (PDS), Care Of Military Personnel and Spouse (or significant other) Support (COMPASS), National Days of Prayer, Strong Bonds Relationship Resiliency Training, Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program events, National Guard Activations for hurricanes and in support of the Governor of SC as well as standard daily operations. Avalon flawlessly flanked me for a full military honors funeral and graveside ceremony as I took position with a funeral honor guard detail. She has accompanied me in the hospital sharing her joy, not just with the son of an Airman, she also brought plenty of extra loving care to the staff.<sup>66</sup> Her poise and demeanor was impeccable spanning lengthy commander meetings without making a sound, to flying comfortably on a four-hour flight to an overseas military assignment.

Through the exposure shared above, a more hands-on approach brings a kinesthetic learning device to the military member as a unique resiliency resource. Simply having a conversation and referring out for treatment may not provide the resiliency tool necessary to sustain life and thus service members for the military mission. Societal concerns bring a layer of resiliency deterioration, as well as relationship strains in the culture of the military. The use of Animal Assisted Therapy, both formally and

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<sup>66</sup> Avalon has a contagious affection for others. She is smart to know who to approach in her working demeanor. She is cautious around equipment. Both these traits make her suitable for the hospital and all public settings. The medical staff experienced her as loving and gentle. In the environments Avalon worked she responded to everyone's affection and attention appropriately.

informally, was the approach in this project setting which drives the justification I addressed through this process description.

The quantitative and qualitative data make up the research analysis and reflection establishing a foundation with the goal to present this research project to my leadership. The purpose is to support a chaplain corps assistance dog program to the benefit of service member's resiliency, or the ability to bounce back from life's challenges. This is not limited to specific interventions yet a part of the everyday military working environment. As the chaplain, I progressed through this project. I applied and sought feedback on fine tuning research and exposure of Avalon, with military personnel and mentors.

To summarize, I used delivery means such as, one-on-one virtual platform and collaborative hybrid models were initiated in this research project. The goal was to gain additional perspective on the outcome results and optimal delivery means in a restricted environment. The hope was that this project would provide a new framework to meet the needs of SM's resiliency through Military Chaplain Corps services in an uncertain world. This project above progressed for four sessions, with and without the Assistance Dog, described in chapter two.

The basis of the research began with a quality of rapport-building that was present with Avalon in engagements with Airmen and families. Observation showed she also provided companionship and can lower stress level and increase resiliency. The question, being around Avalon increases my resiliency, had a mean of six or 70% agreeable response from participants. In addition, the Assistance Dog modality can help service members open up to their own emotions and thoughts as illustrated in the quantitative and

anecdotal references. A description of this chaplain Assistance Dog team and airman relationship is in the book, *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care*, as a “skilled intervention which can facilitate the individual in a process of transcending the social/cultural expectations of gender in general, to the discovery of the individual’s inner and outer emotional, physical and spiritual needs.”<sup>67</sup> One project objective was to enable the airman to loose expectations and discover wholeness in all aspects of one’s self, emotionally and physically through interaction with the presence of Avalon and myself, the chaplain.

My partnership with Avalon demonstrated the theological unfolding of the power of creation. The power of the soul-connection and God-breathed beings was addressed. This paper reflected on, as creatures of God possessing knowledge in right and wrong, there seems to be a connection between nature and a relationship with God to care and protect the world the best as possible. Presence on this earth is not possible without the essence of a person’s soul embodied in the physical body, at least as we can know and tangibly experience. Presence is a powerful aspect to the study of the soul. In Genesis God “breathed” life into mankind transforming physical essence into the image of himself, soul or spirit-like. This is the same location of moving power found in spiritual experiences. God uses various elements to stir people and guide them on life’s journey like big fish (Genesis 1-2) and talking donkeys (Numbers 22:28-30). Weather, others, and animals are all a part of God’s purpose.

When life is viewed as all living creatures that are God-breathed, then Jesus’ death not only sets human beings right with God, all creation and creatures are set in

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen Roberts, 221.

order through a relationship of loving care. Even if one believes that parts of creation are unredeemed, this idea does not negate the significance of the redemptive act of Christ on all creation. In the relationship between creation and humans, Stephen Roberts shares in his book, *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care*, that “having the Spirit does not isolate the believer from the unredeemed creation; rather, it reinforces the believer’s solidarity with the creation.”<sup>68</sup> This was shown in the quantitative data through the results of the question, I believe I will include animals more in my life with a mean of six or 80%.

Furthermore, the model St. Francis exhibited is evident in the deeper meaning of relationship God intended for humans to have with his creation. The root of this relationship is the ethical managing of creation. In life this power is in all creatures. In Mark Buchanan’s book on life, he notes the transformative life in all creation, “What emerges from this cocoon is true metamorphic change, new possibilities for every person and for all of creation.”<sup>69</sup> The effects of life interacting with one another brings about the hope of making all things new, of growth and the lasting effects of God’s redemptive love realized in all God’s creatures. This project tested whether or not Avalon’s presence was deemed to offer unconditional relationship. Her ministry was another layer to engagement with others. For instance, recognizing the impact of animals’ lives at death and honoring their lives and meaning opens doors to the significance their presence brings in our lives. Now more than ever the integration of assistance dogs in institutions, service dogs for disabilities, therapy pets and emotional support animals are thriving.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 80.

## QUALITATIVE ANECDOTAL CASE STUDY CONCLUSION

The following example is how Avalon affected the experiment outcomes in strategic ways. Confronting personal thoughts helps to identify feelings and emotions. Too many times military personnel shy away from showing weakness and being authentic due to judgment or fear of retribution. Humans are not perfect and can fall victim to self-preservation. Seeing the inner person can create wholeness and acknowledges reality of a situation. Grappling with his inner self, Jacob, son of Isaac, was stripped down to his bareness both physically and emotionally. After a long night of being worn down by God, he was purged of the entrapping of his heart and released it to God. In turn he was transformed so much that his name had to be changed to Israel and the injury to his hip made him walk with a limp.

In the story of Jacob in Genesis 32:22-32 he was left with nothing. He had no home and sent all his family and property to meet his brother Esau. Jacob stayed back and took time to “duke it out with God” or wrestle with his reality, before moving forward and meeting his fate with Esau. In the act of wrestling, Jacob struggled with God in an unveiling existence of non-judgmental presence. Just as an airman faced the grip of grief stroking the head of Avalon, she laid everything aside in that moment to realize her vulnerability and transform it into redemption of herself by God. She says, “If people can become willing to encounter and reencounter feelings of discomfort in the service of a higher goal, they can begin to break those problematic cycles that result in psychological and spiritual suffering.” Furthermore, as the biblical story of Jacob relates, Jacob put it all out on the table and was able to be in the present moment with God (Genesis 32:24-29). It took everything inside him to face God in his weakness to the

point that he was exhausted. Little did Jacob know that this working out of his life physically and emotionally made room for God to empower him to overcome the future unknown and receive a blessing.

Similarly, an airman sat before the chaplain and assistance dog, Avalon, in raw emotional moment of grief over her marriage separation and pending divorce. In the safe space of the counseling setting, she like Jacob, set all her inhibitions aside and unraveled emotionally and spiritually before the chaplain with Avalon resting on her feet. As she shared her inner conflict of broken dreams as a wife and relationship with her children as a mom, she struggled to find her self-identity and worth. Her strength was minimal under the burden of financial, legal, and loss of time with her children. She never dealt with bills and independence before. Somewhere in the space of Avalon and the chaplain's redemptive presence, she experienced her mental strongholds fall to the wayside and her authentic raw emotional feelings surface.<sup>70</sup>

The Airman wrestled with God, instead of her husband, in a relationship with the chaplain borne of trust and blessing of unconditional love from Avalon. Life needs more authenticity and grace. As Jacob did, this airman let it all go till it hurt and then received the blessing. The confrontation with feelings, questioned what should be or could be and enhanced through the redemptive presence of pastoral care with a chaplain and the incorporation of an Assistance Dog. These effects of hope created a bridge on which the SM could cross the gap between imperfect practice of faith and the perfect promises of faith, between weakness and the strength on which God has established the future.

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<sup>70</sup> December 6, 2020

Scripturally, God manifested his presence in others or creation to include animals. This presence is so empowering it is inescapable and redemptive in the SM's life.

The opportunity to bring the struggle of the emotional strain, to work through difficult transitions with SM and do the research, was a welcome setting in the presence of colleagues. Case studies and the ups and downs of conducting a project during a pandemic proved to be difficult. My peer group offered a safe place to reflect. I could share with confidentiality and without fear of disclosing possible identifiers of someone they knew. Having a peer group during a research project is optimal, especially during a pandemic.

#### STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The non-judgmental presence, as a point of reference to some of the above encounters, is evident in the example of theologically driven therapeutic technique of the chaplain assistance dog team. The interaction with Airmen, which informs this work of Avalon, offered huge dividends to the operational setting. Through day-to-day encounters, Avalon built relationships far reaching and specific to the SM she was with. This went as far as her anticipating seeing someone she knew that worked in a particular building as we pulled up to park. She could find her way to the offices of her certain favorite Airmen and Soldiers without being guided. People began storing treats in their offices to give Avalon when she came by to visit. The desire of the SMs to sustain a relationship with Avalon, and entice her to visit through providing treats, speaks to the enduring connection and resiliency Avalon provided in the work place. These relationships will endure long after this project concludes.

Overall, the strengths of the project outweighed the weaknesses of this research project. Some aspects used in assessing data, military ops tempo and pandemic affected the gathering of information. However, the basic presence and encounters Avalon had with SM took this project to new heights simply by applying it in the military setting. Even the constraints of social unrest, mission need and health issues did not negate the highly effective integration of Avalon. Without the pandemic, I imagine the research time can be condensed to four weeks and the ability to meet with each participant occur more regularly. Everyone she encountered had a positive response, even if it was to help desensitize a member from a traumatic encounter with a dog in her/ his childhood.

Unfortunately, there were circumstances outside of my control such as the COVID pandemic that affected some of the SM I used in the research and the project overall. There were times when SMs were called up to do COVID relief or serve with the civil unrest reinforcements. During these instances it was more difficult to get with SMs for a session. However, when participants had to isolate, a strength was some sessions were done on their own while another could take place over secure audio-visual means. Even seeing Avalon over the virtual platform brought satisfaction to the SM with a positive rating. This observation supports having animals or Avalon on screen during the session even if the viewer cannot pet the animal. In the post-session IV, the animal exposure questions three (I know Avalon helps me in the sessions where she is present.) and four (I wish Avalon could interact with me today.) had means of seven (60% question 3 and 4, 70% positive) five (I believe I will include animals more in my life.) had a mean of six or 80% and question seven (Being around Avalon increases my interest in the sessions.) had a mean of seven or 70%.



Another struggle was a delay in gathering the surveys. Some were returned electronically. These means posed issues with printing and evaluating. In addition, personally, I had to push a little more than I usually do with people in order to schedule some sessions or retrieve the surveys. This was a growing opportunity for me. When I checked my actions with the participants, I found them to be favorable to my reminding them and keeping them accountable to the process. There were no visible or remarkable obstacles to the chaplain as a deterrent in either session instructions or interactions. In the last session the question, Knowing I would see the chaplain made me happy, had an 80% positive agreed response. What did not happen was an inclusion of an online survey I believe could help the research gathering. I hope to use a more widespread survey in future research. Regardless, in my personal evaluation the survey results were encouraging even though my assertiveness to push through the scheduling issues took me out of my comfort zone.

#### FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Looking towards the future, I envision where the Assistance Dog program is wide spread throughout the military just as the military police working dogs are today. The morale increases as service members develop relationships with their unit Assistance Dog.<sup>71</sup> Work place stress decreases and suicide rates may lower in the military with the presence of Assistance Dogs. No longer are military members told they cannot pet a military dog. Dogs, like Avalon, in units are available to engage through petting, playing fetch or just hanging out with personnel on breaks. I envision my role as a military

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<sup>71</sup> In summary sessions I and II where Avalon was present showed a 10% shift in the pre and post-graphs. Sessions III and IV where Avalon was predominantly not present had less change of < 10% between the pre and post-surveys.

service dog trainer to help provide a standard and purposeful process of engaging and using Animal Assisted Therapy with service members.

As wars rage across the world and our service members and families are thrown into the fog and friction of conflict, this significant innovative work must continue. In two years of partnership the rewards greatly out-weigh the extra effort and care expense of a highly trained and certified service dog. I would not trade this experience for anything. The doors that were opened through Avalon's exposure. This is priceless to the gains in increased morale and impact in mental health integration for spiritual care. The participants generally started off fairly resilient with a pre session rating of 83% happy and 17% sad. This transpired into a post rating of 90% happy and 10% sad which resulted in a 7% shift toward a positive more resilient emotional state. Due to these quantitative results and first hand witness of the experiment, I intend to support this partnership as long as I am in the military. I have approximately ten of my twenty years left and hope to extend even further if able. I am passionate about this work as I am a frontline observer to the speechless non-judgmental presence this creature offers.

In closing, Avalon's effects on the resiliency of SMs, are not hard to measure. My research revealed compelling evidence for the benefits an Assistance Dog could provide in daily operations. The ground work was laid, added to this work is additional affirmation of Avalon's impact as an integrated team member. The longer Avalon is around in my military work the greater her exposure. I am optimistic this important work will catch on to the point where military provision will be streamlined to support Assistance Dogs in helping agencies across our military branches. The visible impact

truly testifies to the spiritual connection God's creation has and the instruments of love and healing animals bring to humankind.

APPENDIX A  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CHAPLAIN AND AVALON



Ch, Maj Christina Pryor Pittman and Avalon, Assistance Dog for Ministry



Avalon, NEADS Certified Assistance Dog International

## APPENDIX B CONSENTUAL COVENANT

### **Gardner-Webb University IRB Informed Consent Form**

The Benefit of Integration Assistance Dogs in Active Military Chaplain Corps Services  
Ch, Maj Christina Pryor Pittman (School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University)

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research study is to increase resiliency, the ability to rebound from life stressors or obstacles, and the study and practice of the interaction between the trained animal and service members (SM). The use of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) enhances coping through increasing the ability to apply positive exposure to SM's work place resiliency and morale. In this research study the Service Dog is, Avalon. The hope of this program is to implement handler trainings and duplicate at military installations worldwide. This includes a developing justification and implementation process to add to the provisions and support of Assistance Dogs in the Air Force Instruction (AFI) to ensure the programs official presence.

#### **Procedure**

As the participant, you are asked to schedule face-to-face engagement with the chaplain researcher and Avalon in the unit or remotely through a private phone call or DoD Microsoft Teams through the following sessions:

- 1) Through casual conversation with the chaplain and Avalon present, conduct an informal SM assessment using acronym FICA: F (Faith and meaning), I (Influence and importance), C (Community of faith), A (Address/Actions), and record on the researcher's data form. Service Member fills out a pre and post surveys.
- 2) Individual private setting with Avalon where the resiliency lesson, "Four Lenses," a personality evaluation tool to aid in building personal awareness in relationships, is presented through Steven Covey's *Speed of Trust* curriculum. Service member fills out a pre and post surveys.
- 3) A self-directed reading on resiliency and trust in relationships from Steven Covey's book, *Speed of Trust*, is assigned to the SM who studies the content and then a follow-up discussion (without Avalon) in various settings takes place. Service member fills out pre and post survey.
- 4) A resiliency video on extending trust in relationships is sent to the SM to view with the Chaplain (Avalon is not present) virtually. Dialogue on the topic of resiliency takes place between the SM and chaplain. Service member fills out pre and post survey.

*You may skip any question that causes discomfort and that they can stop the interview or survey at any time. If your study involves deception will not be used.*

#### **Time Required**

It is anticipated that the study will require about 30-45 minutes of your time at each of the four sessions.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

### **Confidentiality**

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data. *If it is possible for you (the researcher) to deduce the participant's identity, state the following:* Because of the nature of the data, it may be possible to deduce your identity; however, there will be no attempt to do so, and your data will be reported in a way that will not identify you.

### **Risks**

There are no anticipated risks in this study. If, as a result of the study, you experience discomfort and would like to discuss your thoughts or feelings the session research will pause and the chaplain can continue to provide real world support for you as the participant.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand the effects Assistance Dogs have in a military setting where Chaplain Corps services are provided. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

### **Payment**

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

### **Right to Withdraw From the Study**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

### **How to Withdraw From the Study**

*Please modify this section so it accurately describes how to withdraw from the study while it is being conducted and how to withdraw after it is completed, where appropriate (it may be impossible to withdraw if the data are anonymous).*

- If you want to withdraw from the study, *please tell the researcher and simply walk away or tell the researcher you wish to end the conversation.* There is no penalty for withdrawing.
- If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact the researcher at [christina.pittman@us.af.mil](mailto:christina.pittman@us.af.mil).

**If you have questions about the study, contact:**

Ch, Maj Christina Pryor Pittman  
 DMin Student  
 School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University  
 Researcher telephone number: 803-522-5091  
 Researcher email address: christina.pittman@us.af.mil

Dr. Robert Canoy  
 Faculty Research Advisor  
 School of Divinity, Gardner-Webb University  
 Faculty Advisor telephone number: (704) 406-4395  
 Faculty Advisor email address: rcanoy@gardner-webb.edu

**If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.**

Dr. Sydney K. Brown  
 IRB Institutional Administrator  
 Gardner-Webb University  
 Telephone: 704-406-3019  
 Email: [skbrown@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:skbrown@gardner-webb.edu)

**Voluntary Consent by Participant**

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me. I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant Signature

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

## APPENDIX C RESEARCH SESSION PLANS

### RESEARCH SESSION I

Plan: Face-to-face engagement with Avalon in the unit to casually collect informal spiritual assessment using acronym FICA: F (Faith and meaning), I (Influence and importance), C (Community of faith), A (Address/Actions), and record on the researcher's data form. Service member (SM) fills out a pre and post survey.

#### Action Steps:

- Present the pre-survey to the service member with Avalon in a working stance next to the chaplain. Once the survey is completed place in an envelope and proceed with the session.
  - Introduce service member to Avalon by giving the assistance dog the command, "say hello" or "visit." Use additional introduction commands like, "shake" or "my lap."
  - In the work center or office continue the engagement by informally conducting a spiritual assessment using the acronym, FICA. Through casual conversation gain information on the service member's spiritual assessment for the purpose of gaining an individual base line for spiritual resilience. Some commands to use with Avalon in the conversation are, "fetch" and "retrieve" a toy or items. Open the opportunity for the SM to engage with Avalon as much as she/he would like. This includes, "petting," "brushing," "roll-over" and "speak."
- F- What are the elements of the SM's faith or spiritual values? Do these values instill purpose or meaning in the SM's life?
- I- What are people, precepts or experiences which influence or inform her/his life? Are there key practices or beliefs which are important in the SM's life?
- C- Does the SM belong to a community of faith or associate with a particular faith background even if she/he no longer attends?
- A- Are there issues the SM needs addressed and what is an action plan to assist with concerns to include providing resources.
- Finally, present post-survey for the SM to fill out and place in an envelope.



## RESEARCH SESSION II

Plan: Individual private setting with Avalon where the resiliency lesson, “Four Lenses: Understanding Temperament” evaluation tool to aid in building personal awareness in relationships, is presented through Steven Covey’s *Speed of Trust* Strong Bonds curriculum. Service member fills out a pre and post.

## Action Steps:

- Present the pre-survey to the service member with Avalon in a working stance next to the chaplain. Once the survey is complete, place in an envelope and proceed with the session.
- Re-introduce service member to Avalon by giving the assistance dog the command, “say hello,” “visit,” “shake,” or “my lap.”
- Place Avalon in a “down stay” position next to or on the SM’s feet while the next sequence of events takes place. (Allow natural interaction between SM and Avalon and record observations on the Researcher Data Form.)
- Using the four cards provided in the curriculum book, walk through the following steps in a private one-on-one setting. Begin by reading the introductory statement on page 8 of the participant book.
  - 1) By examining the images side of the cards only, have the SM place the cards in order of most preferred to least preferred. Flip them over and record the color order.
  - 2) Next have the SM read the sentence side of the cards and have her/him place them in order of preference of most like her/him to least. Record the color order.
  - 3) Provide a preferences survey for the SM to read the 10 statements and record the rating for the remarks which follow each question.
  - 4) Record the results for each step in a score card grid and tally the numbers down to generate the color temperament order.
- Finally, present post-survey for the SM to fill out and place in an envelope.

## RESEARCH SESSION III

Plan: A self-directed reading on resiliency and trust in relationships from Steven Covey's book, *Speed of Trust*, is assigned to the service member (SM) who reads the content and then a follow-up discussion (without Avalon) in a variety of settings or through a modality the SM prefers.

Service Member fills out pre and post survey.

## Action Steps:

- Present the pre-survey to the SM. Once the survey is complete, place in an envelope and proceed with the session. If the meeting is virtual, arrange for the delivery of surveys and the book, *Speed of Trust*, prior to the meeting.
- Have the SM read the chapter, "You Can Do Something About This," pages 27-41, in the book provided, a head of time. Schedule a follow-up conversation with the SM.
- Encourage the SM to write or mark in the book as we discuss. This is a resource she/he can keep.
- Ask the SM if she/he had any initial reactions or thoughts to the reading material.
- Next ask if she/he had any stories about a time when someone trusted her/him?
- Then ask what trust means to him/her?
- Engage the SM in a dialogue about the trust in her/his relationships.
- Ask if there are any needs this reading brings to light when she/he considers their own spiritual resiliency in relationships.
- Ask if there are any additional thoughts, she/he would like to share. Does the SM have any questions?
- Finally, present post-survey for the SM to fill out and place in an envelope. Arrange to pick up the post survey envelope at another time.

## RESEARCH SESSION IV

Plan: A resiliency video on extending trust in relationships is sent to the SM to view with the Chaplain (Avalon is not present) by means of technology available at the time. Dialogue on the topic of resiliency takes place between the SM and chaplain. Service member fills out pre and post survey.

## Action Steps:

- Present the pre-survey to the SM. Once the survey is complete, place in an envelope and proceed with the session. If the meeting is virtual, arrange for the delivery of surveys prior to the meeting.
- Have the SM do a virtual meeting to view the trust video provided in the *Speed of Trust* curriculum and discuss with the chaplain.
- Encourage the SM to take notes.
- Ask the SM if she/he had any initial reactions or thoughts to the viewing material.
- Next ask what she/he observed on the extending trust to others.
- Then ask if there was a similar time when someone trusted her/him? How did it make her/him feel and what were the results?
- Engage the SM in a dialogue about how the video informs her/his trust in relationships.
- Ask if there are any needs this video brings to light when she/he considers their own spiritual resiliency in relationships.
- Ask if there are any additional thoughts, she/he would like to share. Does the SM have any questions?
- Finally, present post-survey for the SM to fill out and place in an envelope. Arrange to pick up the post survey envelope at another time.

APPENDIX D  
PARTICIPANT'S SURVEYS

**PARTICIPANT'S PRE SURVEY I**

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number 8 representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
2. I believe I can be in a better place than I am right now.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
3. I consider myself to be resilient.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
4. I have a hopeful outlook on life.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
5. I believe creation (nature and/or animals) helps me be spiritually resiliency.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
6. When I am around domestic animals, I feel relaxed.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
7. Being around animals increases my resiliency.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
8. I would like to have an Assistance Dog in my military work place.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
9. This setting helps me talk to a chaplain more easily.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
10. My openness to talk with the Chaplain increases when the Assistance Dog is present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
11. When I encounter a dog I tend to \_\_\_\_\_.
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad      Mad      Frustrated      Glad      Happy      Excited
13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PARTICIPANT'S POST SURVEY I

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number 8 representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
2. I believe I can be in a better place than I am right now.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
3. I consider myself to be more resilient than before this session.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
4. I was glad to see, or I missed seeing Avalon at my session with the Chaplain.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
5. I wish I had more time with Avalon.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
6. I wish I had less time about my time with Avalon.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
7. Being around Avalon increases my resiliency.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
8. I am unsure what role the Assistance Dog played in my time with the chaplain.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
9. This setting helps me talk to a chaplain more easily.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
10. Talking with the chaplain increases my resiliency.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
11. My openness to talk with the Chaplain increases when the Assistance Dog is present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad      Mad      Frustrated      Glad      Happy      Excited
13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PARTICIPANT'S PRE SURVEY II

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number 8 representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
2. I believe I can be in a better place than I am right now.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
3. I consider myself to be resilient in my relationships.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
4. I strive to seek a balance between work and relaxation in my life.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
5. I believe creation (nature and/or animals) helps calm my mood.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
6. When I care for domestic animals, I feel I have purpose.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
7. Being around animals improves my temperament.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
8. I would like to have my pet or another co-worker's pet in my military work place.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
9. This setting helps me talk to a chaplain more easily.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
10. My openness to talk with the Chaplain increases when the Assistance Dog is present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
11. The chaplain presents an approachable personality.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad      Mad      Frustrated      Glad      Happy      Excited
13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PARTICIPANT'S POST SURVEY II

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
2. I believe this experience offered me satisfaction today.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
3. I consider myself to be more aware about my resiliency in my relationships.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
4. Engaging with Avalon helps me feel relaxation in my work setting.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
5. Having Avalon lay at my feet helps me feel calm.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
6. I believe Avalon senses my mood.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
7. Being around animals improves my temperament.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
8. I would like to have a pet in my military work place occasionally.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
9. Avalon's presence helps me talk to the chaplain more easily.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
10. The chaplain's presentation is more engaging when the Assistance Dog is present.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
11. The chaplain presented the material in a manner I can understand.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad          Mad          Frustrated          Glad          Happy          Excited
13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### PARTICIPANT'S PRE SURVEY III

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
2. I believe I can trust myself to change my perspective.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
3. I consider myself to be trustworthy in my relationships.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
4. I strive to extend trust to others in my life.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
5. I have trust in God/ higher power.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
6. I feel purposeful when a domestic animal trusts me for her/his well-being.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
7. Being around animals helps me be resilient in my relationships.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
8. I trust my co-worker's in my military work place.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
9. I prefer to do a resiliency reading on trust without the chaplain present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
10. I wish I could do this reading with the Assistance Dog, Avalon, is present.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
11. The chaplain provided enough information to do this reading session.  
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad      Mad      Frustrated      Glad      Happy      Excited

13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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### PARTICIPANT'S POST SURVEY III

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

- |     |   |     |     |            |      |       |         |   |   |
|-----|---|-----|-----|------------|------|-------|---------|---|---|
| 1.  | I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.                       | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 2.  | I believe I can trust myself to change my perspective.                          | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 3.  | I know more about how to build trust in my relationships.                       | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 4.  | I strive to extend trust to others in my close relationships.                   | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 5.  | I believe trust in God/ higher power is important.                              | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 6.  | I miss not having Avalon present during my session.                             | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 7.  | I believe having Avalon next to me helps me feel more open to the lesson.       | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 8.  | I believe having an assistance dog in military work place can help build trust. | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 9.  | I trust the chaplain to helped me in other times of my life.                    | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 10. | Avalon enhances the chaplain's sessions.  | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 11. | I believe the chaplain and I are getting to know each other better.             | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 12. | I am presently feeling emotions closer to...                                    | Sad | Mad | Frustrated | Glad | Happy | Excited |   |   |

13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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### PARTICIPANT'S PRE SURVEY IV

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number 8 representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

1. I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
2. I believe I have more trust in others to help me be in a better place emotionally.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
3. I consider myself to be more resilient than when I first started these sessions.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
4. I have the awareness that animals affect my mood positively.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
5. I believe animals help me be in tune with the world around me.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
6. Knowing I will not see Avalon today makes me feel down.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
7. Being around Avalon increases my interest in the sessions.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
8. If I can see an animal and not touch it, helps me feel calm.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
9. This setting helps me talk to a chaplain more easily.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
10. Knowing I would see the chaplain made me happy.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
11. My sessions with the chaplain are helping me.  
1          2          3          4          5          6          7          8
12. I am presently feeling emotions closer to...  
Sad          Mad          Frustrated          Glad          Happy          Excited

13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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### PARTICIPANT'S POST SURVEY IV

Survey Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle a number on the scale from 1-8 with 1 representing strongly disagree to number 8 representing strongly agree. Feel free to use the backside of this form to expand on any questions.

- |     |  |     |     |            |      |       |         |   |   |
|-----|--|-----|-----|------------|------|-------|---------|---|---|
| 1.  | I am presently feeling high levels of stress and anxiety.          | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 2.  | I know more about trust now than I did before the video.           | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 3.  | I know Avalon helps me in the sessions where she is present.       | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 4.  | I wish Avalon could interact with me today.                        | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 5.  | I believe I will include animals more in my life.                  | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 6.  | Discussing the trust video is/would be better with Avalon present. | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 7.  | Being around Avalon increases my interest in the sessions.         | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 8.  | If I can see an animal and not touch it, helps me feel calm.       | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 9.  | I prefer the virtual setting to talk to the chaplain.              | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 10. | When the chaplain talks with me, I feel calmer.                    | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 11. | Seeing the chaplain without Avalon seems out of place.             | 1   | 2   | 3          | 4    | 5     | 6       | 7 | 8 |
| 12. | I am presently feeling emotions closer to...                       | Sad | Mad | Frustrated | Glad | Happy | Excited |   |   |

13. I offer these additional thoughts/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX E  
RESEARCH VERBATIM FORM

**RESEARCH VERBATIM**

Research Group/Individual: Pseudonyms: (for each person in visit)  
Date of Engagement: Setting of Engagement:  
Time of Visit: Length of Visit:  
Service Member Demographics:  
Applicable Observation Goal(s):  
Presenting Issues:  
Background:

**DIALOGUE**

**MINISTRY ANALYSIS**

1. Service Member's presenting/implied issue.
2. Social/Cultural Observations.
3. Interpersonal process analysis.
4. Service Member's spiritual assessment and pastoral receptivity.
5. Reflection on Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) engagement observation.
6. Theological implications of AAT if present or absent.
7. Personal learning and application to the research.
8. Goals for future engagement and care plan.



APPENDIX G  
RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION JOURNAL FORM

**RESEARCHER'S REFLECTION JOURNAL**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Group/SM: \_\_\_\_\_

Session: \_\_\_\_\_

Reflection on service member's presenting issues, mood, engagement with AAT:

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Interpersonal dynamics: \_\_\_\_\_

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Operational tempo: \_\_\_\_\_

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Unit/Personal Morale: \_\_\_\_\_

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General: \_\_\_\_\_

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