SACRED CIRCLE OF LEARNING:

A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATIVE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

This project examines the nature of transformative learning in theological education. By following a seventeen day intensive module on ministry leadership, offered by the Centre for Christian Studies, the study articulates the factors and best practices of transformative theological education. Current literature concerning desire for change in theological education is reviewed. A four-part definition of transformative learning based on identity development, critical reflection, subsequent action, and integration, tests the growth of participants. This definition follows on the work of transformational learning theorists. As well, the program is discussed in relation to education theories of self-directed, organizational, strength-based and experiential learning.

This study is offered for the consideration of theological educators; they are asked to consider their pedagogical methods in light of the insights of learning theory and practice. Methodological investigation included reflective questionnaires, in-depth interviews and artifact examination. Elements of best practices in transformative theological education revealed in the study involve: emphasis on relational community building, invitational and encouraging regard toward learners, creative and experiential educational design, intentional commitment to evaluation and feedback, enhanced opportunity for reflectivity, critical analysis of individual and societal assumptions, and integrative approach to theory, practice, and spirituality.

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CHAPTER ONE

ARTICULATING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CIRCLE:

A STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIVE THEOLOGICAL EDCUATION

This project focuses on the aspects of transformative theological education

evident in the 2007 Leadership Development Module (LDM) of the Centre for

Christian Studies (CCS). This three week course makes a significant impact on

participants' spirits and lives. The LDM engenders a sacred and meaningful

experience of learning community and authentic faith sharing. One former student,

deeply appreciated the experience:

> Where community is safe and structured, the impossible becomes possible. The LDM works as an orchestrated whole, moving participants from being co-learners to co-leaders and round again. ... The LDM may be finished but it hasn't finished with me. It lives on within me as I incorporate its learnings, reflect on the processes, am challenged by the content and remember with warmth those who traveled the journey.

In 2006, two Australians, from the Uniting Church of Australia, came almost

15,000 kilometres to take the LDM. In email correspondence, one of them

commented:

> I was trying to put my finger on what you do so well, and believe it is the constant integration of faith/personal growth/Christian identity with whatever else you are doing. So you always give the best secular insights in the context of our faith.

Mostly, the curriculum and design of the LDM has evolved with reflective

hunches of seasoned educators and the practitioners' intuitive sensibilities. This

project affords the opportunity for the CCS approach to education to be

documented, studied and assessed. This work gives articulation to what it is about the program that moves people so deeply, and identifies the dynamics that make this educational experience so relevant and significant. The research tools of this study, evaluation forms and personal testimony indicate that this experience transforms participants. The project identifies the pedagogical factors of this integrated, holistic course that contribute to this transformation in the learners. This project intends to reach an audience of theological educators, and to name best pedagogical practices of theological education, and thereby, influence preparation for ministry and impact the future leadership of the church.

Setting the Context of CCS and the LDM

Every June, the LDM is offered by CCS, and cross-listed by the University of Winnipeg, Faculty of Theology. As a theological school associated with the Anglican and United Churches of Canada, and rooted in a history dating back to deaconess training schools of the late 1800's, CCS provides preparation for ministries of education, social justice and pastoral care. CCS's motto dauntingly asserts: "Living a Theology of Justice"; the school openly espouses a pro-feminist stance, affirms gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons (GLBT) and carries a commitment to liberative perspectives. The geographically-dispersed, distance-based program provides accessible theological education for those preparing for diaconal ministry and those in other streams of ministry.

Since 1998, the LDM has been held annually in June and has introduced over one hundred and fifty participants to the CCS approach. Historically, a

majority of the participants have been heterosexual women, middle-aged, middle-class, United Church Caucasians. Certainly there have been exceptions: a smattering of men and transgendered individuals, a diversity of sexual orientations, youth and elderly, the wealthy and those with limited financial resources, Mennonites, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and those from the Uniting Church of Australia, as well as some folks with Asian, South Pacific and Aboriginal backgrounds.

In 2007, all were United Church; all were Caucasian Canadians. Ten of the participants were women; three were men. Ages range: the youngest participant was in her twenties; two women were in their early sixties. These persons were all literate, healthy adults admitted to the CCS program based on references and interviews.

CCS's LDM is intended for people who want to develop their skills in ministry. Some in professional ministry take the course for continuing education; others are lay persons who take the course to enhance their lay ministries, and for others the course acts as an introduction to CCS's four year diaconal ministry diploma program.

Of the thirteen 2007 participants, five came to the LDM committed to going on in the four year diploma program for diaconal ministry; four were uncertain of their vocational path and yet, after the LDM experience signed up for further studies with CCS; one ordained minister took the LDM and signed up for CCS's one year certificate in Educational Ministry; one minister transferring from another denomination took the LDM to meet his education requirement in the

United Church; and two took the module as a "stand alone" personal development opportunity.

The LDM pedagogy strongly emphasizes co-learning and co-leadership, experiential and participatory learning, diversity of learning styles, self-direction and goal setting, peer review and competency outcomes, integration of spirituality, experience and scholarship. The course is challenging and demanding, however the attention to community building and development of trust goes a long way to empower reluctant or nervous learners.

Setting the Context within Theological Education

In an era where many voices are being raised asking for reformation and change in theological education, it is safe to say that the LDM differs from the typical lecture-based style and academic setting of much seminary theological education. CCS offers an uncommon approach to theological education, and much in the literature (which will be reviewed in the next chapter) affirms the integrative CCS approach as exemplified in the LDM. Alternatives to seminary theological education, where learning is segregated by department and primarily uses pedagogical models based on conveying prescribed knowledge to groups of learners, are being sought by church leaders and critics of traditional theological education.

Ministry demands a complex set of knowledge and skills and an integrated personality of wholeness and maturity is expected. The church and world need people who understand and can critique the faith tradition, who are deeply

spirited and wise, who are analytical and justice-oriented, who are competent and compassionate. Theological educators have the heavy, and blessed, responsibility of developing ministry leaders with these qualities and abilities. This responsibility calls for thoughtful reflection on pedagogical practices; this study provides a venue for this consideration. If theological education is deepened and energized, the church and world will benefit from leadership that is integrated, committed, competent and wise.

The Project

In order to examine the impact of the LDM upon participants a clear and testable definition of transformative learning was employed:

> the development of revised or new understanding and critical reflection leading to a revitalized and integrated identity.

The working definition follows four elements: identity development, reflective critical analysis, subsequent action, and integration. Transformational learning was demonstrated as students identified changes in the way they understood their vocations, in their ability to engage in reflective critical analysis, in their initiative in taking appropriate subsequent action, and in a holistic integration of their learning.

Three forms of data collection were used in this project.[1] The first form involved a survey/questionnaire, a written reflection worksheet that was administered three times. Before the LDM, all participants were invited to reflect upon their understandings and images in each of the four areas identified for

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[1] See Appendix A, B, C, D and E.

transformational learning. This step provided base line data about participants'

ideas and background. Subsequently, at the end of the LDM, they were invited

to identify changes in their thinking and attitudes. As well, a three month follow-

up with the same instrument tested the longer lasting impact of the experience.

Every attempt was made to maintain the confidentiality of comments and

reflections.[2] Not unexpectedly the return rate for the forms dropped off during

the course of the study. Although the number of returned forms were relatively

small, a healthy and significant percentage of the students of the LDM submitted

all three forms.[3] Certainly the level of engagement, thoughtfulness, and

deliberation given by the respondents to the questionnaires justifies and

authenticates the conclusions drawn from the survey.

The second form of data collection involved intensive interviewing of four

participants of the LDM. These four interviews were conducted in a structured

format following the LDM.[4] For the in-depth interviews, four interviewees were

selected to represent four categories of participants: one person taking the

course for continuing education, another to discern her call to ministry, one who

needed the course as a credit for his switch into ministry with the United Church,

and one taking the LDM as an introduction to CCS's four year diaconal ministry

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[2] Participants were asked not to indicate their names on the forms; the forms were numerically coded to identify the responder across the three periods. A third party received the reflection sheets, and contacted those who have not returned the sheets, thus keeping the participants identity confidential from the researcher. The LDM is a pass/fail course and no letter grades or percentage marks are assigned. Nevertheless, research responses were not read until after all participants were finished the course.

[3] Of the thirteen participants at the 2007 LDM, ten (seventy-six percent) returned the initial form and agreed to be part of the study. Of the ten, seven (seventy percent) returned the second form. Of the seven remaining, six (eighty-six percent) returned the final form.
Also, although the forms were completed anonymously, my intuition is that all, but one, of the survey respondents were different from those involved in the in-depth interviews. Thus the survey form adds depth and breadth to the population of those tested. Ten of thirteen participants engaged in offering reflective analysis of their experience.

[4] Questions similar to those on the reflection worksheets were employed yet more time allowed for more direct questioning and exploration of answers. See Appendix F and G.

diploma program. Having those enrolled in the LDM for a variety of reasons represented in the interviews added breadth to the study. Due to time and expense, interviews took place immediately after the completion of the module. The interview questions were field tested with former participants of the LDM. A summary report of the data and interpretation was circulated to participants for comment, and thus enabled additional input from study members.

The third form of data collection involved the assembling of artifacts and materials. Large amounts of resources and paper were generated in the course of the LDM: schedules, orientation materials, lesson plans, content handouts, flip-chart group reports. CCS curricula statements, outcome documents, theological and educational stances helped to establish and describe the culture and pedagogy of the LDM. The researcher also kept participant observer field notes and took extensive photographs, as ways to remember details and themes as they emerged in the project.

As a member of the program staff at CCS, I have been involved as co-facilitator of the LDM since 1999. I have led the course seven times with five different colleagues. Over the years, it has been a deep honour to witness the positive way that the program has touched people's faith lives and ministries. As someone with a thirty year history in ministry, and as a member of the diaconal stream of the order of ministry of The United Church of Canada, I try to live out my commitments to the justice imperative of the gospel with integrity. As a white, able-bodied, educated, employed, upper middle class male in a heterosexual relationship, I am aware of my privileged position. As someone with a long

history of educational ministry I try to approach my work as a co-learner. Clearly, my dual role as researcher and teacher warrants constant monitoring. I willingly admit that I am not an unbiased, distant observer; I passionately enjoy co-facilitating this event. This study affords me the chance to express this enthusiasm. It is, of course, easy to deceive oneself about the worth and importance of something in which one is so enmeshed. Throughout the project I have, nevertheless, attempted to maintain a critical perspective and analytical reflectivity by disciplined reflection and collegial consultations. Through cover letters and consent forms I have openly declared my position. In the end, this study, unapologetically, represents my conviction that the invitational and communal atmosphere, and the experiential, reflective, holistic pedagogical practices of the LDM, creates deep, rich and meaningful learning.

I contend that minimal risk to personal safety, emotionally or physically, for participants was involved in this study. Instead, I think participants benefited from further reflection and deepened understanding. No academic credit or remuneration was offered. No one was coerced into involvement. Withdrawal from the study was without penalty. No one was deceived or misled about the purpose of the study. All participants were able to give legal consent.

After the completion of the course, the data was analysed using a variety of strategies. The reflection worksheets, transcripts and materials were organized into files and units. A secondary stage of reflective reading and reviewing of the data involved making notes and posing questions. In a third step, the data was

classified and coded, as categories and themes, interpretations and meanings were established.

This project did not attempt to cover the whole four-year program but to test and share CCS's non-traditional pedagogical approaches as evident in one introductory module. Studying the LDM provided a manageable venue for articulating and evaluating the elements of transformative theological education.

The project did not test participants in the LDM over the last nine or ten years; this study focuses on the 2007 cohort. The possibility exists that the class of 2007 was an anomaly. There was little ethnic diversity, no ecumenical variety and some regional concentration.[5] Anecdotal evidence from the past, however, would indicate that the positive effects of the LDM are not limited to 2007. Evaluation forms have rated the LDM highly; former students have enthusiastically recommended the course. A study of larger scale might review the historical impact of the LDM by inviting all former students to be surveyed and interviewed.

The number of the interviewees and those who responded to surveys was low, but the percentages of those who contributed were high. The results may be skewed; those who had a positive experience may be more prone to submit to surveys and interviews. However, the researcher is convinced that the depth of the 2007 responses offers satisfying data and represents a fair picture of the experience.

The study was not comparative; other programs of theological education were not examined. Further research comparing and contrasting the pedagogy

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[5] Regionally, the concentration was from western Canada and no one came from farther east than Ontario.

of traditional seminary and alternative approaches would provide important depth and breadth to the findings of this study.

Alternative delivery systems for theological education receive attention in the literature. The use of digital technology is discussed extensively.[6] Education by extension and distance learning are espoused.[7] Dispersed models are championed for their ability to encourage the incarnational mission of the "church scattered."[8] Immersion experiences are highlighted.[9] Theological education programs that have dared to think "outside the box" are celebrated.[10] Mission oriented agendas that bridge the traditional knowledge acquisition approach and the practice of ministry emphasis are also advanced.[11] Many of these creative and engaging ideas are incorporated in the CCS program. I feel affirmed that what we are doing – some digital technology, distance learning, dispersed models, immersion experiences, mission orientation – is reflected by a variety of authors. All of these elements deserve concentrated attention, but this study does not focus on these aspects of the school *per se.* Rather, I will concentrate on the transformational pedagogical activities of the 2007 LDM.

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[6] See theme issues of *Theological Education*, 42, no. 2 (2007), and 41, no. 1 (2005), also Mary Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All That We Can't Leave Behind* (Lanham, Md : Rowan & Littlefield, 2005).

[7] F. Ross Kinsler, ed., *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983); Richard Sales, "Theology among the People: Theological Education by Extension and the TAP Program" in Lance R. Barker and B. Edmon Martin, eds., *Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004).

[8] Jane Shaw, "The Seminary Dispersed: Theological Teaching in a Changing World" in Malcolm L. Warford, ed. *Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004) 89-102.

[9] George F. Cairns, "The Theory and Practice of Transformative Education", and Yoshiro Ishida, "Theological Reflection in the Community Based Model" in Susan Thistlewaite and George F. Cairns, eds., *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994) 60-71, 123-135.

[10] Barker and Martin.

[11] Virginia A. Peacock, "Theological Education and the Mission of the Church," in Terry Brown and Christopher Lind, eds., *Justice as Mission, an Agenda for the Church : Essays in Appreciation of Marjorie and Cyril Powles* (Burlington, ON: Trinity Press, 1985) 78-84.

The study only tested the participants immediately and three months following the event. Research would be intensified if longer term effects of the experience could be examined. Nevertheless the project also benefited from the clarity of its parameters and boundaries by enabling a focussed and in-depth look at one experience with one group of persons.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter of this study considers the current condition of theological education. The voices of those who desire to re-shape and change the present state of theological education are heard. The narrative continues in the third chapter by outlining the schedule of the LDM. This chronology of the actual days of the LDM provides the reader with a clear sense of the event's operation and atmosphere. In a fourth chapter, a few sample sessions of the LDM are described in detail in order to provide illustration of the creative and experiential educational methodologies. In the fifth chapter, the literature of educational theory is introduced. Self-directed, organizational, strength-based, experiential and transformative learning theories are articulated and assessed in relation to the LDM. A sixth chapter describes the four persons involved in intensive interviews; these profiles are examined in light of the four elements of the definition of transformative learning. The seventh chapter reviews the research obtained from the participants' reflection worksheets. In the eighth chapter I identify personal, pedagogical and theological insights discerned in the

process of the project. A final chapter reviews the project noting findings and

suggestions from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

DESIRE FOR CHANGE:

VOICES OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATORS

From a variety of vantage points, across an ecumenical spectrum, a desire is being expressed for approaching theological education in a different way. Many in the churches and many theological educators, because of the demands of the times, the decline of the church, and the dissatisfaction with present modes and foci of ministry preparation, are seeking alternatives. The CCS's LDM offers one such alternative.

Over the centuries, preparation for ministry has been approached in a myriad of ways. Yet, in the recent past the academic model has prevailed as the preferred methodology reaching a level of assumed dominance and normativity, especially within mainline Protestant Churches. CCS, as a theological school, has not stood within the mainstream of the academy. Historically, CCS is connected with the birth of the deaconess movement in Canada in the late 1800's. The CCS curriculum has been reformed and evolved numerous times but it has always forthrightly promoted an epistemology and pedagogy that honours both theoretical and practical learning. This holistic integration is what many are envisioning for the future of theological education.

Theological education needs to prepare ministers who are, indeed, intellectually proficient, but, also, spiritually wise, contextually grounded, and

professionally competent. At the LDM, students work on all these areas – deepening background, forming vocational identity, sharpening critical thinking, developing skills – and evaluating progress repeatedly.

Transmission models of education, as traditionally used in the university-based seminary, assume that teachers impart information and students retain knowledge. Theories of adult education, which will be discussed in chapter five, question the narrowness of this epistemological assumption and call for more engaging pedagogical approaches. As demonstrated in the responses of participants from 2007 (outlined in chapters six and seven), the LDM provides a creative and "hands on" program design and is facilitated by CCS staff who are experienced and grounded in adult education practice.

Desire for Re-Mapping: Canadian Conference on Theological Education

In November, 2007, I attended a one-day, national, ecumenical consultation on the future of theological education in Canada sponsored by the Churches' Council on Theological Education in Canada (CCTE). CCTE was formed four decades ago to foster ecumenical cooperation in theological education. Dramatic changes in the context of church, academy and the culture have emerged since those beginnings. It was time to invite dialogue and embark on a renewed vision.

Several speakers offered their perspectives. Wendy Fletcher, principal and dean of the Vancouver School of Theology, contributed a view from an ecumenical, mainline seminary. Poignantly and passionately, she outlined the

pervasiveness of secularism and the decline of the church. Fletcher recognized

the fear and fragility involved in letting go of beloved elements of the status quo,

and called theological educators to move toward the possibilities in re-imagining.

As faithful parallel paths for facing the future of theological education, she

suggested the concurrent images of *holding* and *scattering*. In her remarks,

holding represented remembering the story and maintaining faithfulness;

scattering depicted detachment from security and diaconal engagement with the

world. As CCS staff and as a diaconal minister, I greeted Fletcher's use of

diaconal imagery with resonance and excitement.

Jean-Guy Nadeau, Université de Montréal, reflected on his context as a

Roman Catholic lay theologian in Québec. He spelled out the need for

theological educators to address the culture's deep estrangement from, and

suspicion of, organized religion. Using a safety slogan from VIA rail – "Look,

Listen, and Live!" – he enjoined the audience to engage the pastoral

responsibilities of theological education by humbly observing and encountering

the realities of the present. He encouraged theologians to move their discourse

beyond the academy and church and include the public arena. As someone

coming from an institution that espoused "living a theology of justice", I was again

enthused by the encouragement to embrace the broader domain.

As secretary of Christian Higher Education in Canada (CHEC), Stanley

Porter bluntly named that Canadian theological education was in a state of crisis.

From an evangelical viewpoint, he identified three issues for consideration. With

extensive use of statistics, he, firstly, indicated critical financial and enrolment

numbers that highlighted the need for radical re-visioning. Secondly, he believed

curriculum required more flexibility and accessibility. He labelled the focus on

MDiv preparation as hegemonic and charged the audience to respond to a

greater variety of forms of ministry. Thirdly, Porter encouraged the conference to

strategize about the culture's lack of knowledge and interest in theological

education.

I came away from the event more convinced than ever that traditional ways

of offering theological education must change. Unfortunately, resistance to such

change remains strong; those who voiced commitment to the status quo were

very much in evidence. It would be unrealistic, and unfair, on my part, to expect

clear visions to emerge or next directions to become evident within the limits of a

one-day conference. The gathering did provide an opportunity for stimulating

presentations and for meaningful networking. Yet, in my mind, the re-mapping

objectives of the conference were only but begun. Important areas of

consideration were not addressed. For one, the competing purposes of

theological education – pastoral preparation, spiritual formation, intellectual

scholarship, leadership training – were not overtly considered. The overlapping

arenas of accountability – church, academy, world – were not carefully

examined. Alternative delivery models – distance education, congregationally

based examples, schools connected to specific ethnic populations – were largely

invisible. Most importantly for me, pedagogical understandings and

epistemological suppositions went undiscussed. In this project, I will highlight

educational practices that provide proven alternatives. The educational

approach of CCS and the LDM makes a difference; healthy communities of learning are created and individual lives are transformed.

Desire for Change: Denominational Voices

Theological education needs to examine its assumptions and envision a new way of facing the future. Significant voices within the two founding denominations of CCS are looking for something to change.

Denominational documents in The United Church of Canada paint a grim picture of the state of theological education. Financial costs for students lead to debt loads that have reached overwhelming proportions.[1] Schools are competing over ever-shrinking financial resources.[2] Student enrolments are declining. Too many seminaries serve too few students and the dollars have to stretch too far. Full time ministry positions are becoming less available.[3]

Anglican authors support the notion that theological education needs re-thinking and re-shaping. A.J. van den Blink describes the present state of affairs as a crisis, asserting that spirituality is treated as an add-on to intellectual formation, practical theology is treated with disdain, the gap between parish and seminary is widening and psychological theory has increased individualism in the preparation for ministry.[4] John White contends that past training models have not

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[1] Faith Formation and Education - ECL-CC, *Report and Recommendation for Implementation of Resolution 43 of the 38th General Council – "Establishing Ministry-based Ordination Program,"* (Etobicoke: Permanent Committee on Programs for Mission and Ministry, 2004); Stephen Chambers, *Student Debt: A Whole Church Challenge,* (Etobicoke: Faith Formation and Education, United Church of Canada, 2002).

[2] Education for Church Leadership – Co-Ordinating Committee, *Strengthening and Consolidation Task Group Report,* (Etobicoke: United Church of Canada, 2004); Greg Young, *Strengthening and Consolidating Theological Education: Scenarios for Discussion: Consultation Paper,* (Toronto: TCI Management Consultants, 2004).

[3] Ted Reeve, *The United Church of Canada Ministry Needs in the New Millennium,* (Toronto: The Centre for Research in Religion, 1997).

served the church well, resulting in a high frequency of clergy burn-out and a lack

of mission energy evident in an era of institutional maintenance.[5] In a 2000 issue

of *Ministry Matters* focussed on theological education, a wide range of

contributors offer diverse opinions and perspectives – more attention to lay

ministries,[6] more consideration of the changes in pedagogical context,[7] more

development of communal connection,[8] less regard for working in the church and

more for being the church in the world,[9] less focus on professional training for

parish ministry and more on critical thinking and conceptual preparation,[10] less

abstract speculation and more grounding in a passionate faith that "confesses

that at the heart of the universe is a mystery of infinite love"[11] – all of which

highlight a fairly critical attitude toward the present state of affairs in theological

education and a desire to change direction.

Careful thought needs to go into the concerns related to finances, delivery

and recruitment, so that how we market and manage our theological schools is

consistent with our faith stances. Yet, in this study, I do not address the breadth

of these "nuts and bolts" issues. Rather, in this project, my focus rests on the

engaging, communal, holistic pedagogy offered at the LDM. I believe that

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[4] A.J. van den Blink, "Reflections on Spirituality in Anglican Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review*, 81, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 429-449.

[5] John A. White, "A Theology of Anglican Ministerial Education: Some Personal Reflections," *Anglican Theological Review*, 79, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 394-412.

[6] Patricia Bays, "Who Do We Prepare for a Variety of Ministries?" *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 10.

[7] Barbara Liotscos, "Educating for Ministry: Why and How," *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 8.

[8] Ronald Ferris, "Seminaries Without Walls: A Bishop Reflects on the Future," *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 11.

[9] Donald Phillips, "Trends in Theological Education," *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 17-18.

[10] Robert Course, "The Value and Completion of Theology," *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 9.

[11] William Crockett, "Articulating a Vision of Faith," *Ministry Matters* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 14.

leadership shaped in the justice and spirituality of these kinds of circles will make a difference in the church and the world. I commend these educational approaches to my colleagues in other theological schools as one concrete, yet fundamental, way of addressing the crisis in our schools.

<div align="center">Desire for Historical Perspective: Diverse Paradigms from the Past</div>

In a biblical reflection, Cheryl Bridges-John compares these times in theological education with the fall of Babel, suggesting that this is a disoriented time of liminal chaos when the old paradigms are being questioned.[12] Those who offer historical perspectives remind their readers that, over the centuries, preparation for ministry has been tackled in a variety of ways. Thomas Groome laments the legacy of Enlightenment theological education, which separated knowledge and context, perceived rationality as objective and value-free, disparaged experience, and professionalized theology; he proposes an alternative approach based on a pedagogy which cultivates wisdom.[13] With historical background, Glen Miller questions the present pre-dominance of the academic model for preparation of ministry reminding the reader of the great diversity of approaches – such as student presentation seminar systems, lecture-based research programs, mentored parish training – taken in theological education throughout the ages.[14]

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[12] Cheryl Bridges-Jones, "From Babel to Pentecost: The Renewal of Theological Education," in John Pobee, ed., *Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical, Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal,* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997) 132-146.

[13] Thomas Groome, "Wisdom for Life: The Horizon of Theological Literacy," in Rodney L. Peterson with Nancy M. Rourke, eds., *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 352-370. By "wisdom for life", Groome means people are capable of thinking for themselves, they correlate faith and life, and they aim to humanize and transform others and the world.

Reviewing Canadian Anglican history of theological education, Frank A. Peake, also highlights a variety of models employed even in the recent national past: apprenticeships, university training, and denominational seminaries.[15] Don Thompson acknowledges the present focus on abstract academic approaches in theological education, but reminds the reader of other twentieth century factors and movements (e.g. Canadian Urban Training, Clinical Pastoral Education) that have emphasized experiential (and experimental) approaches.[16] Histories of theological education in The United Church of Canada also underscore the reality that theological education has never been under-criticized, internally or externally.[17]

I find it liberating to be reminded that theological education has not remained static. The present hegemony of academy-based training does not have to be a given. Over the years, responsiveness to the needs and visions of the times has resulted in changes in approach and emphasis within and beyond the university setting. The LDM is but one example of the creative and alternative ways that theological education has been offered outside of the box. Persons with a responsibility for shaping and preparing the future leaders of the church can imagine and vision new ways; the past demonstrates that there is not one right way.

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[14] Glen Miller, "Historical Influences on Seminary Culture," in Warford, 103-126; and Glen Miller, "Why the Seminary?: A Historical Inquiry," in Lance R. Barker and B. Edmon Martin, eds., *Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education,* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004) 117-137.

[15] Frank A. Peake, "Reflection on Anglican Theological Education," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society,* 41 (Fall 1999), 99-114.

[16] Don Thompson, "Experiential Theology: Fad or Foundation?" in Brown and Lind, 71-77.

[17] Nathan H. Mair, *Education for Ministry in The United Church of Canada: As Reflected in the Manual Regulations Re: Course of Study, 1928-1981* (Toronto: Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, 1983), and Nathan H. Mair, *Education for Ministry in The United Church of Canada: An Historical Probe* (Toronto: Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, 1983).

Desire for Integration: Holistic Approaches

The 2005 version of the Association of Theological Schools' *General Institutional Standards* prescribe that the goals of theological schools are to develop spiritual formation, ethical character, intellectual understanding, and pastoral skills in an integrated fashion. The document vehemently states that: "These goals, and the processes and practices leading to their attainment, are normally intimately interwoven and should not be separated from one another."[18] In many ways, this integrated approach is mirrored in denominational outcome documents. The United Church of Canada's document, "The Framework for Outcomes for Church Leadership"[19] pointedly aims toward the direction where theological schools will unite practical preparation for ministry and theoretical scholarship, stresses the need for balance in work and relationships, highlights intellectual articulation alongside spiritual health, and emphasizes personal authenticity and moral integrity. Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC) has produced a series of grids which outline outcomes or competencies that are expected for people engaged in various forms of ministry.[20] Evidenced in each of the grids is a holistic framework and a desire for cohesion of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual spheres in the person, and in her practice of ministry.

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[18] Association of Theological Schools. *General Institutional Standards 2005* 4.1.1 http://www.ats.edu/accrediting/standards/overview.asp Used February 8, 2008.

[19] Education for Church Leadership Co-ordinating Committee. "The Framework for Outcomes for Church Leadership" (Etobicoke: United Church of Canada, 2007).

[20] Theological Education for the Anglican Communion. "Ministry Grids," http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/teac/index.cfm Used February 8, 2008.

Many voices call for an integrated approach to theological education. Rodney Peterson points to a number of dialectics in theological literacy: preserving tradition and prompting progress, prayerful spirituality and academic rigour, scholarship and pastoral concerns; he asserts the need for dynamic creativity in the discerning consolidation of these theological tasks.[21] David Tracy names distinctions that have become "fatal separations"[22] in Western thought: feeling and thought, form and content, theory and practice; he makes the case for a unified approach with theology as a "genuine conversation"[23] between reflection and action. Discussing the importance of engaging the multifaith reality of the world, Kathleen T. Talvacchia declares integration of personal experience, faith tradition, cultural setting and practice of ministry, to be fundamental and foundational in ministry formation.[24] Outlining a program designed for the aboriginal context, Janet Silman describes an action-reflection model that integrates competencies in skills, knowledge, personal growth and spiritual formation.[25] A survey of participants and instructors in practical field sites indicates the value placed on, and the yearning for, theological education which interfaces relevant experience, critical reflection, integrative theology, maturing self-awareness and a commitment to on-going learning.[26] Mark D.

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[21] Rodney L. Peterson, "Theology: What is the Real Thing?" in Peterson with Rourke, 1-12,

[22] David Tracy, "On Theological Education: A Reflection," in Peterson with Rourke, 15.

[23] Ibid, 13.

[24] Kathleen T. Talvacchia, "An Integrative Educational Strategy for Christian Leaders in a Multifaith World," *Teaching Theology and Religion,* 9, no. 2 (April 2006): 135-145.

[25] Janet Silman, "Keepers of the Vision: Aboriginal Community-Based Learning for Ministry," in Barker and Martin, eds., 15-34.

[26] Gordon Lynch and Stephen Pattison, "Exploring Positive Learning Experiences in the Context of Practical Theological Education," *Teaching Theology and Religion,* 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 144-154.

Chapman espouses a wisdom model for theological education that integrates intellectual pursuits and prayer life, head and heart, character formation and knowledge development, liturgical practices and ethical concerns.[27]

I join with these writers; I long for approaches that incorporate context and content, skill and spirit, church and academy, practice and theory. I believe that the CCS model of education and the LDM represent a noble experiment in a holistic and integrative approach to theological education.

Much in the literature rues the separation of theory and practice in theological education. Described in a variety of ways and terms, this dualistic tension pits "knowing about" against "knowing how",[28] scholarly against pastoral,[29] generic truths against contextual relativity,[30] abstract knowledge against passionate faith/love[31], knowledge acquisition against ministry enhancement,[32] and theoretical content against experiential context.[33] Many note that there is a hierarchy in this polarity where theory is advantaged over practice.[34] The LDM attempts to engage participants in a way that does not set the cognitive and the practical against each other, but balances them. The CCS

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[27] Mark D. Chapman, "Scripture, Tradition and Criticism: A Brief Proposal for Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review,* 78, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 258-274.

[28] Mark S. Heim, "Renewing Ways of Life: The Shape of Theological Education," in Peterson with Rourke, 55-67.

[29] Peterson, 1-12.

[30] Talvacchia, 135-145.

[31] Crockett, 14.

[32] Peacock, 78-84.

[33] Frank A. Peake, "Reflections on Anglican Theological Education," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society,* 41 (Fall 1999), 99-114.

[34] Groome, "Wisdom for Life: The Horizon of Theological Literacy," 352-370; van den Blink, 429-449; Donald S. Browning, "Toward a Fundamental and Strategic Practical Theology," in Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds., *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991) 295-328; Edward Farley, "Four Pedagogical Mistakes: a *Mea Culpa,*" *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 8, #4 (October, 2005): 200-203.

web site speaks to this balancing act: "Learning is a process of integration of

experience with theory and theory with experience."[35]

In the literature, concern is also expressed about theological educators'

divided loyalties between church and academy. A 2003 gathering of seminary

faculty members by the Association of Theological Schools identified this tension

as a vocational stress.[36] From one perspective, Robert Course suggests that

theological schools have abandoned serious intellectual study in the name of

skills training for congregational ministry; he argues for a renewed commitment to

scholarship and conceptual preparation for ministry.[37] From another perspective,

Edmon B. Martin and Lance R. Barker, envision theological education that is

grounded in local congregations in order to challenge the academic hegemony,

which presently holds theological education.[38] Taking a middle position, Victor

Klimoski identifies that the partnership between church and theological schools is

distant, and Klimoski forwards the case for strengthening the dialogue between

the partners.[39] At CCS, we respect both these partners. We value, and benefit

from, the gifts of scholarship and intellectual rigour represented in the academy,

even though, to a some extent, we are located outside its bounds.[40] We are

more directly situated within service to the church; our ties to the church are

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[35] http://www.ccsonline.ca/Programs/approach.htm Used February 8, 2008.

[36] "ATS Luce Consultation on Theological Scholarship, May 2003" *Theological Education,* 40, no. 2 (2005): 93-114.

[37] Course, 9.

[38] Edmon B. Martin and Lance R. Barker, "Re-visioning Ministry Leadership: Beyond Adapting Congregation and Clerical Models," in Martin and Barker, 171-184.

[39] Victor Klimoski, "Evolving Dynamics of Formation," in Warford, 29-48.

[40] CCS does offer joint degree programs with St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta and with the Faculty of Theology, University of Winnipeg. Students in the diploma program have to take eight external courses with accredited universities to complete their program.

stronger relationally, financially and spiritually. Yet, we do not see the church

and academy as mutually exclusive enterprises; we understand them both as

very important. And we would not wish to condone idolatry of either; these

partners need and deserve our best critique and analysis.

Another tension in theological education exists amongst the

responsibilities of engagement with the past tradition, connection with the present

context, and the promotion of change for the future. Those preparing for ministry

leadership need to be well grounded in historical background, and have

extensive knowledge about, and substantive skill in, reading and interpreting

sacred texts.[41] An ability to learn from experience, and to analyse and

understand the present contexts of the world is also crucial.[42] Theological

education also needs to prepare ministers who are future-oriented: ready to

renew the church, foster the work of the realm of God, and transform a hurting

world.[43] At the LDM we attempt to "equip the saints" with a foundational

understanding of the past, a realistic grounding in the present, and motivation for

changing the future. At the LDM and in the CCS program, we aim for integration;

a segment of the *Guidelines for Readiness for Continuing in the Program* tests

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[41] Charles R. Foster, and others, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), Robert Cummings Neville, "On the Complexity of Theological Literacy," in Peterson with Rourke, 39-54; John E. MacInnis, "Theological Education as Formation for Ministry," in Peterson with Rourke, 382-391; Charles R. Foster, and others, "Pedagogies of Interpretation in Educating Clergy, " *Teaching Theology and Religion,* 8, no.4 (October 2005): 204-217.

[42] Mark K. Taylor, "Celebrating Difference, Resisting Dominance: The Need for Synchronic Strategies in Theological Education," in Wheeler and Farley, 259-294; Ishida, in Thistlewaite and Cairns, 123-135; Gordon Lynch and Stephen Pattison, "Exploring Positive Learning Experiences in the Context of Practical Theological Education," *Teaching Theology and Religion,* 8, no. 3 (July 2005): 144-154.

[43] Konrad Raiser, "The Importance of the Ecumenical Vision for Theological Education and Ministerial Formation," in Pobee*,54*-60; William Bean Kennedy, "Liberating Pedagogies in the Globalization of Theological Education," in Alice Frazer Evans and others, eds., *The Globalization of Theological Education.* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993) 278-292; F. Ross Kinsler, "Theological Education by Extension: Equipping God's People for Ministry," in F. Ross Kinsler, ed., *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension,* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983) 1-32.

participants against this goal: "Increasingly integrates one's knowledge, understanding, attitudes, skills, and self-awareness in ministry." One of the participants in the in-depth interviews reflected on the integration of theory and practice she evidenced at the LDM:

> I've learned more ... in this period of time than in ... many, many, many courses. ... I think much more of this is going to stay there and accessible, as opposed to in many academic courses [where] you study for the exam, you write the exam and you file the stuff away.... And I am going to have to apply this stuff and so my respect for the learning model is immense.

Desire for Competence in All Areas of Ministry: Elements of Readiness

In *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*[44]*,* the authors organize the essential elements for ministry preparation into four signature pedagogies. The first category, engagement with tradition and the sacred texts through enhancement of linguistic skills and critical thinking is labelled *interpretation.* The second domain, *formation*, involves practice of spiritual disciplines that nurture a sense of mystery and holiness, and the shaping of vocational identity. A third area, entitled *contextualization*, cultivates awareness of social location, culture and structures and also leads to consideration of the possibilities for transformation and change. Pastoral skills and judgement are addressed in the final pedagogy, *performance*.

The four goals prescribed for theological schools described in the 2005 version of the ATS *General Institutional Standards* directly correspond (in a slightly different order) with the signature pedagogies of *Educating Clergy*:

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[44] Foster and others, *Educating Clergy*.

"deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of a faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community."[45] The standards of the United Church *The Framework for Outcomes for Church Leadership* document – spiritual and personal formation, learning in and of the Christian faith, cultural and contextual sensitivities and analyses, leadership within the faith community – significantly concur with the ATS schema.

Interpretation

Interpretative assumptions and practice, certainly, vary amongst theological educators, however introducing historical texts, cultivating thinking, and expanding consciousness remain important goals.[46] A central stage in John E. MacInnis' vision of ministerial formation necessitates historical confession and a familiarity with scriptural and traditional texts of the faith.[47] Acknowledging the complexity of theological education, Robert Cummings Neville includes both a sophisticated understanding of the past, and openness to new insight and critique, as one unified requirement for making theological judgements and interpretations.[48] And while presenting an argument for a radical new feminist rethinking of theological education that includes consideration of the *how* of

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[45] Association of Theological Schools. *General Institutional Standards 2005* 4.1.1

[46] Charles R. Foster, and others, "Pedagogies of Interpretation in Educating Clergy," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8, no. 4 (October, 2005): 204-217.

[47] MacInnis, John E, 382-391. Others, while acknowledging the importance of a strong grounding in biblical and historical background, stress the importance of developing critical thinking in theological education. See Charlotte McDaniel. "Reflection Seminars As Loci for Critical Thinking," *Theological Education* 40, supplement (2005): 63-74; Groome. "Wisdom for Life: The Horizon of Theological Literacy," 352-370; and Gordon Lynch and Stephen Pattison, "Exploring Positive Learning Experiences in the Context of Practical Theological Education," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8, no. 3 (July, 2005): 144-154. Mark D. Chapman, for instance, warns of the dangers of education that lacks any critical dimension suggesting it can become indoctrination or assimilation in a closed system; he suggests that the Gospel itself represents a tradition of encounter, discernment and "question, criticising and suspecting." "Scripture, Tradition and Criticism: A Brief Proposal for Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review,* 78 no. 2 (Spring 1996): 267.
[48] Neville, 39-54.

learning (style, process, relationships), Rebecca Chopp acknowledges that the

what of learning (ideas, content and subject matter) continues to be important.[49]

Without argument, I can agree that the intellectual content of theological

preparation needs to be taken seriously. If church leaders are to have depth and

substance, a comprehensive knowledge of tradition and scripture, as well as

familiarity with contemporary thinking and ability to reflect critically, are essential.

The LDM acts at an introductory level for theological education; theological

concepts and scholarly background are offered at an entry level. Nevertheless,

the program seeks to set a standard where critical analysis, background

knowledge and abstract thought are cultivated and expected.

Formation

In a growing number of cases, students are no longer spiritually and ethically

shaped in local settings and this formation becomes an expectation of the

theological school. In recent history, faculty members have not seen this as their

role and are ill equipped to take on this aspect of theological education.[50] Yet,

from a Catholic perspective, Brian O. McDermott stresses the importance of

spirituality in drawing students to maturity in the faith and asserts that theological

literacy is more than academic competence; it also must include schooling

religious imagination and developing an openness to grace.[51] In a World Council

of Churches' discussion, Mary O'Driscoll, also, argues that spirituality is an

essential area of competence that too often is overlooked; it is difficult to quarrel

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[49] Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995).

[50] Warford, 3.

[51] Brian O. McDermott, "Theological Literacy: Some Catholic Reflections," Peterson with Rourke, 325-334.

with her claim that ministry personnel need to be grounded in an authentic

relationship with God.[52] Philip Sheldrake makes a case for the role of spiritual

direction in theological education; he upholds the potential for spiritual direction

to take the spiritual health of students seriously and its role in encouraging

students to grow closer to God and recognize the Spirit in life.[53] Insisting on the

integration of intellect and spirit, A.J. van den Blink cautions against popular

spirituality which reflects an individualistic consumerism and lack of social or

ethical concern; he asserts "authentic spirituality cannot be a game or hobby."[54]

Rodney Peterson warns against the polarizing of spiritual piety and academic

scientism, and suggests a dynamic creativity between these dialectics that

discerns theology: "what is the real thing in life."[55]

Within CCS, the spiritual and ethical aspect of vocational identity is stressed

in diaconal sessions, reflection assignments, and field placement mentoring.

Within the LDM, it is encompassed through daily worship, faith journeys and

contemplative exercises. The CCS central commitment to justice also influences

a spirituality that is strongly integrated in an incarnational theology. The holy

does not exist just on a transcendent plane but on immanent levels of equitable

human interaction and sustainable engagement with creation. Moments of

prayer and mysticism are embodied not just in structured moments of spiritual

disciplines and worship, but also in art and stories, laughter and tears, silence

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[52] Mary O'Driscoll, "Response to: Konrad Raiser, 'The Importance of the Ecumenical Vision for Theological Education and Ministerial Formation'" in Pobee, 61-65.

[53] Philip Sheldrake, "The Role of Spiritual Direction in the Context of Theological Education," *Anglican Theological Review,* 80, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 366-381.

[54] van den Blink, 435.

[55] Peterson, "Theology: What Is the Real Thing?" 2.

and song that promote loving compassion in the midst of a broken world and moments of connection in a creation that is groaning. I would argue that the whole communal and integrative approach which demands constant evaluation and feedback leads to these areas of personal development. Spiritual and ethical formation for those in ministry leadership is woven throughout the program and the pedagogical approach of the LDM.

Contextualization

Traditional theological education has, too often, been removed from the realities of the world. Cultural awareness and critical social analysis need to be intensified. It can be argued that little has changed since Dieter Hessel contended, in the 1980's, that social ministry concerns, in MDiv programs, were limited to the theoretical and not practical levels, engagement of social issues happened only in an extracurricular fashion, and education for social ministry were seen as optional or extra.[56] Yoshiro Ishida describes the powerful learning in a local immersion project for seminary students in inner-city Chicago, and concludes that the pedagogy of theological education should reflect more engagement with social realities.[57] Reflecting on the experience of seminar students and staff traveling abroad to learn from another culture, William Bean Kennedy raises questions about the mode of learning and teaching in "normal" theological education; he stresses the importance of theological students learning to reflect on their personal social location and the assumptions that they

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[56] Dieter T. Hessel, "A Social Agenda for Theological Study," in Dieter T. Hessel, ed., *Theological Education for Social Ministry* (New York: Pilgrim, 1988) 1-13.

[57] Ishida, 123-135.

make as a result.[58] Discussing the importance of inter-cultural connections and socio-political analysis, Mark K. Taylor declares that theological educators need to nurture disciplined reflectivity and articulation of social location and intentionally consider cultural dynamics in theological discourse.[59] Karen Lebacqz describes the changes she has made in her teaching as a result of her exposure to liberation theology and struggles in the two-thirds world, and proposes a move away from models of professional specialization and training to models where engagement with the marginalized is mandatory.[60]

At the LDM, social ministry and critical thinking are introduced and honoured through sessions, readings, and exercises. Students who take the full four-year CCS diploma must take the Social Ministry year, which includes a field placement with a population on the periphery. They must also participate in a global perspectives exposure visit during their final Integrating year. Social ministry is not considered a special interest or an add-on elective; it is an integral part of the vision of an institution that declares itself "living a theology of justice."

Many writers recognize the cross-cultural reality of today's seminaries.[61] This pluralism brings a range of identities and multiple perspectives and images to the classroom. The student body now represents a variety of ages, ethnic histories, sexual orientations, gender identities, and class backgrounds. The presence of this diversity means that those who have been traditionally alienated

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[58] Kennedy, 278-287.

[59] Taylor, 259-294.

[60] Karen Lebacqz, "Getting Our Priorities Straight: Theological Education and Socially Responsible Ministry," in Hessel, ed. *Theological Education for Social Ministry,* 66-82.

[61] See: Toinette M. Eugene, "Liberation: Gender, Race, and Class" in Evans and others, 185-199; Talvacchia, 139-145, Foster, "Diversity in Theological Education," 15-38; Diamond Cephus, "Rehabilitating Prejudice: Framing Issues of Diversity in Theological Education" in Warford, 215-228.

and disenfranchised are now around the table and claiming their voice. Inevitably, this threatens the status quo and the dominant power structure, and consequently, tension and resistance are to be expected. Theological schools must move through the potential – and likely inescapable – conflict with a vision that eschews mere accommodation and tokenistic tolerance, and that honours genuine respect and authentic dialogue.

CCS attempts to address some of these concerns in aspects of its curriculum, which include interfaith and ecumenical components, community projects, First Nations connections and global tours. Without doubt, more could be done. The present student and staff population leans toward a decidedly privileged, middle-aged, Anglo, United Church demographic. Moving toward authentic welcome and hospitality for other populations remains a goal and vision that will require concentrated effort and commitment. At the LDM the base line work on respectful relations, honouring difference and conflict management lays the ground for dealing with diversity. It is not enough but it is a start.

Performance

As noted earlier, models of theological education situated in the academy have tended to separate the practical development of ministry skills from academic preparation, and often, relegated this branch of theology to an inferior – less intellectually demanding, less academically rigorous, less rationally stimulating – status. Despite this pervasive viewpoint, the fact remains that practical theology involves the translation and integration of reflection and action,

conception and practice, thinking and doing and it is a very complex, difficult and demanding enterprise.

The longest section of the United Church Outcomes document deals with leadership within the faith community and public context. A comprehensive range of skills in the practice of ministry section are emphasized: witnessing and listening, preaching and enabling, leading and teaming, self-care and pastoral care, conflict management and administrative acumen, prophetic risk and sensitive response. No question, ministry is demanding. A multifaceted set of knowledge and skills is expected; an integrated personality of wholeness and maturity is required.

Theological educators have the responsibility of equipping the saints to do the work with skill and competence, wisdom and grace. At the LDM, we emphasize proficiency in relationships: facilitation, leadership, communication, conflict management, teaming. In ministry, people skills are paramount. In the unique LDM program, students plan together and continually offer one another evaluation; participants learn to work together in authentically empowering ways. These relational attitudes and behaviours become core elements of the program as students learn the concrete content and skills of educational, pastoral, liturgical and social ministries.

Desire for Renewed Pedagogy: Re-imagined Teaching

In chapter five, I will be exploring a variety of educational theories and their potential for informing the practice of theological education. Theological

educators could benefit from more concentrated reflection on their individual

pedagogical style and approaches, as well as, analytical assessment of

institutional assumptions surrounding epistemology and education is warranted.

Typically, faculty members of theological schools are not trained as educators

and they are not conversant with the pedagogical discourse.[62] The legacy of

academic scholarship, which has confined knowledge to the areas of rationality

and scholarship also deserves some critical assessment.[63]

   I am encouraged that some theological educators are, indeed, addressing

and critiquing current pedagogical practices, and see renewed commitment to

pedagogical principles as a way to rejuvenate theological education. Rebecca

Chopp argues not merely for a feminist reform in theological curriculum, but for a

redefining of theological education.[64] She imagines an embodied, communal

theological education not as a product but a process where practice and ideas

are interchanged, narratives and experience are honoured, connectedness is

nurtured, and new symbols are constructed. Charles Foster, also, contends that

formation in theological schools must be re-envisioned.[65] He encourages

theological educators to become more attentive to students and create

hospitable and inclusive environments, for a variety of learning styles and cultural

diversities. G. R. Baldwin believes that learning demands more than retention;

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[62] Raymond Brady Williams, "The Vocation of Teaching: Beyond the Conspiracy of Mediocrity" in Warford, 15.

[63] Kwok Pui-Lan, and others, "Taken with Surprise: Critical Incidents in Teaching," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8, no. 1 (January, 2005): 35-46.

[64] Chopp, 110-111.

[65] Foster, "Diversity in Theological Education," 15-38.

real understanding requires transformation of the religious imagination.[66]

Baldwin espouses a process of creative education, based on principles of

openness, dialogue, and listening, leading to self-awareness. Outlining

contemporary scholarship on educational practices, Mary-Ann Winklemes shares

research on how students learn.[67] She profiles phases of intellectual

development, varieties in learning styles, insights about cognitive stress, and

investigations from physiology and neuroscience, and then makes several

concrete suggestions to improve theological teaching. Garth Rosell contrasts

two historical influences on theological education: the lecture emphasis and the

student presentation model.[68] He, then illustrates creative pedagogical

possibilities by describing his methodology for hands-on, in-the-community,

learning. These articles witness to the creativity and thoughtfulness that some

are putting into pedagogical practices in theological education. I believe that the

pedagogical practices of the LDM are equally creative and thoughtful. In

subsequent chapters, the schedule and some sample sessions of the LDM will

be outlined, and this innovative education will be demonstrated.

<div align="center">Desire for Faith Community: Mutual Empowerment</div>

Barker and Martin challenge the church to liberate itself from the

assumption that all workable congregations need to employ a full-time seminary-

trained order of ministry person; they challenge the cult of professionalism which

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[66] G. R. Baldwin, "From Sole Learning to Soul Learning," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9, no. 3 (July, 2006): 165-174.

[67] Mary-Ann Winklemes. "Making the Classroom an Environment for Formative Learning," in Warford, 161-180.

[68] Garth M. Rosell. "Engaging Issues in Course Development" in Warford, 181-196.

insists on elitist credentials and classist authorization, at the expense of commitment to the priesthood of all believers and the ministry of all the baptized.[69] They confront the academic hegemony which holds theological education, and suggest a move toward a more integrated, innovative, less hierarchical approach grounded in local congregations. They envision a communal orientation rather than the present individualistic one, where theological education is accessible to all who want to deepen their faith and long to serve.

Letty Russell does not see that a congregational model of theological education will necessarily address the dualism of thought and action, or the individualistic model of the "lone ranger" model of professional ministry.[70] Shifting from a clerical model to a congregational paradigm will not necessarily address racism, classism, heterosexism or sexism. It will not subvert the status quo. She recommends a mission paradigm where the work and acts of justice-making are central. She proposes an eschatological perspective where the church reaches out to the marginalized. She favours, not an ecclesiocentric (church centered) vision but an oikocentric (whole world) vision.

Karen Lebacqz challenges the power structures of theological schools, which are based on elitism and a range of oppressive hierarchies.[71] She links the structures and methods of theological schools to a patriarchal vision of ministry. In her understanding of scholarship, work would arise out of *praxis* and

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[69] Barker and Martin, 3-12.

[70] Letty Russell, "Which Congregations? A Mission Focus for Theological Education" in Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Barbara G. Wheeler, eds., *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as Focus for Theological Education.* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988) 31-35.

[71] Lebacqz, 66-82.

the standard for evaluation would be commitment to justice, peace and compassion.

Certainly theological education needs to move beyond the present individualistic approach to a more communal vision, where dialogue amongst staff, students, and the broader world is nurtured in a sense of relational connectedness. In order to reduce the isolation and competitiveness of the present model, mutuality in learning must become normative. Clearly one of the aspects of the LDM that is heralded is that it stresses a communal connection. The participants repeat that they feel the atmosphere is respectful; one student commented after the first day: "A safe place of trust was quickly created." I believe that this allows for risk to take place, and in that risking learning can happen.

In this chapter, theological educators have voiced their concerns about the future of theological education. Many contemporary conversations indicate that change is desired. Historians remind us that, over the centuries, the shape, focus and methodology of theological education has been varied and diverse; the past indicates that shifts in paradigms are possible. The holistically integration of theory and practice, church and academy, past, present and future, is championed by authors. A convergence is emerging that suggests the interweaving of intellectual, spiritual, socio-political and pastoral dimensions; students must know the content of the faith and be able to think critically; they must demonstrate personal character and a depth of spiritual commitment; they

must be able to analyse contextual realities and be engaged with the world around them; they must be able to perform the functions and tasks of ministry with competence. Voices within theological education express hope that solidarity and justice work in the world will be emphasized; elitism and clericalism will be addressed; connection with faith communities which will stress mutual empowerment; the history of social irrelevance and pietistic interference will be confronted.

Within its history, CCS, and its ancestor institutions, have adapted and changed their program to suit the needs of the times.[72] The LDM of CCS offers one alternative model of theological education which reflects many of the desires voiced in this chapter. Since its beginnings in the deaconess movement, CCS has always combined practical training with academy content. Programs continue to challenge students in their intellectual, spiritual, socio-political and skills development. At the LDM, theory is shared through readings and staff input; sessions focus on critical thinking. Spiritual formation is addressed through daily worship, regular journaling and contemplative exercises. The motto of CCS – living a theology of justice – permeates the approach of the LDM in the selection of authors, sessions on social ministry and theological convictions. Practising the functions and tasks of ministry happens on planning teams and in student leadership, and is enhanced with regular reflection and feedback. The LDM creates a pedagogical atmosphere of trust and community, which encourages and empowers the student. The LDM offers a holistic pedagogy that respects mind and spirit, heart and head, practice and theory.

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[72] Former CCS principal, Gwyn Griffith, is presently writing a comprehensive history of CCS and its ancestor schools.

CHAPTER THREE

JOURNEY IN LEARNING:

A DESCRIPTION OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODULE

As a course, the LDM is designed to develop and enhance leadership for ministry. In the process, it provides a rich opportunity for personal growth within a community setting. An encouraging and hospitable atmosphere is established. Educational processes are engaging, varied and creative. Based on action/reflection concepts of learning, the pedagogical philosophy honours each one's gifts and sees each one as co-learner and co-leader. The program is demanding but supportive and empowering. All of this results in a rigorous, intensive, exciting experience of theological education.

This chapter will offer a picture of the LDM and describe its flow and form, its character and culture, its ethos and educational vision. The schedule will be outlined so that the reader has a vision of its movement and momentum. A summary of the pedagogical characteristics and ministry approaches of CCS and the LDM will conclude the chapter.

As an introductory module for the CCS program, the schedule of the LDM sweeps broadly across a diverse range of themes. The course offers initial tastes of a variety of subjects that are covered more extensively in the comprehensive curriculum of the four-year diploma program. The subject matter includes pastoral care, education, social ministry, theology, biblical studies and diaconia. As well, the module presents topics that form the core and foundation

of the CCS educational process: planning, goal setting, facilitation, group

dynamics, feedback, and conflict management. As central skills in the practice of

ministry these topics are crucial aspects of leadership in the church. Also

included throughout the schedule are opportunities for daily worship, regular

community building, evaluation, work teams, faith journeys, staff-student

interviews, case studies, theological reflection and preparation for those going on

into the CCS theme years.

   In the last chapter, we reviewed the work of scholars who were calling for a

more integrated approach to theological education. They envisioned learning

that leads to intellectual competence, spiritual maturity, contextual analysis, and

pastoral skill. I believe the LDM offers an example of learning that honours such

a holistic approach: learned scholarship *and* personal experience, reflection *and*

action, theory *and* practice, ideas *and* feelings.

   In ten years, the LDM has always been team taught. In 2007, I had the

privilege of working with my new colleague, Sherri McConnell, who had joined

the CCS program staff only three months previously. I was very much looking

forward to this first time that Sherri and I would be formally teaming together;

Sherri and I have worked together many times, and in many capacities, over

more than twenty years. We know each other well and enjoy being together; I

have great respect for her and expected that we would be a good fit as a team

and complement one another in leadership. Sherri brings a rich background in

adult education, a depth of spirit, and a high degree of pastoral sensitivity.

Having taught the course on six former occasions with four other colleagues, I

was very familiar with the flow and content of the LDM and very comfortable in my role as facilitator. I will further explore my personal and professional learnings regarding the 2007 LDM in chapter eight, but, at this point it will suffice to say that Sherri and I offered skilled leadership. At the end of the LDM, one of the participants offered these moving comments about us: "I have the most profound respect and awe – warmth, sensitivity, competence and wisdom – great balanced team."

As the students and staff of the LDM form a sense of community, they tend to look after one another with pastoral support and care. On occasion, however, some participants feel the need for an outside ear whether that has to do with issues arising in the circle or from continuing concerns from home or the past. So every year at the LDM, we put in place volunteer chaplains who can be confidentially contacted by phone and/or a face-to-face meeting can be arranged. It is my understanding that a heavy demand is not placed on the chaplains, but it is an important resource to have available nonetheless.

Intentional and Diverse: Session Components

The LDM runs for a seventeen day period in June. Morning and afternoon sessions – and the occasional evening class – are held every day but Sundays.

Ordinarily, a session will start and end with some journaling time.[1] At the beginning of a session this reflection time offers students the opportunity to prepare emotionally, spiritually and intellectually for the session and allows them

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[1] For a discussion of the use of journaling in theological education see: Beth McIsaac Bruce. "A Qualitative Research Report on the Journals of Supervised Field Education Students" *A Report of the Proceedings of the 27th Biennial Consultation of the Association of Theological Field Education,* 2003.

the chance to centre and focus. At the end of a session, journaling is used to

identify learning and name areas for further investigation or consideration. This

amount of quiet reflectivity can be daunting or new for some participants. One

extraverted interviewee describes how it took time to warm to the idea:

> At first with the journaling I was like what am I going to write about for five
> minutes? [As the LDM proceeded] I ended up wanting more time. It was an
> 'aha' for me. Writing stuff down brought me to a slower process.

Every session terminates with some time for evaluation. Generally the

questions are open-ended: What was helpful? What was not helpful in the

process? Sometimes this can feel tedious; one person likes an activity and

another person doesn't, or someone gets focussed on some minor element. Yet,

in my mind, this practice serves many purposes: feedback is established as a

normative event; reflection on experience is encouraged; critical thinking is

enhanced; affirmations are shared; critiques are identified; feelings are aired;

improvements for the future are considered. And importantly, it says to the

participants that those in leadership are open to hearing from the participants,

thereby demonstrating an important attitude of transparency and receptivity.

Throughout the LDM, music is used extensively to honour a mood, to gather

folks together after a break or small group discussions, to signal the end of

segment, to give voice to praise or prayer. Frequently the singing is *a capella* but

students who are proficient with accompanying instruments often are motivated

to share their talents. Typically, this is a highly appreciated aspect of the LDM.

Along side the cognitive aspects of the subject matter and content, this

classroom honours the affective nature of a community being together in spirit and song.

Students are given an agenda for each session. This, typically blue, sheet identifies purpose and goals, and intentionally gives students a sense of the hopes and directions of the session. The session is detailed with time expectations, small group directions and discussion questions. Some have reacted to the highly structured nature of this document; they sense a lack of spontaneity and feel overly controlled. Yet, the practice of sharing the agenda proves to be helpful for those who want or need to know where the process is going. It provides a transparency through shared information. It also serves as back-up if instructions are missed or confused. Further it enables a sharing of the responsibility for leadership and time management with the whole group. Staff benefit from this organization: a record of the proceedings is maintained and the clarity of the agenda and exercises makes it easy to take turns facilitating and model shared leadership and teaming. In 2007, as leaders, we were both teased and praised for "running a tight ship."

The LDM sessions are characterized by variety and intentionality. The program is organized and structured with clarity of direction and purpose. Participants are continually asked to consider their own goals and assess their learning. Sessions pay considerable attention to a range of learning style needs by: offering diversity and creativity, addressing the cognitive and affective, and considering introverted and extroverted responses.

Engaging and Abundant: A Sweep of the Schedule

The first week of the LDM[2] begins with a Monday morning session of community building.[3] Participants start a process of sharing who they are in a gentle and non-threatening fashion.

On Monday afternoon the module moves into the first of staff led sessions that focus on educational theories and practice. An introduction to learning styles constitutes the work and content of this first session. Students complete a learning styles inventory, based on the scholarship of David Kolb.[4] By Tuesday morning, the group is ready to survey some adult education theory. The session includes evocative movie clips, reflection on past educational experience, learning centres and didactic input.

Tuesday afternoon is devoted to the planning process. After a staff-led exercise on planning principles, students meet in four groups related to the topics: pastoral care, education, social ministry and theology. Their task is to plan a process that will enable the whole group to wrestle with the readings for their topic.[5] The timing for this planning is tight; some students, especially those

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[2] See appendix H.

[3] This session will be described more fully in chapter four.

[4] David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

[5] Three or four articles per topic are circulated weeks previously.
For Pastoral Care the students review a classic article by Howard Clinebell which upholds images of wholeness and growth, a chapter from Larry Kent Graham that challenges the individualism of the field, a work from Karen Lebacqz and Joseph D. Driskill that clarifies the differences amongst pastoral care, pastoral counselling and spiritual direction, and a reading from Jean Stairs that highlights the importance of listening for the soul.
The Education readings include offerings from Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, bell hooks and Daniel D. Pratt. Moore's work employs the image of the heart to explore a holistic approach to education. hooks asserts that education must be freeing, enabling, life-giving and spiritual. Pratt proposes five schema for teaching: transmission, apprenticeship, nurturing, development and social reform.
In the area of Social Ministry, the selections involve a discussion of the differences, similarities, and distinctions between and amongst oppressed groups by Anne Bishop, an outline of a methodical approach to social analysis by Les Samuelson and Wayne Anthony, and a feminist identification of key elements in social justice by Lynn N. Rhodes.

with high performance anxiety or little educational design experience, feel greatly

stressed by this expectation. As staff, we do our best to convey as sense of

calm, and to encourage an engagement with the process as learning – not as a

measure of individual success or failure.[6]

On Wednesday morning, a session on personality indicators both offers

insights into personal identity but also helps in appreciation of different styles and

approaches.[7] This learning is often immediately applied to the planning team

situations. Thursday morning concentrates on the art and practice of theological

reflection.[8]

Wednesday and Thursday afternoons of week one, students present case

studies, based on experiences of leadership in ministry, to one another. The

group discusses observations, ministry issues, socio-political dynamics, and

theological implications, and is asked to engage the case in a reflective sense

not as advice-givers or problem-solvers:

> We are committed to case study, for our students and for our own
> ministries, because it helps us see clearly the reflective component of
> ministry. Ministry is about faithful response to God, the communities with
> which we work and worship, and the women and men who make them up.
> To respond faithfully requires a theological process that illuminates:
> ourselves and what we bring to the ministry situation, the context in which
> the situation exists, and the ways that God's people have sought to
> understand and do the will of the Holy One. The practice of ministry simply
> cannot be separated from the practice of reflection.[9]

For the Theology articles, John B. Cobb, Jr. encourages a broadening of the theological enterprise beyond the academy, Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah outline some of the major characteristics of two-third's world feminist theology, Sallie McFague offers a chapter of theological autobiography and a personal creedal statement, and Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd identifies elements of transformative theology from the perspective of the Canadian margins.

[6] In chapter eight, I discuss some of my learning about dealing with anxiety at the 2007 LDM.

[7] This is another session that will be described more fully in chapter 4.

[8] This session will also be outlined in chapter 4.

[9] Jeffrey H. Mahan, Barbara B. Troxell, Carol J. Allen. *Shared Wisdom: A Guide to Case Study Reflection in Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 105.

Friday morning begins the first of the reading discussion group presentations (pastoral care). The next three reading discussion groups present on Friday afternoon (education), Saturday morning (social ministry) and Saturday afternoon (theology). After each of these presentations, student colleagues and staff offer feedback. The intentionality of the evaluation process affords a reflective analysis of both task performance and team participation. Again, the students are working on at least two levels: they are wrestling with the content of the subject area and they are practising educational process and facilitation skills. In the previous chapter, a rallying cry was raised for theological education that integrated theory and practice. This planning group process embodies this integration; there is no better way to learn content and material than to have to teach it; there is no better way to learn to lead than to take a turn leading.

Staff led sessions on feedback (Friday morning), biblical interpretation (Friday afternoon), critical thinking (Saturday morning) and operative theology (Saturday afternoon) follow and accompany the respective presentations.

Week two begins with a re-examination of the planning process and goal setting. Students are asked to identify learning goals for each of the four student led sessions, which come later in the module: conflict, facilitation, group dynamics and leadership.[10] The naming of individual learning goals enables the

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[10] Again, several articles have been circulated and assigned for each of these topics.
For the Leadership readings, articles by Anne Bishop, Starhawk and Sue J.M Freeman et al, wrestle with power and traditional hierarchical understandings of leadership. Parker Palmer offers an examination of the spiritual shadows that influence leadership.
Facilitation articles discuss the roles and responsibilities related to leading and listening to group discussion in chapters from The Facilitator's Handbook (Heron), Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making (Kaner et al), and, Facilitation Skills Development (Corporate Education Branch, City of Winnipeg). A reflection on the role of facilitation in social justice education is offered by Pat Griffin, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*.
The Conflict readings range from introductory resolution principles (Bernard Mayer) to mediation techniques (Jennifer E. Beer), from cross cultural issues (Augsburg) to biblical themes (Carolyn Schrock-Shenk), from concrete one-to-one

planning groups to design their sessions based on an understanding of the group's needs and hopes. Not all students are easily able to grasp the concept and art of writing learning goals; it seems foreign to their nature and experience of education. In some ways, this difficulty represents a shift from an external and imposed "this is what you should learn" to an internalized motivation "this is what I need to be learning." This practice sets an expectation that students will move toward self-direction in their learning and take responsibility for what they learn. This kind of expectation serves to honour the personal experience of the learner, and thereby, heightens the engagement level, deepens the reflectivity, and calls forth the intentionality of the students.[11]

On Monday afternoon, resource persons arrive to work with the students as they plan for their student led sessions. These experienced folk are recruited to be with the students throughout the three designated planning sessions (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons) and for the day of the presentation.[12] After each of the presentations, one of the staff and the resource person meet with the students to de-brief and evaluate. Again, reflection and feedback are normalized and incorporated in the learning as students' grasp of content, skill in leadership and participation in planning are affirmed and critiqued. Again, holistic theological education, as discussed in the previous

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resolution processes (Centre for Christian Studies) to congregational perspectives (Gilbert R. Rendle).
In the area of Group Dynamics, Dianne Baker defines the topic and discusses stage theory, Peter Renner names categories of behaviour in groups, Roger Schwarz sets ground rules for effective groups, and Susan A. Wheelan offers insights on effective team leadership in groups.

[11] In chapter five, the gift and dilemma of self-directed learning will be rehearsed.

[12] The resource persons' role requires a flexibility of spirit; what they are required to do depends on the needs of the planning team. The responsibilities range from content expert to process enabler, from reassuring pastor to critical prophet, from conflict mediator to task focus-er.

chapter, is practised. Knowledge *and* practice of ministry are evaluated together in an intentional and integrated fashion.

On Monday evening the sharing of faith journeys begins.[13] For most participants, this experience is anticipated with some level of anxiety. The storyteller knows her or his life will receive the attention and focus of the group, and some vulnerability is, inevitably, associated with that. Nevertheless, this intimate process affords participants the opportunity to reflect on the breadth of their individual life experience, and also, deepens the connections in the group, and, thereby, furthers the development of community.

In this second week, staff conduct one-to-one interviews with each of the students. These meetings provide another focussed opportunity for staff to develop a stronger knowledge of individuals and their hopes and expectations for learning and growth, to share information and answer questions about the program, and to hear feedback. Students are asked to prepare for the conversations by reflecting on a series of questions about their present LDM experience and future goals. In this process, reflection and analysis are stressed as a way of nurturing intentional thoughtfulness; relationship continues to be developed in order to offer learning in a supportive framework.

The second week also includes some staff led sessions. Polarity management theory and practice is introduced (and critiqued) as a model for conflict and change. Theological discussion offers a chance to consider some of the basic questions of faith: Who is God? Who are we? What is our task? A session on perspectives on ministry centres on a bible study and leads to an

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[13] The impact and influence of the faith journeys' process will be discussed further in chapter four.

identification of images for and principles of ministry. A review of early diaconal history and discussion of diaconal identity ends the second week.[14]

In the third week, the themes and stories of scripture are surveyed in a playful romp through the first and second testaments using symbols, music and artwork to recall and highlight some of the main biblical stories. Those with extensive biblical background can feel this process is superficial; those who are new to scriptures can feel overwhelmed and "stupid." As staff, we attempt to convey a sensitivity concerning this dilemma and encourage each participant to consider personal learning goals for the session. We suggest that students could use the overview as an indication about the sections of the bible with which they need to do further familiarization and research, or they might consider the educational possibilities of the process for confirmation classes or introductory bible study.

A session devoted to various schools of theological interpretation reviews a range of theological outlooks from neo-orthodoxy to creation spirituality, from the Jesus seminar to Latin American liberationists, from process to womanist theologians, from *minjung* to eco-theologies. Students are given a chance to identify authors and perspectives with whom they are unfamiliar.

For those continuing in the CCS diploma program, a session in the final week outlines the expectations of the theme year field placements. Three theme years – Educational Ministry, Pastoral Care and Social Ministry – are included in the CCS diploma program. A twelve-hour per week field placement is integrated into each of these years; students work with a network of support volunteers. For

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[14] This session will be described in a more fulsome manner in the next chapter.

many, all this information constitutes an overwhelming amount of detail to absorb. Yet, a number of relationships have to be set up and learning goals developed, so it is crucial that students are clear about expectations and that they are prepared to initiate and engage the process as self-directed learners.[15]

A whole day is dedicated to practising the spiral model of theological reflection.[16] Students prepare by selecting a concrete experience from their ministry or leadership and following the discipline and steps of the process. Small groups gather to hear one another's reflections and engage their colleagues with affirmations and challenges, comments and questions. Again, reflection on action is encouraged and stressed. Again, feedback on the practice of ministry is given and received.

The last day of the LDM concentrates on the peer assessment process. In preparation for this day, students begin with a self-evaluation. Based on the *Guidelines for Readiness for Continuing in the Diploma Program[17]* and their experience at the LDM, they identify personal areas of significant growth and areas for further work. Students and staff also name affirmations and encouragements for student colleagues. Yet again, students reflectively consider their progress and development in ministry. And this learning is tested in community, and standards of accountability measure the growth through

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[15] Theory connected to self-directed learning will be discussed in chapter five.

[16] The spiral model of theological education will be described in the next chapter.

[17] "Guidelines for Readiness Continuing in the Program" http://www.ccsonline.ca/Students/Assignments/StudentResourceKit2007.pdf Used February 8, 2007, 21-26.

feedback. An evening session finishes the LDM by addressing issues of community closure and transition.[18]

Transformative and Alternative: Elements of Educational Approach

The Leadership Development Module is intense; a depth of participation and engagement is demanded in the experience. Students and staff are together for seventeen straight days of theological reflection, personal exploration, community sharing, spiritual practice, educational process, intellectual stretching, group planning and leadership training. Evenings and the two Sundays are generally unstructured but fill up quickly with assignment preparation and planning team meetings. I sometimes wonder if the LDM models an inappropriate and unhealthy "works righteousness." Yet, I would not want it to be too easy or superficially light either. Despite, or maybe because of the demands, participants invariably declare the LDM to be an exhausting but exhilarating journey of discovery in faith and ministry practice.

In chapter two, we reviewed theological educators who were suggesting that more attention to vocational formation, self-awareness and personal integrity is needed in preparation for ministry programs. At the LDM, the curriculum concentrates on this important work. Throughout the two and a half weeks, personal insights emerge for the participants. Several exercises in personality indicators frequently lead to "aha" moments of revelation; having frameworks for describing personal traits and characteristics adds structure to self-understanding. Working in teams to plan presentations requires intentional

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[18] These processes will be discussed further in the next chapter.

consideration of self in relation to others; new wisdom about oneself is often a result of teaming tensions and the respectful working out and honouring of differences. Sharing one's faith journey with the group involves an inevitable process of self-examination; this exposed vulnerability offers opportunity to rehearse and re-frame one's life in the spirit. Regular journaling enhances the reflective process; taking the time to pause and identify learning deepens self-knowledge. For some these insights can be painful, and over the years, we have witnessed resistance and defensiveness in some students. Fortunately, the strong majority embrace the meaningful significance of this very personal learning.

Community aspects of the program are central to creating an atmosphere of encouragement, where learning is typically engaged as opportunity. In chapter two, several authors voiced the hope that theological education could move beyond the "lone ranger" leadership model. I am confident in saying that the LDM does offer a less individualistic and a more collaborative approach. On the first day, intentional attention is given to community building. Every attempt is made to project an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality including communal meals on several occasions throughout the LDM. Daily check-ins ensure that individual's information is shared, enabling relationships to build. Frequent use of small group discussion encourages deepening trust. Memberships in small groups shift and change regularly, ensuring connections are broadened and varied. Students work out the dynamics of teaming and learn to lead in a cooperative fashion.

The variety of the educational methods, at the LDM, generates energy. A rich mix of experiential teaching techniques and creative activities are employed from audio-visuals to role plays, case studies to craft materials, dramatic skits to musical offerings.[19] This classroom experience involves hands-on, left and right-brain learning. Students are very engaged; no one is sitting at the back day-dreaming or doodling. Participation is expected and the learners eagerly comply.[20] The attention to pacing and variety in learning styles helps to relieve some of the tiredness or boredom that can come from teaching that relies solely on one approach or style.

Laughter and fun are mixed in throughout the seventeen days. The first session involves a series of participatory games. In an educational theory session, movie clips are used to illustrate various ways teachers teach and students learn. To explore one planning process theory, participants don costumes and role-play a discussion. Staff "ham it up" by enacting several illustrations of inappropriate ways to offer feedback. On occasion, evaluations have indicated that the playfulness has gone over the line into silliness; some have found this distracting or have felt the wit undermined the importance of the content. Mostly, this spirit of irreverence has been welcomed as a relief from the earnestness that many have experienced in the church. In the midst of the serious business of the LDM, a spirit of good humour, for the most part, is appreciated as "holy laughter."

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[19] Experiential learning theory will be discussed in chapter five.

[20] There is likely an element of self-selection in this compliance. In the admissions process and in pre-event materials, students are informed of the style of learning. Those who would be suspicious of or uncomfortable with such pedagogical activities would not willingly enroll in such a course.

The LDM can be stressful for the participants who are returning to formal education after many years of absence and who carry memories of brutal pedagogical approaches characterized by competition, ranking, elitism, humiliation, power-over[21], blame and shame. Staff at the LDM attempt to embody and promote a strength-based approach to learning where students are seen in a positive, affirming light. [22] Rather than foster a pathological understanding of the learner, the LDM attempts to enhance self-worth. Starting from a belief in the fundamental value of each person gives learners permission to engage in learning with a feeling of safety rather than fear. In this atmosphere of encouragement they can take risks they might not take in a tense climate. A sense of responsibility and empowerment emerges for the LDM students; they are expected to exhibit a self-directed intentionality through personal goal setting. We are mindful that a policy or philosophy of encouragement has limits. Over the years, despite references and admissions interviews, we have had students who are not a fit for the course and/or unsuitable for ministry. As staff and as an institution, it remains our responsibility to make these judgements forthrightly and identify deficits. We attempt to do this in a respectful fashion; in my mind, the most helpful approach involves helping the student to name these shortcomings for her/himself. Without doubt, this has been a small majority of the students. It is more typical that learners are delighted to be coming into their own, finding their voices and welcoming the excitement of learning.

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[21] For a discussion of the concept of "power over" see: Anne Bishop, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002) 61 ff; and Starhawk, *Truth or Dare* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) 9 ff.

[22] Strength-based learning theory will be discussed further in chapter five.

Feedback is frequently offered throughout the LDM. Every attempt is made to normalize the giving and receiving of feedback. Principles and ground rules for feedback are discussed. Staff led sessions end with a chance for students to comment on design. Evaluation sessions follow each student led presentation. A comprehensive peer assessment process ends the event.[23] Clear sets of outcomes are articulated in a set of competency guidelines. Although there is a level of anxiety about receiving and giving feedback for many of the students, many of them end up being surprised about how they learn to enjoy and embrace the evaluative aspects of the program. Feedback provides helpful information about how one is perceived and delivers important knowledge for growth and future learning.

At the LDM, students are given numerous opportunities to practice the skills of leadership in ministry. This, of course, can be scary even if one has a fair bit of experience; being watched and assessed in a community of peers can be disconcerting. Nevertheless, students live into the responsibilities of facilitating groups, leading worship, designing educational process, summarizing theory, and speaking in public. The LDM combines hands-on, practical chances for leadership with reflective observation and considered analysis. In this environment, a certain freedom exists to make mistakes, try out new styles, and take some risks. Even though fear is part of the equation, a certain excitement and energy goes along with the experience.

The learning at the LDM is also intellectually stimulating. Most students find the engagement with readings and content an energizing enterprise. Throughout

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[23] This process will be described in some detail in the next chapter.

the course, the students are being exposed to new fields, new ideas, and new authors. Largely, and happily, students embrace the opportunities with a delighted eagerness.

The CCS motto – "living a theology of justice" – works its way into the heart of the LDM. The educational philosophy is based on a commitment to inclusiveness and accessibility. The norms of the group are founded on principles of respect. The presented vision of diaconal ministry highlights compassion for those on the periphery of society. The group process and conflict resolution sessions are grounded in the hope that every voice can be heard and honoured. The readings emerge from discourses of social reform, holistic, liberation, feminist, womanist, two-thirds world and queer theologies. Some of these perspectives are foreign to students and hence can present the uncertainty associated with the unknown. We have been confronted with accusations of being overly "politically correct." On the other hand, we have had students at the LDM – hearing impaired, ethnic minority, learning disabled, transgender, survivors of abuse – who have challenged us as educators to more authentically make space for those who have lived with exclusion and fear. And many of the students who are unfamiliar with justice perspectives find themselves intrigued and drawn in by the dream of a church and world where equality and fairness are an embodied reality. The dream has a compelling forcefulness that galvanizes commitment in a positive way.

Several of the theological educators referenced in chapter two, made the case for training for ministry that more strongly emphasized spirituality. For me,

the heart of the LDM comes from its grounded sense of prayerfulness and attention to the needs of the soul. Spirituality is interwoven throughout the LDM in a myriad of ways – daily worship, meditative exercises, bible study, ritual, music, creative use of the arts – and participants appreciate these many opportunities to connect with the resources of faith while in an educational setting. Elements of the experience are less cognitive and more retreat-like. I believe we need to know the faith in a cerebral, cognitive fashion but also in an embodied spirituality. I celebrate the integration of mind and spirit that happens at the LDM.

Many of the students come to this event testing their vocation, discerning the appropriateness of their call to ministry. For all the students the content and subject material of the LDM matters deeply to them; it entails more than issues of employment and a pay cheque, information gathering and course credit; it represents their commitment to faith and their response to the divine imperative. The compelling nature of vocation elicits a range of emotions, but students, generally feel they are doing something important, facing something with meaning and purpose.

Above and through all, the LDM integrates learning in a holistic program. Individuals arrive at personal insights while immersed in a communal atmosphere. The processes of the event are varied and creative, fun and engaging. Students are encouraged and nurtured in an affirming and supportive atmosphere while tested and stretched by frequent evaluation and feedback. The learning incorporates practical, hands-on skills development as well as

intellectually stimulating abstract theory. CCS's commitment to justice surfaces in most every aspect of the program calling students to live into prophetic, inclusive, compassionate ways of being. Spirituality is interwoven throughout the seventeen days of the LDM as participants consider the directions of their vocational journeys. This CCS event offers an abundance of riches that transforms perspectives and leads to changed lives. The LDM models a compelling alternative for theological education that is inclusive, accessible, rigourous and healthy.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS:

REPRESENTATIVE SESSION DESIGNS

In this chapter, six of the thirty-three LDM sessions will be outlined and described as examples of the variety and creativity involved in this program. This model of theological education embodies a commitment to transformational, experiential learning that is both self-directed and emphasizes communal connection. In contrast to traditional approaches the LDM is not constructed as a teacher dominated, content focussed, pedagogical model where the "jug to mug" transmission of material prevails. In offering these examples in this chapter, it is hoped that alternative possibilities will be presented and imaginations of theological educators will be inspired. Some committed scholars suspect that experiential process "waters down" academic rigour. These examples contest that suspicion, and contend that learning is enhanced and enabled when processes honour the whole person as cognitive, affective, and relational beings, and when strength-based approaches empower students in a climate that builds on safety and trust rather than pathology-based approaches that foster competition and hierarchy.[1]

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[1] In chapter five, the work of scholars whose views support these pedagogical approaches will be discussed.

Honouring Relationships: Community Building

In the university classroom where the LDM is held, a chart normally hangs on the wall indicating a seating arrangement with one isolated desk for the instructor at the front of the room and subsequent rows of tables for the students. The chart sternly instructs would-be furniture movers to return all tables and chairs to the pattern outlined. Despite this warning, on the first day of the LDM, students enter into this room and the pattern is disturbed: students are greeted by staff and invited to a table of prepared name tags; the desks and tables are pushed against the walls; the chairs are arranged in a circle; hymn books and agenda sheets are placed on every chair; a short table sits in the centre of the circle; on the table a large map of Canada is surrounded by the names of each of this year's LDM participants. As students show up they are introduced one to another, invited to take their nametag, and welcomed to take a seat in the circle.

When all have arrived, staff offer a few words of greeting and introduction. The remarks indicate the desire to create an atmosphere of supportive community at the LDM where differences are accepted and everyone is understood to be worthwhile. Making the LDM as safe as possible so that folks are encouraged to risk, stretch and grow, is identified as a hope. A vision of education, where judgmental-ism and competition are minimized, is articulated. The style of the LDM pedagogical process is outlined; the range of creative and diverse educational methods – singing, skits, discussion groups, input, journaling, reflection time, sharing – are highlighted. The integration of the

intellectual, spiritual, emotional and practical is lifted up as a goal. And sharing of responsibility for learning is named as an intentional objective.

After these staff comments, each person is asked, around the circle, to share her or his name, location and a story about getting to the module. In 2007, some of the stories are funny; some are poignant. Three of the student participants live in Winnipeg; their stories tend to focus on the potential difficulty of maintaining regular responsibilities while enrolled in this course. The ten other students come from out of province; the stress of trip arrangements, last minute travel mix-ups, households left behind, new accommodations in a new city surface as common themes.

Following the round of stories a series of "Getting in Order" exercises are introduced. In the first round, participants are asked to arrange themselves alphabetically according to their first name. A few moments of playful confusion and hubbub ensues as participants scramble to move into an A to Z line, then first names are repeated in the whole group. Participants are then instructed to take three to four minutes to share with a neighbour something about their name (e.g. meaning of the name, family history with the name). In the second round, the group is invited to organize alphabetically by last names. First and second names are voiced in the whole group. Again, participants are asked to engage a conversation with a new neighbour, but this time about birth order in families of origin. In the third round, the group sorts itself by birthdays (not years!): January 1 to December 31. Again, a discussion is suggested: a birthday party story. In a short few minutes, these exercises help the group to learn names and interact

with a variety of participants. A pleasant tone emerges; the process is active and participatory, and strives to set a welcoming, low intimidation sense of fun.

The tone shifts in the next activity. A more introverted, reflective energy is required. A work sheet is distributed and participants respond to the questions individually. Staff lead through four sets of basic questions that are intended to be open-ended and non-threatening:

> church: what kinds of activities have you been involved in?
> education: what are the programs, classes, courses that you have
>   participated in that have been really energizing?
> group life: what kind of activities give you energy in groups?
> leadership: what gifts and abilities and approaches do you bring to
>   leadership?

The questions intentionally attempt to keep the participants grounded in the positive by focussing on experiences or attributes that are seen as favourable; at this initial stage, the danger of losing participants in morass of self-recriminating moments or guilt-laden judgment is avoided. Then, participants are instructed to share, for three or four minutes, their responses to the four questions with four different colleagues: one topic/theme per pairing. Movement from one partner to the next is punctuated and facilitated by singing. Again, the process is participatory and active but it moves the level of conversation to a slightly deeper level. By this point, participants have had short one-to-one, intentional conversations with at least seven of their colleagues. In each interaction, they have revealed something about themselves and this self-disclosure means they are getting known in and getting to know the group. Gently and graciously, a sense of belonging, safety and trust is fostered.

After a short break, a sharing circle process, involving the whole group, begins. In the pre-module mailing, participants had been requested to bring a symbol or picture that represents something about them. Each person has a few minutes to say who they are, where they come from and what their visual item means to them. When they are done they place their symbol on the table in the centre of the circle and pin a slip of paper with their name on it to their location on the map of Canada. Once again, names are re-enforced; by the end of this exercise, each person's name has been spoken aloud at least five times in the whole group. Having one's name known is a key element in identification and is fundamental to being known and developing a sense of belonging.

After each symbol sharing, a printed blessing is said in unison to the person. The liturgical action of the blessing honours the presence of each individual, deepens the affective poignancy of the moment and connects the community in a shared articulation of faith and an intentional expression of spirituality.

In 2007, the students' symbols have been selected with thoughtfulness and care. Family photographs, a hymn book, a marathon medal, a painted silk prayer cloth, a rock from a First Nations talking circle, an African stone sculpture, a tee shirt from a church musical, a personalized calendar (which was a job departure gift) were some of the offerings. And in the sharing people revealed poignant and intimate details of their lives: divorce, cancer, sexual orientation, personality quirks, geographic alliances, spiritual crises, vocational changes, political commitments, relational issues, faith perspectives. In part of one short morning,

people were, willingly and easily, moving toward mutuality of connection and community. By disclosing something about themselves they were opening themselves; by hearing about their colleagues they were letting others in.

Most of the rest of the morning is devoted to a review and clarification of the LDM schedule and norms. Documents had been circulated previously to participants by mail. However, perhaps inevitably, some level of discomfort and anxiety is associated with unknown territory. All the participants are experiencing something new. Some people come to educational experiences with fear and trembling, because of past history. Learning involves vulnerability and uncertainty. Reviewing the schedule and norms provides another opportunity for expectations to be explained and for the staff to extend reassurance.

The morning ends with journaling, evaluation and announcements. These three activities become a standard practice for finishing all the LDM sessions. Journaling encourages reflection on feelings and thoughts. Evaluation normalizes feedback and critical thinking. Announcements enhance communication and transparency. At lunch, in a gesture of hospitality and welcome, CCS provides a simple meal.

Evaluations from the 2007 participants included many favourable comments about this opening session:

-A safe place of trust was quickly created.
-It was welcoming and set the tone for the circle.
-I was impressed with how quickly we became a community.
-Community building was very helpful. I would not have been able to share
    fully had we not done the work.

It would be very unlikely that the beginning session for a traditional theological course would look like the one just described. The focus on relationships and creating climate might receive some attention in a traditional setting, but it is more typical that the instructor would do the majority of the talking, and that content would prevail over process.

I would strongly suggest that it is worth the effort to spend time building community. Deliberately focussing on process more than content, the first session of the LDM establishes a crucial atmosphere and pattern. Firstly, it honours the relationships and people who will be working together for three weeks. At the LDM, in order to learn well together these students need to know and trust one another. Beyond the LDM, leadership in ministry demands a respectful ability to connect with others and the skills and attitudes that give a prime place to people and relationships. The theological educators who were calling for more communal approaches to ministry preparation, in the second chapter, would applaud these initiatives taken at the LDM.

Secondly, the participatory nature of the process signals that this will be an active style of learning. Even though permission to pass is given and the opportunity to temporarily withdraw is an option, it is impossible to sit in the back row of an LDM circle; the activities necessitate engagement and involvement and they do not have to be tedious or dry. In her work, *Teaching to Transgress,* bell hooks indicates:

> The first paradigm that shaped my pedagogy was the idea that the classroom should be an exciting place, never boring. And if boredom should ever prevail, then pedagogical strategies were needed that would intervene, alter, even disrupt the atmosphere. … The idea that learning

should be exciting, sometimes even "fun," was the subject of critical discussion by educators writing about pedagogical practices in grade schools, and sometimes even high schools. But there seemed to be no interest among either traditional or radical educators in discussing the role of excitement in higher education.[2]

In the next chapter we will consider the educational theory of experiential learning, and demonstrate that the LDM is a working model of this theory.

Thirdly, the LDM demands self-reflection and personal investment. Articulation and consideration of one's own ministry and life experience become principal, and immediate, sources for learning and growth. In subsequent chapters, the importance of critical reflection on experience is discussed in relation to theories of transformational learning.

Honouring Diversity: Personality Indicators

On Wednesday morning of the first week of the LDM, after the students have had five sessions together, a session concentrating on personality indicators is offered. The material and activities of this session are intended to deepen one's understanding of self and others. Clearly, this focus in the LDM curriculum reflects a belief that, in ministry and leadership, self-awareness is critical, and that respectful appreciation for others, despite differences, is crucial.

The participants begin the session reflecting on the journaling question: "What are some of the major aspects of my personality?" This moment presents an opportunity for the participants to collect their thoughts before theories are introduced. As the session progresses they are able to test their initial responses over against the ideas of the various personality indicators.

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[2] bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York/London: Routledge, 1994), 7.

The session covers a number of indicators and stresses a range of theories rather than centring on one specific model.[3] This broad approach intentionally keeps a variety of factors and standards in mind when assessing oneself or others. It does mean that a lot of material is covered and students have to cope with a revolving series of overviews.

In introducing the session, the staff strongly encourage students to "wear lightly" the work of personality indicators. Firstly, the danger of labelling a person with a trait can reduce complex reality to limited dynamics. The students are reminded that people are more complicated than a restricted array of behaviours presented in most of the personality models. Secondly, naming a characteristic can become determinative rather than descriptive. Students are cautioned that once a trait is identified it can start to have power over actions and limit one's imaginable range of behavioural options. Thirdly, the models tend to assume a universalism that ignores context. The models assume that people will act in similar ways in most situations; the indicators make little allowance for the impact of circumstances or the myriad of situational dynamics that influence behaviour. Fourthly, the tests that are employed to assess personality types are flawed and suspect. They do not take into account a number of internal self-deceiving factors or external pressures that may lead to false results. Personality indicators cannot claim to be perfect tools.

Nevertheless, the set of personality indicators explored at the LDM provide some structure for considering one's own tendencies, as well as some

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[3] By this point in the LDM, students have also had a chance to plot their "scores" in relation to the Learning Style Inventory, another tool in personality indication.

frameworks for understanding dynamics in others. As the strengths and weaknesses of various personality polarities are reviewed, the staff repeatedly uphold a vision of diversity honoured. Over and over, the staff stress that behaviours other than one's own typical actions are not necessarily wrong; they are different. The indicators prove invaluable in working in teams and planning groups; participants have a shared language to re-frame potential frustrations and discrepancies in terms of difference. The personality models help students to see the benefits of "looking behind" behaviour and broadening their understanding by seeing through another's view point.

Myers-Briggs is the first indicator studied. Students arrive in class with a short test completed.[4] The four polarities of the model:

-extroversion/introversion
-sensate/intuitive
-feeling/thinking
-judging/perceiving

are described using a series of projected cartoons which prove to be amusing and illustrative, as well as helpful for visual learners. Between each set of polarities, students are asked to share their test scores. Scores are plotted on the chalk board and discussion is solicited about responses, insights, questions and concerns. The next step asks the students to select one of the four polarities and move into a small group to explore further the dynamics of that particular set. Each group begins with discussion and participants are asked to consider persons in their lives who exhibit these traits, and identify the gifts and tensions related to these set of characteristics. Each group is given a set of theologically

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[4] The text used is David Kiersey and Marilyn Bates, *Please Understand Me* (Nemesis, CA: Prometheus, 1978).

related questions specifically geared toward their group and asked to develop a creative report back from their discussion. In 2007, one group moved themselves into a human sculpture illustrating the spiritual needs of extraverts and introverts. Another group using some props playfully mimed the differences between a sensate's rigorous collection of information and the intuitive's instinctive epistemological approach. The thinking and feeling group offered a delightful skit where biblical sisters, Mary and Martha, were portrayed with the characteristics of the two poles. And the judgement and perception group demonstrated the differences through enacting two (excruciating!) church meetings held under the dominance of each style. In these "report backs", poles might be satirized but an understanding prevailed: no pole is wrong or bad; there is gift and benefit to each approach.

The examination of the Gregorc Style Delineator is marked by similar wisdom. The four poles in this indicator – random and sequential, abstract and concrete – particularly relate to approaches to learning. To explore this model, the group is asked to place themselves physically in the room. First the random/sequential axis is described and students move left or right according to their self-perception. Secondly, the abstract/concrete axis is explained and participants step forward or backward in relation to their understanding of their preferences. After this exercise, students are in groups and each group is given a mixed assortment of hard, wrapped candy. The groups are invited to sort their candy. In 2007, the concrete/sequential group organized their candies in rows corresponding to shape, size and variety; the abstract/random group arranged

their candies into a replica of a flower. This exercise clearly depicts the tensions in a demonstrative way. Also, an appreciative tone of understanding emerges: my way is only one way; other ways are equally valid.

To explore Edward DeBono's concept of the Six Thinking Hats[5], participants don appropriately coloured hats and role play a discussion about where to go for lunch. This model emphasizes possible roles in the planning process: the black and white hat gathers information; the red hat responds at a feeling level; the grey hat cautiously sees difficulties; the yellow hat remains optimistic and positive; the green hat represents the creative thinker; the blue hat has a "big picture" overview. As part of the de-briefing, students identify the benefits and gifts of each of the "hats." Again, diversity is honoured; even those traits one deems as irritating can teach us lessons and broaden our horizons.

The last personality indicator categorizes four types of leadership styles: *charismatics* who offer a traditional follow-my-vision approach, *lovers* who lead through warmth of relationship, *peers* who are democratic and "one of the gang", and *technicals* whose strength is organization. Through this last indicator, another model is introduced that holds up another structure and set of classifications to consider behaviours and actions for oneself and for one's colleagues. Once again, the staff attempt to honour each of the approaches by highlighting both merits and shortcomings in each of the leadership styles. Charismatics may miss the contributions of others but they have vision and can get things accomplished; lovers may not focus on the task but they are brilliant at

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[5] For the purposes of the LDM, the writings of Edward DeBono, *Six Thinking Hats* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1985) have been adapted.

maintaining relationships; peers may never initiate but they are wonderful at consultation; technicals may become overly bureaucratic but they can administrate. Students are asked to appreciate the gift of their own style and work on broadening their repertoire to include other approaches. As well, they are encouraged to value other ways of operating than their own.

The personality indicators session illustrates several essential commitments of the LDM. Firstly, on-going reflection on self-knowledge is viewed as crucial to leadership in ministry. One needs to continue the work of understanding oneself and one's impact on others in order to provide sensitive and suitable ministry. In subsequent chapters, such critical reflection will be heralded as an essential process in transformational learning.

Secondly, one's personal preferences and style cannot become the only measure by which appropriate behaviour is tested. One needs to realize that other approaches and attitudes can offer alternative and broader vision. Successful teaming in ministry depends on a respectful valuing of other gifts than one's own. In the second chapter, voices crying for leadership in ministry that was less individualistic and more collaborative were heard; these authors would appreciate the efforts made at the LDM to uphold cooperative models.

Thirdly, creative process honours diversity. A variety of activities and educational methods allows for the engagement of a range of learning styles and moods. In the second chapter, acknowledgement was made that epistemology cannot be limited to the cognitive or privileged to the cerebral. In the fifth

chapter, educational theorists will concur; the ways of knowing are many and varied.

Honouring Faith Understanding: Theological Reflection

On the first afternoon of the LDM, a session on learning styles is held, and the work of David Kolb is introduced and a preliminary reference is made to the use of the four quadrants – concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation – as the spiral method of theological reflection. On the first Thursday morning, students are led through a process where they engage in and practise use of the spiral.

As has become familiar, the session begins with journaling. The questions inquire about personal understandings of theological reflection and any concerns or wonderings about it. The staff introduction attempts to de-mystify theological reflection by setting an invitational, reassuring tone and inviting participants to set aside anxiety or fears of inadequacy.

A reader's theatre script is used to give background, re-tell and interpret the story of Jacob wrestling with the stranger/angel/God[6] in a poetic and contemplative fashion. Each participant in the circle is assigned parts. The script highlights and raises significant questions about the nature of God, theological anthropology, doubt and faith, guilt and forgiveness, suffering and blessing. In discussion groups, following the reading, participants examine an English translation of the Genesis text and practise using the spiral reflection model with a set of questions:

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[6] Genesis 32: 24-30

-As we know it from Genesis, what was the concrete experience (i.e. the narrative plot)?
-What do you observe as you reflect on the story?
-What theological ideas or abstract concepts arise for you?
-How does the story impact on you for the future?

Groups are asked to report back on one significant insight from each quadrant.

In 2007, the concrete experience quadrant question elicited a range of elements

of the story: Jacob's history of wrong-going, the assailant asking Jacob for

release, the change of Jacob's name to Israel. From the reflective observation

question, groups highlighted: the struggle and tension between Jacob and the

assailant, the night time setting, and wounded pain of Jacob's hip. Dealing with

abstract concepts solicited another range of ideas: transformation occurs through

struggle and God is willing to wrestle with us, we all carry scars and pain, Jacob

was a flawed hero and God did not give up on him. In the active experimentation

section, a variety of applications ensued: engage in the hard work of cultivating

relationship with God, face your own past failings and flaws, communities are

flawed heroes too and need to apologize (e.g. residential schools). Indeed, the

reports of the groups signified a rich connection to the story and to the work of

theological reflection, at personal, spiritual and political levels.

After the break, the staff had set up an art installation. Tables had been

moved to the centre of the room. Diagonally across the tables, a series of quilt

squares depicted the days of the first creation story. To one side, the beauty of

the natural world was celebrated. Lush landscape art, planted flora, rocks in

spirals, photographs of the star-lit heavens, bowls of water and images of rivers

and oceans, psalms extolling the wonders of the earth, prayers praising the

Creator, pictures of animals, birds and fish, adorned one half of the installation. The other half lamented the ecological disaster of the planet. Garbage was strewn amid statistics of climate change, facts about air pollution, depictions of urban over-population, visions of clear cut logging, advertisements for SUVs, articles about consumerism and intercessions for our planet home.

Participants were asked to enter the room in silence. They encountered a candle-lit room where soft music was playing. A contemplative hush incorporated the room. This portion of the exercise constituted the "concrete experience" of the spiral.

After viewing the installation, students moved into a private time for "reflective observation." Journaling questions guided this process:

-What did I see?
-What images "leapt out" for me?
-What were my feelings as I viewed the "art installation"?
-How did the experience unsettle or challenge me?
-How did it give me hope or vision?

On a signal of music, students moved into random groupings of two or three to address the "abstract conceptualization" aspect of the spiral. Using scripture (Genesis 1:26-31) and tradition (a series of hymn lyrics), participants considered the ideas and images raised for them in the exercise. Finally, the group moved into the "active experimentation" phase of the spiral using another set of journaling questions to identify future actions, strategies for change, blocks to engagement and possibilities for further study.

In a time of evaluation and de-briefing, students of 2007 offered emotions and insights that stood out for them from the experience. Some expressed

sadness and a sense bordering on despair. One person recounted his initial

intellectualization of the exercise until he reacted with anger when he

encountered a rock with a sand-blasted logo on it; he saw it as a symbol of

humankind's invasive nature. Another person discovered a sign of life in a

caterpillar who had migrated from a dying tree branch to a discarded coffee cup.

Still another focussed on the candle light in the room as her image of hope.

Others talked about follow up commitments and the need to stay informed.

Clearly this was a powerful event in the cycle of the LDM. Participants were

actively engaged. Four pedagogical domains of theological education –

interpretation, formation, contextualization, performance – were introduced in

chapter two. In just one session, a serious commitment in each of these areas is

demonstrated. Scripture and tradition are discussed and interpreted; spirituality

and ethics are incorporated and respected; social and ecological contexts are

identified and considered; skills in theological reflection and strategic planning

are enhanced.

Honouring Life Story: Faith Journeys

Monday evening of the second week, the sharing of faith journeys begins.

For many of the participants, it ranks as the most significant time at the LDM.

Some of comments offered from the 2007 evaluation forms testify to the

meaningfulness attached to the process:

> -Draining but an incredible experience.
> -Very helpful – made me reflect intentionally about where I have been and
>   where I am.
> -Wow. Powerful and amazing to hear our back stories.

-Moving. I know I learned so much during that day and a half. It was very difficult but rewarding.
-Wonderful, exhausting, treated with such care and compassion -- it truly felt like sacred time.

In this process, students are asked to reflect on their personal experience and consider how their faith and theology has been affected, informed and challenged in light of the circumstances of their life. A handout offers guidelines and suggestions to students as they prepare for their time of sharing. Individually, persons prayerfully identify the impact of their own story on their practice of ministry and understanding of faith. For persons preparing for and/or engaged in ministry, whether lay or ordered, considering these matters needs to become an essential and disciplined habit, and the LDM sharing of faith journeys models this practice. Such critical reflection on experience is an essential element in transformational learning (which will be discussed in subsequent chapters).

Over the years, students have shown enormous creativity in the sharing of their stories: one person danced much of her life experience; another created a one woman play; several have incorporated music; many have employed symbols and images; poetry and art have been used; always story-telling is primary, and poignant, methodology.

Students are invited to bring their fifteen-minute time slot to a close[7] by picking a verse of a favourite or appropriate hymn that the group joins in singing. Then, a short ritual litany ends each time of sharing:

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[7] Students are asked to appoint, ahead of time, someone in the group who will provide time signals. The staff are very clear about the time constraints of the exercise; the need to respect the time of others who also will be sharing their stories is cited. Also, it takes energy for the listeners to engage in the intensity of so many stories, therefore, those sharing need to confine their presentations to the prescribed time limits.

> Thank you, ____N___, we respectfully acknowledge your story and your
>   spirit,
> **We receive your story and your spirit of grace and gift.**
> You have honoured us by sharing your journey, ___N___.
> **You have blessed us by sharing your journey, ___N___.**
> May your continuing journey be blessed.
> **Amen.**

setting a tone of prayerful recognition.

The sharing of faith journeys involves an intimacy that demands

confidentiality, compassion and a supportive climate. Over the years, many

participants have told hurtful stories: painful stories of abuse and betrayal,

harassment and abandonment, sickness and estrangement. As well, over the

years, a witness to the dignity and determination of the human spirit has been

upheld: stories of reconciliation and renewal, healing and hope, revelation and

wisdom.

As a staff person, I am conscious that we are asking participants to enter

into a most personal exercise where a level of vulnerability is inevitable. I am

clear that this is not a therapy session; while colleagues and staff constitute a

supportive community environment, they are not present as counsellors.

Repeatedly, we remind students to frame their life stories in the light of

theological insights. In the preparation and writing of their faith journey, they are

practising the art of connecting personal story with the themes of the stories of

faith. As staff, we take pains to remind the students that relating a chronological

autobiography or unveiling a catalogue of "unfinished business" are not the

purposes of this exercise. We pointedly ask students to set appropriate

boundaries around what they can handle sharing and what it is they feel

appropriate for others to know about them. Some safeguards are in place: chaplains are available for the whole of the LDM, contact information for crisis lines is posted, and staff follow up with students checking in formally and informally. I know there are risks, and I feel strongly about the importance of the ethics of "do no harm" and "duty of care."

I also know the incredible benefits and depth of connection that happen when one's story is heard and accepted. Colleagues are required to listen to others' stories in a way that demonstrates attentiveness, empathy and care. In this way, participants are offering, and practising, the fundamental ministry skill of being a respectful, listening presence. They are learning to "hang in" while hearing about the ups and downs of a human life.

Corporately, as individuals become known to one another at such an intimate level, the group is further strengthened through the depth of such sharing. We often hear the comment, "I have never told anyone that before"; participants are testifying to the sense of belonging they feel at the LDM. I am thrilled that they feel accepted and supported; I am saddened that this type of connection is not more normative in our congregations and that people do not have opportunities to be really known.

The faith journey sharing does not typically happen in traditional, academically based seminaries. As a venue for theological reflection, personal experience is viewed, at least to some extent, with suspicion. In including this type of activity in the curriculum of the LDM, CCS is affirming that theological education needs to include the "slings and arrows" of real lives. While not

teaching in a theological setting, bell hooks makes the case that education needs to include mean-making opportunities:

> While it is utterly unreasonable for students to expect classrooms to be therapy sessions, it is appropriate for them to hope that the knowledge received in these settings will enrich and enhance them…I do not think that they want therapy from me. They do want an education that is healing to the uninformed, unknowing spirit. They do want knowledge that is meaningful. They rightfully expect that my colleagues and I will not offer them information without addressing the connection between what they are learning and their overall life experiences.[8]

I would contend that we do not have to set experience against scholarship, spirituality against ideas, emotion against cognition. I would suggest, with the theological educators reviewed in chapter two and with the educational theorists in subsequent chapters, that when are working toward integration of head and heart, theory and practice, we are doing our most important and compelling ministry.

<div align="center">Honouring Vocation: Diaconal Formation</div>

The goals of the diaconal formation session aim to address a sweep of biblical, and early church history. Some introduction to present day dynamics and denominational understandings of diakonia is also undertaken.

Central symbols of diakonia – water, basin and towel – punctuate the session on diaconal history. The first time the bowl is passed around the circle, participants are asked to indicate something about their present understanding of diaconal ministry. This ritual enables each person to reflect on her or his current understanding, share thoughts and listen to others' experience and thinking.

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[8] hooks, 19.

The readings assigned for this section provide helpful historical background and ecumenical perspectives. A playful quiz is conducted based on the articles. The material is reviewed, in a fun and energetic fashion.

Following the quiz, the 2007 students are divided into four groups. One group reviews the sections in the articles related to biblical background. They are asked to develop symbols for *diakonein* (the verb)*, diakonos* (the person) and *diakonia* (the office)*.* For their report back this small group drew one person engaged in footwashing to indicate the interconnection of the concepts. Another small group works on diaconal history in the early centuries of the church. They develop a time line tracing the development and decline of the diaconate from 150 - 600 C.E.   A third group examines the structure of the offices of ministry, particularly connected to the diaconate, from three eras: biblical, ante-Nicene and post-Nicene. A final group investigates the role of women in the diaconate of the early church. The orders of widows, virgins and deaconesses are analyzed. This discussion group reports back using a visual "coat of arms" for each of the three orders.

Water is, then, poured in the bowl and it is passed around the circle. Each person is asked to indicate some insight from this time of research. Students are pleased to be learning this material and touched by their sense of connection with diaconal history.

After the break, the staff offer a few comments about present day understandings of the diaconate. These words focus on the Anglican and United Church perspectives with some reference to other denominational practices.

Students, then, move into groups of two or three and are asked to recall persons they know who are in the diaconate. They are to reflect on the service, spirit and style of these persons in particular, and what that signifies for the diaconate in general. Remembering specific persons in diaconal ministry brings a tangible reality to the dialogue and reminds the group of the breadth and variety of diaconal expressions of ministry. A time of whole group discussion follows these conversations.

The bowl ritual is, then, repeated one last time. This time each person is asked to wash the hands of the person next to her or him, and identify something that she or he wants to learn concerning diaconal ministry. Several want to pursue more historical investigations. Others are interested in exploration of ecumenical partners. One or two, not officially connected to, or preparing for, the diaconal stream in the order of ministry, name a desire to be more substantively supportive. Appreciation is expressed for the positive presentation and the integration of reflective prayerfulness in the process.

One student wrote in her evaluation:

I loved the way ritual was wound into the afternoon and it gave us all a sense of the sacredness of this ministry. I learned much about the history and that greatly increased my understanding of the roots of diakonia. It also intrigued me to look closer at the wider network of the diakonia.

This diaconal formation session provided a strong opportunity for LDM participants to consider their call and their place in ministry. In subsequent chapters, we will be examining the importance of vocational identity in relation to transformational learning.

Honouring Feedback: Closure

The last day of the LDM intentionally focuses on closure. Inevitably, the LDM creates and maintains an intensity of communal feeling and personal learning; participants need an opportunity to mark the transition and say goodbye.

Preparation for the last day also involves a personal review of learnings where each participant identifies areas of learning and places where they feel they need further work. The CCS outcomes document, *Guidelines for Readiness*, indicates areas of expected competency against which students can evaluate themselves.

As well, in a process of peer assessment, student colleagues, and staff, identify four or five "affirmations" and one or two "encouragements" for each member of their small group. The instructions for this task ask participants to tie their feedback to specific *Guidelines* statements, and also to include concrete examples of behaviours being mentioned.

In the small group process, each student takes a turn presenting her/his learnings and areas for further work. Following this presentation, the group shares its feedback with the individual. Time for singing or silence or prayer, begin and end each student's time.

After each student has presented, time is allotted for students to consider the feedback they have received and to construct an initial strategic plan to address observations. Back in the small group each student shares the ideas for next steps.

The process is intense, but the learning is vital. The evaluation forms from 2007, give evidence to this:

-The paperwork is overwhelming at times but rewarding as you can't get away with just saying 'good job.' You really have to think about it. And now I think my contributions are more valuable.
-...it has built my faith to have the concrete experience of having others talk to me about my humanness and about what I offer the world.
-A word of thanks for a great process that affirmed and gave me a gentle push to where I need to go.

The intentionality of this evaluation process stresses the importance of reflection. Each student has to consider and pull together a report on what was most significant in their learning and to identify goals for on-going growth. Each student, also, has to consider a number of their student colleagues and determine which areas of ministry to affirm and to challenge. They are encouraged to think carefully and critically. In subsequent chapters, we will be exploring this dynamic of critical reflection in the process of transformational learning.

The last evening begins with a slide show presentation of photographs taken during the three weeks. This presentation offers a visual memory for the event, which elicits some laughter, many sighs and a wistful reminder that this experience is coming to an end.

Then using a talking circle format, each person one at a time around the circle identifies learnings and "things they want to say to the community." Many poignant comments were made in 2007. With much emotion, a gay man commented that he felt accepted and not just tolerated. One woman announced that, as a result of her positive LDM experience, she had asked her congregation

to start a process with her to help her discern her vocational direction.[9] Another

participant began singing the opening line from the hymn, "Holy, holy, holy"

because he felt this had been such a sacred experience.

The evening closes with a simple ritual: symbols of the faith are passed

around the circle from hand to hand as words of blessing and commissioning are

spoken individual to individual:

> *-after the bible*: May you continue to connect your story with the story of
>   God's people.
> *-after the loaf*: Bread for the journey.
> *-after the wine*: May your cup always overflow.
> *-after the basin and towel*: May you live in love and service.

The significance of the experience is not limited to the knowledge gained but is

broadened and deepened by the relationships made, the self-awareness

developed, the spirits moved and the hearts touched.

At the LDM the focus and atmosphere that is created is different than the

learned tradition of the seminary classroom. Eloquent, evocative lectures are

more likely to be replaced, at the LDM, by shorter periods of input followed by

opportunities to discuss, process or apply theory. The intellectual "thrust and

parry" of seminar debates is more likely supplanted by a gentler opportunity to

consider, explore, and weigh material. Pedagogical models based on

transmission of knowledge are augmented by an epistemological

acknowledgement of body, heart and soul, as well as mind.

This approach risks ridicule. Some are suspicious of the program's

educational design and practice. Some voice scepticism, and suggest CCS

lacks rigour; CCS is intellectually shallow. Creative processes are labelled "Arts

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[9] Some of these stories are told in more depth in chapter six, in light of elements of transformational learning theory.

and Crafts." Community building and revelation of personal stories are considered "Touchy/Feely." Attention to atmosphere and environment is written off as "Sunday School." Non-didactic methodology is regarded as "Mickey Mouse."

Without being defensive, I would counter that the sessions described in this chapter represent a healthy and holistic alternative to much of traditional theological education. In chapter 2, many theological educators indicated a desire to move in the direction where relationships and process share an equal place with content and information sharing. At the LDM, personal life experiences are recognized rather than ignored. At CCS, emphasis on community establishes an alternative to individualism. Engagement is expected; one is not able to "hide in the back." Creativity and playfulness are demonstrated in the educational design; a variety of "ways of knowing" are respected. Differences are acknowledged in a non-judgmental atmosphere of curiosity. Theology, tradition, and personal experience are explored in a reflective integrated spirituality. Vocational aspirations are nurtured. Learners are treated as adults responsible for their own learning. In the next chapter we will explore theories of education that under gird the practice of theological education at CCS.

CHAPTER FIVE

DYNAMICS OF CHANGE:

VOICES OF EDUCATIONAL THEORISTS

As an innovative theological program, the Leadership Development Module (LDM) of the Centre for Christian Studies (CCS) reflects a rich mix and eclectic understanding of various adult education theories. *Self-directed* learning theory celebrates diversity in individual learning styles and interests, and proposes the use of educational methodologies that open up instructor dominated learning. At the LDM, this theory is concretely applied in a number of ways: exploration of personality and learning styles, setting of individual learning goals, and engagement with personal assessment processes. During the LDM, significant time is spent developing community and deepening the relational aspects of education. In some ways this reflects *organizational* learning theory, which directs its attention to the corporate and communal nature of education and change. *Strength-based* schools of thought challenge pathology-based pedagogies that view the learner as deficient, and instead, highlight the students' abilities and talent. At the LDM, actions are affirming and encouraging; a safe and trusting atmosphere is created where students are invited to embrace an approach to learning that is neither competitive nor harshly judgmental. Throughout the LDM, students are involved in innovative activities and evocative exercises that ask for tangible participation, and are then followed by practices of

analytic consideration and meditative contemplation. The thesis of *experiential* learning scholars champions this kind of "hands-on" engagement coupled with reflective discipline. *Transformational* learning theory explores the changes and shifts in perspectives that happen in learning in relation to the dynamics of critical reflection, identity formation, integrative insight, and subsequent action. The LDM aims to be a transforming experience by using critical reflection as a means and goal of learning, addressing the vocational identity of students as ministers, guiding toward an integrated wholeness of person, and encouraging appropriate new behaviours as a result of new insights and "aha's."

Change through Self-Awareness: Self-Directed Learning

One of the interviewees for this project, pointed to the self-directed nature of the CCS program, indicating that it is a completely new learning orientation that forces the learner to grapple with content and application;

> I mean the curriculum is set out but what I'm going to learn or what I think I need to learn for the curriculum, I'm the one that has to figure it out. ... that is the piece that really adds to the workload, and yet, the outcome.

At CCS, we celebrate some of the advantages of a "self-directed" approach but we also bring a critique of some of its excesses.

The term "self-directed learning" encompasses a broad scope of educational usage and approach: from solitary activity to individual inquiry projects, from remote access programs to directed reading courses, from a philosophic sense of responsible engagement to necessary pragmatic practice.

P. C. Candy locates the methodologies of learning instruction on a continuum. [1]

At one end of the continuum are teacher-controlled strategies such as

indoctrination, lectures, direct lessons, and instruction. At the other end of the

continuum, learner controlled processes – independent study, discovery learning,

case methods, distance education, student research – allow more freedom of

choice and flexibility.

Some of the processes used at the LDM that would qualify as self-directed

include: knowing one's own learning and personality styles, setting one's own

learning goals, identifying one's own learning and areas for further work, shaping

one's own assignment topics; drafting and discussing case studies.

Fundamentally, self-directed learning theory asserts that learning is meant for the

student not the teacher. The teaching staff at the LDM tend not lecture or

provide long bouts of didactic input, but to structure exercises for exploring topics

and themes; students have a lot of opportunity to select and discuss aspects of

the material that intrigue and interest them.

Self-direction advocates allege that this approach to learning solves

problems related to motivation, participation and relevance. They claim that self-

directed learning addresses concerns about the inflexibility of traditional

educational institutions and recognizes the importance of respecting diversity of

learning styles in any educational setting. This certainly proves true at the LDM;

the variety of pedagogical activities is rich, and consequently, the student

motivation is high, too.

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[1] Philip C. Candy, *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice* (San Francisco/Oxford: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

Several theorists seek to identify self-direction as an outcome for learning; they uphold learning that leads to autonomy. The characteristics included in attempts to define autonomous learners include: independence, self-responsibility, control over actions, capacity for decision making and critical judgements, the ability to express norms and limitations of the learning setting, and a sense of personal values and beliefs. One assessment tool measures psychological factors such as: initiative, independence, persistence, responsibility, self-discipline, curiosity, goal-orientation and outlook.[2] Such tests might aid in the admissions process and have potential in screening. Unfortunately, Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffaralla suggest that the findings of such tools are "confusing and contradictory."[3]

I would, also, contend that characteristics of autonomy should not be considered free of context. An autonomous learner in one situation might become, often appropriately, a dependent learner in another situation. From circumstance to circumstance, context to context, skill levels, familiarity, competence, and commitment vary and influence individual behaviour.

Principles of self-directed learning include egalitarian participation and the primacy of the learner, and therefore, authorize the sharing of power and control within the learning situation. Candy posits that it is the goal of all education to develop people who are morally, emotionally and intellectually autonomous. According to Candy, a constantly changing world calls for continual adaptation, and thus, learners who are curious and independent need to be fostered and

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[2] Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Cafferella, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide (Second Edition)* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999)*,* 306.

[3] Ibid, 307.

encouraged. At CCS, we expect students to live into this level of maturity in learning. They must be able to draft learning goals that will "stretch" them, to set up field placements without constant staff monitoring, to hear and respond to continual feedback.

However compelling the justifications for self-directed learning theory, at CCS, we do not uncritically endorse its ideology. Practically, while self-directed learning can be freeing and flexible, it can also be confusing and complex. Learners often need structure and support. That is not necessarily a bad or weak thing. When a learner lacks sufficient knowledge to make a beginning or take progressive steps, suspending one's independence is often a strategic and appropriate choice. As CCS staff, as we deal and connect with students, we attempt to discern the suitable balance between offering support and setting free, between clear structure and creative options.

Proponents of self-direction, also, assume that adult learners know what is best for themselves. This is not always the case. Resistance is a reality amongst learners; students elude challenge, do not expand their horizons or do not willingly enter into experiencing previously untried or unpreferred learning situations. In some cases, they do not know enough to know what they need to know and so cannot even fathom what they might need to learn. Consequently, educators must take up the responsibility of challenging their students. Often it is easier to let students slide or choose the simpler path. Often it is more comfortable to avoid conflict or dodge confrontation. Often it is more popular to make peace or affirm safe choices. Yet, even in an organization like CCS where

we are committed to the image of co-learning, the teacher's role involves

directing the learners. Writing from the perspective of an Afro-American woman

who grew up in poverty, bell hooks talks about this tension in her teaching:

> I was deeply afraid of using authority in a way that would perpetuate class elitism and other forms of domination. Fearful that I might abuse power, I falsely pretended that no power difference existed between students and myself. That was a mistake. Yet it was only as I began to interrogate my fear of "power" – the way that fear was related to my own class background where I had so often seen those with class power coerce, abuse and dominate those without – that I began to understand that power itself was not negative. It depended what one did with it. It was up to me to create ways within my professional power constructively…[4]

At the LDM, every learner is given the opportunity to name her or his own

learning and take responsibility for next steps. At the same time, outcome

standards, and staff and collegial input, address avoidance of, or resistance to,

change. At the LDM, and in the subsequent pieces of setting up field placements

and responding to assignments, CCS staff do not abduct responsibility to lead

and shape learning. They attempt to use their "professional power

constructively."

At some level, expertise can be trivialized in self-directed learning theory.

This may lead to the dangers of educators abandoning their responsibilities by

handing over the class room to the preferences or impulses of the learners who

may not be the wisest ones to shape their own training. In the LDM circle,

learner's experience is welcomed and explored; opportunities are given for each

person to speak and contribute. At the same time, through the pre-reading

material and the staff leadership, the expertise of those who have devoted

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[4] hooks, 187-188.

extensive time and energy to thinking about or developing skills related to certain topics is valued.

Self-directed learning advocates appropriately condemn education that borders on group-think conformity. Yet, they only grudgingly admit to the social nature of learning and the interdependence of human community, and thereby contribute to an uncritical individualistic perspective. Marcie Boucouvalas challenges that brand of individualism and the value assumption inherent in honouring autonomy.[5] She raises the notion of homonomy – the merit of connection and relationship to the whole – and celebrates communal activities such as teaming, sharing and networking. CCS principal, Caryn Douglas, describes the program as "self-directed learning *in* community - in contrast to a liberal notion that whatever I want to do is fine."[6] The school attempts to embrace the best of self-directed learning theory; conventional education can result in a tyranny of conformity that does not respect diversity and difference. CCS also tries to avoid the concerns and dangers; a self-satisfied streak of individualism or unfocused scrambling can arise in self-directed approaches.

Change through Community: Organizational Learning

The LDM fosters a communal approach to learning. Time is spent assembling as peers and cultivating relationships. Respect for diversity is entrenched in content, norms and procedures. Processes allow each voice to be heard. Competition is minimized by use of interactive feedback rather than

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[5] Merriam and Cafferella, 310.

[6] In conversation with Caryn Douglas, December 10, 2007.

numerical grades. Cooperation is promoted on student planning teams. Conflict management is both instructed and practised from models of restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution. Evaluations are offered as mutual learning opportunities where students begin to embrace feedback as normative and helpful.

In some respects, the LDM reflects elements of the school of adult education theory called organizational learning. Proponents of this model push beyond an emphasis on individualism and study models for learning collectively. This school of thought embraces a communal analysis and approach. Learning organizations are characterized by commitment to, and valuing of, transformation and development.

The writing in this field has emerged largely from a business perspective. Organizational learning receives enthusiastic support from corporate practitioners who value this approach for its management insights. Appreciation is expressed for organizational learning's increase of openness and flexibility in the process of developing creative solutions.

The elements that foster a learning organization generate considerable discussion in the literature of the field. Argyris and Schön encourage an orientation toward productive learning that can address problematic situations with curiosity, honesty and directness.[7] Songe's theory involves the four progressive dynamics: development of individual skill, change of theoretical paradigms, identification of shared vision, and participation in team learning.[8]

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[7] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method and Practice* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

Watkins and Marsick focus on action imperatives: creating opportunities, establishing environments, opening dialogue, sharing learning, empowering vision and moving beyond.[9] Dixon employs the metaphor of the "hallway" to characterize the climate of exchange and accessibility in learning organizations; elements in "hallway" learning include: discussion not lectures, democratic participation, honouring of diversity, encouragement of "non-expert" perspective, openness to surprising outcomes.[10] DiBella, Nevis, and Gould articulate some additional factors in the learning organization: shared understanding of the gap between performance reality and vision, do-able strategies, openness to experimentation, information-sharing, conflict resolution, variety in operations, and active involvement in creation and implementation of goals. Watkins and Marsick's most recent work enumerates barriers to organizational learning; inability to recognize and alter working assumptions, individual competition, and negative learning history can block readiness to embrace organizational learning.[11]

In the previous two chapters, an outline of the care and concern that went into developing community at the LDM was offered. Many of the factors identified by the organizational learning theorists are evident in this relational approach to learning. Unfortunately, organizational learning theorists have not taken seriously several issues. Making universal claims for their work they

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[8] Merriam and Caffarella, 40.

[9] Ibid, 40-41.

[10] Nancy M. Dixon, "The Hallways of Learning." *Organizational Dynamics* 25 (Spring, 1997): 22-33.

[11] Merriam and Caffarella, 42-43.

ignore the importance of context and culture.[12] Furthermore, they pay scant

attention to the power dynamics of organizational life or of societal norms.[13]

Their leading principle asserts the primacy of examining foundational

assumptions[14], yet their own work tends to carry the presumed advantages

related to the capitalist agenda of globalization, business expansion and profit

incentive.[15]

Like organizational learning theorists, we, as staff at the LDM, very much

stress the importance of community. We highlight that learning in the circle is a

collective responsibility; we try to enhance one another's growth. In order to

nurture growth, we attempt to create and maintain a warm, invitational

atmosphere. This is not just a mindless friendliness or uncritical social relativism.

At CCS, we are theologically committed to justice, therefore we try to take issues

of context and culture seriously, and to embrace our on-going responsibility to

analyse power and social privilege. We encourage everyone in the circle to

examine foundational, personal and political, assumptions. Of course, this does

not always happen, but it remains a goal. We will examine our success as

theological educators, in this regard, as we assess the transformational impact of

the LDM in the chapters that follow.

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[12] Argyris and Schön, see 122 as one example.

[13] Ibid, 117.

[14] Organizational learning theorists contrast "single loop" and "double loop" learning. "Single loop" learning pertains to corrections or adjustments within the existing system of organizational values. This type of organizational learning is constrained to present paradigm structures. "Double loop" learning cuts across existing frameworks by restructuring present values and fundamental assumptions.

[15] Argyris and Schön, see examples on 64 and 184.

Change through Appreciation: Strength-Based Learning

CCS's commitment to justice provides a key lens for testing anthropological and theological assumptions about the traits and responsibilities ascribed to, and used to describe and understand, humanity. In traditional theological anthropology, people are envisioned as "created in God's image"[16], and yet are in a fallen state. The classic understanding paints humans as good-yet-sinful. In some ways this theological tension aptly describes the pull that I feel, as an educator, balancing affirmation and enhancement of students' self-worth with challenging blind spots and disciplining delusion and disengagement. Each learner is a blessed gift of God; each learner also has room for improvement. Issues of theological anthropology are operative in any discussion of faith education. How we consider learners, and the role of educators, reflects our assumptions about humanity.[17] At the LDM, an integrated and balanced understanding of the learner is sought. Affirmation and encouragement are stressed within an environment which tries to create safety; students are regarded as gift and blessing. Students are not treated as sinners, yet, evaluation and feedback are normalized in regular assessment and de-briefing; students have work to do and demands placed upon them to improve and move more and more fully into areas of prescribed competence.

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[16] Genesis 1: 27

[17] For a range of perspectives on theological anthropology see: Circle of Horse Running - Robert Two Bulls, "Beneath Mother Earth: The Politics of Creation Theologies," *First Peoples Theology Journal: a Journal Devoted to the Study and Expression of Indigenous Theology* 1 (2001), 2-11; Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear, 1983); Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Elements of a Mujerista Anthropology," in Ann O'Hara Graff, ed., *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 90-102; Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 120-138; Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, "Being Open to New Areas," *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment.* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 103-105.

In classical theology, sin has often been equated with pride. Feminist critique has suggested that pride is not women's greatest sin but rather the overlooking and undervaluing of self.[18] Given the historical and contemporary preponderance of women in CCS and the LDM, and the ingrained nature of sexism in our society, an emphasis is placed on self-worth in the program; personal valuing is encouraged, enabled and celebrated. CCS and the LDM are committed to empowering those whose voices have been unjustly silenced to find their voices and hear them into speech. The practice and content of the LDM seeks equal opportunity, humane inclusion, and respectful approaches.

Several educational, psychological, sociological, business and leadership theories challenge deficit-based pathology approaches to living and learning. These models suggest a shift in paradigms where problem solving is replaced by capacity building; control is supplanted by empowerment. A wide variety of authors are professing this health-based style with diverse emphases.[19] Noting that the empirical or applied behaviour sciences focus on disease, *positive psychologists* tackle the imbalance and confront the culture's preoccupation with that which is unhealthy.[20] Writers on *servant leadership* stress that growth potential is maximized by focusing on gifts and strengths.[21] Work on *self esteem* highlights the importance of acceptance, attention and the affection of others.[22]

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[18] Kirsten E. Kvam, "Anthropology, Theological" in Letty Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, eds., *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies.* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 10-12.

[19] Erik K. Laursen, "Frontiers in Strength-Based Treatment," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 12, no.1 (Spring, 2003): 12-17.

[20] Sybil Wolin, "What is Strength?" *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 12, no.1 (Spring, 2003): 18.

[21] Thomas F. Tate, "Servant Leadership for Schools and Youth Programs," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 12, no.1 (2003): 37.

[22] See the work of Stanley Coopersmith, *The Antecedents of Self Esteem* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1967), as summarized in Larry Brendtro and Scott Larson, "The Resilience Code: Finding Greatness in Youth," *Reclaiming Children*

As opposed to approaches that enforce obedience and exact punishment,

proponents of *positive peer culture* help people to discover their inherent

greatness.[23] Authors who use the term *resiliency* promote the positive attributes

of attachment, achievement, autonomy and altruism.[24] The Search Institute

identifies forty positive d*evelopmental assets,* which they see as essential

affirmative qualities.[25] Enthusiasts of *appreciative inquiry* base their work and

methodology on the assumption that "dialogue about strengths, successes,

values, hopes and dreams is itself transformational."[26]

> These approaches cannot be dismissed as rose-coloured glasses optimism:

> ...not synonymous with a naive, Pollyanna-ish, strengths only approach. On the contrary, understanding that strengths and weaknesses sit side by side in individuals is the basis of responsible strength-based practice.[27]

This movement does not deny the presence of struggle and evil, of sin or

suffering. Rather the deep pain associated with negativity, blaming and shaming,

giving up on someone, losing hope, is acknowledged and addressed.

Negative theories of learning create an environment of antagonism.

Learners are labelled in a demeaning and blaming fashion: inferior, incapable,

disruptive, or indifferent. As a result, students become apathetic, distressed or

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and Youth 12, no. 4 (2004): 194-200.

[23] See the work of H. Vorrath and L.K. Brendtro, *Positive Peer Culture* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1974) as described in Tate, "Servant Leadership for Schools and Youth Programs," 34.

[24] See the work of Frederic Flach, *Resilence: Discovering a New Strength at Times of Stress* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1989), Steven Wolin and Sybil Wolin, *The Resilient Self* (New York: Villard, 1993) as summarized in Brendtro and Larson, 194-200.

[25] Search Institute, "The Forty Developmental Assets for Adolescents" http://www.search-institute.org/assets/ Used February 8, 2008.

[26] Corporation for Positive Change, "What is Affirmative Inquiry?" http://www.positivechange.org/appreciative-inquiry.html Used February 8, 2008.

[27] Wolin, "What is Strength?" 19.

angry. In this unhealthy cycle of learning, teachers either avoid or neglect students or respond with punishment and coercion.

In a positive learning climate, all the participants are respected. All learners are considered with esteem and worth. Concerns are expressed with empathy. Teachers act in an encouraging fashion with attention to nurture and empowerment.

The strength-based philosophy of the Circle of Courage, follows a First Nations medicine wheel set of four values.[28] The first value, *belonging,* builds on kinship notions of relatedness evident in tribal cultures. Rather than the individualism of dominator cultures, a strong importance is placed on building community and the sense of identity that comes from safe and trusted connection.[29] At the LDM, every attempt is made to create a positive learning environment. A primary focus of the event centres on community building. This attention to developing a climate of trust and an atmosphere of safety proves invaluable to all the students, but especially those who have not been in a formal educational setting for a number of years, and for those whose school experience has been marred by negative history. The relational support of the group is tangibly evidenced in a caring sense of connection. At the end of the *first* day of the module, one of the participants said, "This morning, I came into this room not knowing anyone. At the end of today, I feel like I've known you folks all my life." It is easier to learn if one is not anxious about others in the

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[28] Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern, *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future (Revised Edition)* (Bloomington: National Educational Service, 2002).

[29] Martin Brokenleg, "Native Wisdom on Belonging," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 7, no. 3 (1998): 130-132.

group, if one is personally accepted, if human needs for social connection are being met, if a sense of friendly cooperation is established.

The second value, *mastery,* stresses the need for a sense of motivation and non-competitive growth in competence. The model celebrates all achievements, not just the successes of the winners.[30] Throughout its three weeks the LDM also provides lots of opportunity for meaningful achievement, and thereby participants affirmatively develop proficiency at a number of ministry skills. Students practice leadership abilities in a number of group assignments. "Report backs" frequently follow small group discussions where the students have the occasion to present. Assignments during the third week are structured for the student to receive input on their leadership.

The third value, *independence,* encompasses confidence, self-direction and freedom. This is not just a matter of self-sufficiency but the assertive autonomy and power over one's own life to make responsible decisions and solve problems with respect.[31] Educational experiences ruled by punishment and coercion result in uncomfortable situations of manipulation and submissiveness, power struggles and rebelliousness. The LDM avoids these controlling measures; independent thinking and action, not mindless obedience, is favourably encouraged at the LDM in a number of ways. Individual goal setting encourages assertiveness and responsibility. Self-discipline and self-confidence are fostered through an emphasis on affirmation. Again and again, through check-ins,

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[30] Martin Brokenleg, "Native American Perspectives on Mastery," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 7, no. 4 (1999): 194-196.

[31] Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern, and Larry Brendtro, "Raising Respectful Kids" *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 8, no.1 (1999): 22-27.

sharing circles and in pairings and small group processes, space is made where everyone has the opportunity to speak and voice opinions.

The last value, *generosity*, refers to the altruistic, empathetic, supportive qualities of caring and sharing. This value identifies the joys that accrue from kindness and courtesy, from giving and serving.[32] I would say that people care about one another at the LDM. Touching moments of concern are expressed in the natural course of the event. One morning in the 2007 LDM, a woman revealed some recent bad news about her health and she was acknowledged and offered support. A spirit of generosity prevails; a tradition in the student community is a "no questions ask" emergency fund from which students can anonymously donate or receive. Kindness is expressed in a myriad of little ways of hospitality and welcome; a participant from Winnipeg brings baking for the group. Sensitive concern is communicated when emotions are touched; a student is overwhelmed by the discussion in a small group and others send for the staff to connect with him. Respect prevails; speakers who turn their backs to a hear-impaired student, who is dependent on lip-reading, are gently reminded to turn around. Despite differences and tensions, relationships are maintained and difficulties are addressed; after a conflict with a colleague, a student processes her frustrations with staff trying to honour the gifts of the other person and to see her next steps in the relationship. The LDM community is not perfect and cannot measure up to an ideal standard, but it is amazingly caring and generous.

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[32] Martin Brokenleg, "Native American Perspectives on Generosity," *Reclaiming Children and Youth* 8, no. 2 (1999): 66-68.

Of course, dangers exist should one enter into the strength-based approach in a doctrinaire fashion. If the strength-based philosophy goes too far, a climate of "nice-ness" can disable the sharing of truth. If being kind and affirming are valued above all else, then people can abdicate their responsibility for "telling the truth in love." Times arise when pathologies must be addressed. Students have behaviours and attitudes that need correction and adjustment. As staff, and as a community responsible to the church for preparing appropriate leaders, we are called to identify faults and skill deficiencies. In my mind, the peer assessment and constant evaluation processes, at the LDM, go a long way to safeguard against this possibility of over-emphasising affirmation and "nice-ness." At the LDM, learners are esteemed as gifted persons with strengths and talents. The hope is to call forth potential and develop their competence further. The goal is to empower and enable participants to know they can make significant contributions to the work of compassion and justice.

Change through Engagement and Reflection: Experiential Learning

In much of institutional and academic education, the sharing of students' life experience has not been welcome. Talking about the academic institutions where she has taught, bell hooks, writes:

> …the prevailing pedagogical model is authoritarian, hierarchical in a coercive and often dominating way, and certainly one where the voice of the professor is the "privileged" transmitter of knowledge. Usually these professors devalue including personal experience in classroom discussion.[33]

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[33] hooks, 85.

Experiential learning theory insists that the history and experience of the learner needs to be included and upheld in educational process. The inclusion of the students' experience departs from the norm, and radically claims the importance of reflecting upon personal history and integrating learning into life.

    At CCS, our methods exemplify the pedagogy of experiential learning. In the first day of the LDM, participants are asked to introduce themselves in a variety of ways and to name several of their personal experiences. By the second day they are sharing case studies of experiences of themselves in leadership. Throughout the LDM, topics are introduced by having participants journal about their experiences with a theme (e.g. a teacher who was influential, personal connections to justice issues). In the second week, the faith journey process affords the opportunity to connect life story and theological insight. Student planning groups provide hands-on chances to practice educational ministry and teaming relationships. Processes, at the LDM, do not just transmit information or discuss content in cognitive, abstract ways; the sessions operate in the realms of the affective and kinesthetic, inviting embodied involvement in creative activities like art installations, movement and drama, art and music. Learning experiences are created in a way that is active and participatory.

    Through their years of living, adults accumulate a volume and breadth of experience. Potentially, this history can become a fruitful resource for learning. Experience itself, however, cannot be equated to learning. Experiential learning theorists stress the centrality and importance of reflecting upon experience, and not just doing or having or collecting experiences. Theorists emphasize the role

of reflection in order to turn experience into learning and changed behaviour.

The theorists emphasize different aspects of the process of reflection. Dewey

offers that attention must be paid to two principles: continuity between past and

future, and interaction between individual and environment.[34] Boud, Keogh and

Walker suggest a three stage model – objective detailing of experience,

attending to feelings, integration of new learnings – to help educators promote

deep learning through reflection.[35] Bateson contributes to the experiential

learning theory by suggesting the metaphor of the double helix as an image of

the continuous recycling of past experience.[36] Usher, Bryant and Johnston view

experience as a text or map to be used in the learning process.[37]

At the LDM, we introduce an adapted version of Kolb's four stage spiral

model of reflection which begins with the concrete experience of an event, moves

into reflective observation (descriptive reconstruction), then explores the

conceptual and abstract areas of the theoretical before the final stage of active

experimentation which involves strategies for the future.[38] Four shorthand terms

– activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist – are used by Honey and Mumford to

summarize these four learning styles/stages.[39] Barnett adds a fifth step to Kolb's

work: planning for implementation.[40] Groome's five movements of shared

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[34] Merriam and Cafferella, 223.

[35] David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker, eds., *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning,* (London: Kogan Page, 1985), 24.

[36] Merriam and Cafferella, 227.

[37] Ibid, 227-230.

[38] Kolb.

[39] Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, http://www.peterhoney.co.uk Used February 8, 2008.

[40] Merriam and Caffarella, 225.

Christian praxis have similarities to the Kolb model; differences centre mostly in the context of faith language and expression.[41] Jarvis expands the model to include nine different routes that can emanate from an experience.[42] As we introduce the spiral model to students, we point out that reflection can be a spiritual tool, similar in many ways to a contemplative type of prayer. In the busy-ness of life and ministry, it is too easy to be absorbed by activities and schedule expectations without taking time for soulful deliberation and discernment. The LDM attempts to model the importance of such reflective practice.

Such reflection demands depth, which can be centring, powerful, and scary all at once. To enter into one's own experience involves a sacred intimate moment of connection that may be holy, tender or raw, all at the same time. Such intensity can lead to resistance or avoidance on the part of the learner. Commenting on the reflective process at the LDM, one student wrote:

> TOUGH! TOUGH! But oh so valuable! It is very hard work to be honest with myself – … especially knowing that my words have hurt and I can't take them back. I'm a work in progress, I guess. I doubt this will become easier over the years but I also know how much I've learned from it and will continue to learn from it.

Several of the theorists have considered the internal and external barriers to learning from experience. Boud and Walker describe a complex mix of impediments; some of which are internal such as self-worth, prior experience, emotional state; some of which are external such as social forces, learning environment, cultural context.[43] In later work, Boud collaborates with Miller and

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[41] Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith : a Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

[42] Merriam and Caffarella, 224-225.

[43] David Boud and David Walker, "Barriers to Reflection on Experience" in David Boud, and others, eds., *Using Experience for Learning* (Bristol: Open University Press, 1993).

highlights the need to attend to power dynamics and acknowledge personal and political contexts.[44] Wellington and Austen concur, raising concerns about the influence practitioners' values and beliefs systems bring to reflective practice; they suggest an analytic continuum that measures liberation-domestication and systems-individual concerns.[45] From a feminist perspective, Tisdell's writing envisions the educator's responsibility to raise awareness, deepen understanding and broaden appreciation through the use of storytelling and analysis.[46]

These theorists raise for me, as an educator, a number of issues I want to be reflective about in my work at CCS. Firstly, I want to be part of creating as safe a learning environment as possible. Both internal and external forces can make learning frightening for students. I often experience that the participants at the LDM begin in a tentative, hesitant, self-doubting fashion; they need reassurance, support and permission. Secondly, I want to encourage as much critical thinking and analysis as possible. The cultural and social influences on individuals and the dynamics of the classroom demand attention. The pervasiveness of individualism, in our culture, means that the patterns and complexities of privilege and power are too often left unanalysed. Thirdly, in my role as educator, I want to maintain my own commitment to reflective practice and analysis.[47]

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[44] Merriam and Cafferella, 246.

[45] Ibid, 233-235.

[46] Ibid, 231.

[47] I will explore this further in chapter eight.

Brookfield poignantly dares to examine his own experience as learner,[48] He convincingly conveys the argument that an important and neglected source of insight for the adult educator is the educator's own autobiography as a learner. Yet, despite his commitment to examining his life story, Brookfield cautions that experience still needs to be held in check by rigorous reflective theory and scrupulous scrutiny of assumptions. Individual experience cannot stand alone untested; it must be gauged in community against scholarship and theory, scripture and tradition, reason and logic. Theological educator, Sumney suggests that ministry students self-righteously cling to their own story and faith as ultimate authority.[49] He suggests tools like Groome's shared praxis model[50] or Wesley's Quadrilateral[51] as instruments to aid moving beyond unexamined personal experience. While I concur with Sumney's conclusion that use of reflection instruments positively deepens understanding, I am concerned about his critique (contempt?) for his students. I do not have the same experience as Sumney with ministry students. The vast majority of CCS students, over their time in the program, do not protectively guard their stories, or refuse to engage beyond their own perspective, or hold their own lives as faith standards. To some extent, the students who self-select for CCS programs know that they will be required to work at integrating their own "stuff." I think, too, that CCS, and the LDM, establish a normativity around reflection and engagement that includes

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[48] Stephen Brookfield, "Through the Lens of Learning: How the Visceral Experience of Learning Reframes Teaching" in David Boud, Ruth Cohen and David Walker, eds., *Using Experience for Learning* (Bristol: Open University Press, 1993).

[49] Jerry L. Sumney, "Do Not Be Conformed to this Age: Biblical Understandings of Ministerial Leadership" in Warford, 127-142.

[50] Groome, *Sharing Faith.*

[51] Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral — In John Wesley" http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/16-20/20-01.htm Used February 8, 2008.

questions that push and stretch. The atmosphere is invitational but it pushes

toward integration.

Change as Identity Formation, Critical Thinking, Integration and Action: Transformational Learning

Transformative learning, by definition, assumes a commitment to growth

and learning based in an understanding that faith and personal development are

not only possible but desirable. This development cannot be limited to an

individualistic understanding. Broader societal concerns and influences must be

analyzed. Traditional theological perspectives have discussed change and

growth in relation to questions of conversion[52] and sanctification.[53] Issues of

spiritual maturity, renewal, reorientation, holiness, contrition, repentance, have

raised questions related to perfectionism versus personal acceptance, salvation

by works versus salvation by grace, and the merits of gradual progressive

epiphanies versus rapid dramatic moments of revelation. Typically conversion

discussions referred to personal and inward turning, and sanctification

represented an improvement-oriented pietism. With this project, transformation

represents a broader, more integrated, holistic understanding that blends

individual and communal, personal and political, spiritual and social dynamics.

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[52] For a range of perspectives on conversion see: Joan Chittister, *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2003); Sallie McFague, "A Brief Credo" in *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) 3-24; Mercy Ambe Oduyoye, "Conversion," Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, eds., *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996); Lewis R. Rambo. "Conversion," in Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds. *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology.* (London: SCM Press, 1983) 123-124; Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion : Why Faith Is Always Personal but Never Private* (New York : HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

[53] For two perspectives on sanctification see: Glenn Hewitt, "Sanctification," in Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds., *A New Handbook of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1992) 428-429; Nyambura J. Njoroge, "Justification and Sanctification through the Eyes of an African Christian Women" in Milan Opočensk and Páraic Réamonn, eds., *Justification and Sanctification in the Traditions of the Reformation* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1999) 176-180.

Transformative or transformational or emancipatory learning theory explores learning as change and shift in perspective. Friere's theory is predicated in a political outlook of radical social change and liberation.[54] He critiques the traditional education system as a "banking" model. In this traditional model learners are envisioned as mere receptacles for domesticating knowledge that supports the values of the status quo. In place of the "banking" model Friere proposes a "problem-posing" model in which students and teachers engage in co-operative humanizing dialogue. The dialogue involves a process of critical awareness Friere calls "conscientization" which leads to personal empowerment and social transformation. Throughout the learning process, educators and learners are encouraged to engage in an integrated practice, *praxis,* which emphasizes both reflection and action.

Despite charges laid against Friere that his writing is sexist, hooks embraces his work with affection. As an Afro-American woman who writes about the concerns of race, gender and class, she refuses to dismiss him:

> I came to Friere thirsty, dying of the thirst (in that way that the colonized, marginalized subject who is still unsure of how to break the hold of the status quo, who longs for change, is needy, is thirsty), and I found in his work (and the work of Malcom X, Fanon, etc.) a way to quench that thirst. To have work that promotes one's liberation is such a powerful gift that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed.[55]

hooks defines education as a practice of freedom. Her pedagogical work encourages practice that honours relationships, critiques the mind/body/spirit

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[54] Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 1973). For summaries of Friere's work see: Merriam and Caffarella, 324-326; Jane E. Regan *Toward an Adult Church: A Vision of Faith Formation* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), 100-103.

[55] hooks, 50.

split, upholds rigorous critical thinking, and re-imagines the possibilities of pleasure in learning.

Mezirow's work centres on learning as a meaning-making process and how adults interpret their experiences.[56] He distinguishes between meaning perspectives and meaning schemes. Perspectives are broad sets of assumptions or mind-sets. Because personal values and the sense of self are anchored in these taken-for-granted frames of reference, they are emotionally charged and strongly defended. Meaning schemes exist within more specific dimensions, as a sub-set of perspectives. Schemes are more easily and regularly transformed as an everyday occurrence in the ways of problem-solving and last minute mind changing. Mezirow suggests that perspective transformation – the instances where substantial paradigm change occurs – are less common and more significant.

Mezirow's theory has been criticized for focussing on individual, rather than political, transformation. Collard and Law point to the fundamental problem in Mezirow's approach as "the lack of a coherent, comprehensive theory of social change."[57] They attack his liberalism for its relative silence on socio-political context and its failure to advance a radical agenda of emancipation. Tennant echoes these charges by suggesting Mezirow's work is oriented to the psychological and underestimates the power of social forces.[58] Mezirow is

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[56] Jack Mezirow, "Learning To Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformative Theory" in Jack Mezirow and Associates, eds., *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[57] Susan Collard and Michael Law, "The Limits of Perspective Transformation: A Critique of Mezirow's Theory" *Adult Education Quarterly* 39, No 2, (Winter 1989), 102.

[58] M. Tennant, "Perspective Transformation and Adult Development" *Adult Education Quarterly* 44, no. 1, (1993): 34-42; M. Tennant, "Response to *Understanding Transformation Theory*" *Adult Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4, (1994): 233-235.

charged with contributing to the domestication of learners; by ignoring a liberative agenda, Mezirow merely furthers the status quo. Brookfield associates himself, by implication, with those who critique Mezirow's version of transformative learning, by asserting that in order for critical reflection to be critical it must include power analysis and critique of the status quo.[59]

Mezirow insists that his work has always embraced both social and individual dimensions and implications. He defends his position by passionately arguing that learners have the right not to be coerced by the educator's prescribed agenda – even if that agenda is based in the noble aims such as freedom, tolerance, equality and social change.[60] He strongly objects to such imposition and suggests "[a]dult educators do not indoctrinate."[61]

By exploring Jungian theory of personality temperaments and types, Cranton demonstrates a largely psychological approach to transformative learning.[62] On the other hand, Parks Daloz makes the case for a political agenda in transformative learning.[63] His examination of the story of Nelson Mandala and a study of one hundred socially engaged persons leads him to suggest transformational learning must enable the learner to have opportunities to participate in committed action out of their learning.

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[59] Stephen D. Brookfield, "Transformative Learning as Ideological Critique" in Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, 125-148.

[60] Jack Mezirow, "Transformation Theory and Social Action: A Response to Collard and Law" *Adult Education Quarterly* 39, no. 3, (Spring 1989), 169-175.

[61] Mezirow, "Learning To Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformative Theory", 30.

[62] Patricia Cranton, "Individual Differences and Transformative Learning," in Jack Mezirow and Associates*, eds., Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 181-204.

[63] Laurent A. Parks Daloz, "Transformative Learning for a Common Good" in Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation*, 103-124.

In my mind, justice is a gospel imperative. Authors like Friere, hooks, Collard and Law, Tennant, Brookfield, and Parks Daloz act like pedagogical prophets who call for repentance and social change. Their message compels me with its zeal-filled logic and passionate outrage. On the other hand I am not prepared to dismiss Mezirow, Cranton and others. In the aftermath of the church's role in colonialization, residential schools, imperialistic evangelism and triumphal theology, his caution about domination rings out as an important warning.

Cranton defines transformative learning as "the development of revised assumptions, premises, ways of interpreting experience, or perspectives on the world by means of critical self-reflection."[64] The key elements that Cranton identifies are critical reflection and change.

By indicating three signs of transformation – identity development, critical analysis and change – in her work at the Elders' Institute, Roberta Clare adapts and advances Cranston's definition.[65] Firstly, she introduces and features the notion of identity in a way that encapsulates a variety of notions related to self understanding: assumptions, perspectives, premises, interpretation, beliefs, mind sets, frames of reference, world views. She looks for an empowered sense of Christian faith and commitment. In this aspect she has located her definition within her ecclesiastical context. At CCS, we also, focus on vocational identity and we often witness students' progress in terms of their increased confidence related to their ministerial role.

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[64] Patricia Cranton,. *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (SanFrancisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), xii.

[65] Roberta Clare. Class Notes "ED 700 Transformative Models of Religious Education Session 3: The Transformative Education Theory of Jack Mezirow"

Secondly, she focuses on critical analysis. In Cranton's definition, reflection constitutes a methodology; it is a means to an end: the goal of change. For Clare the critical mind set is both means and goal. In her context she is looking for an increased ability to assess the impact that social location, cultural background and faith traditions have had on understanding, belief and feelings. Brookfield asserts that for critical reflection to be considered critical, it must include two elements: examining power dynamics and addressing hegemonic assumptions (the "conspiracy of the normal").[66] This learning often has its painful aspects. Seeing the world from a justice perspective involves opening one's eyes to oppression and suffering. A song that we sing frequently during the Social Ministry Year at CCS, "Sometimes I Wish My Eyes Hadn't Been Opened"[67], carries a special resonance for the students.

Thirdly, Clare identifies the crucial area of action. Only when the new learning translates into changed behaviour and willingness to act out one's new commitments and convictions concretely can learning truly be called transformative. Without the willingness to act out one's new insights and understandings, commitments and convictions, the learning could be considered merely "academic."

In addition, another aspect of transformational learning emerges in the literature related to the themes of reintegration, reorientation, and new equilibrium. Jane Regan describes this stage as a dynamically stable point where the learner has "reached an equilibrium in which a new set of meaning

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[66] Brookfield. "Transformative Learning as Ideological Critique". 125-148.

[67] A feminist song from the 70s by Carole Etzler Eagleheart.

perspectives provides a context for interpreting experiences."[68] At CCS, we often observe this state in students in their later stages in the program. They refer to it in the colloquial terminology: "getting it." The learner has reached a point of integration where behaviour and thinking are harmonized, where outlook and understanding are reconciled, where self-perception and activities coincide.

The working definition for transformational learning I have evolved from the literature, and used in this work, follow four elements: identity development, reflective critical analysis, subsequent action, and integration. Firstly, the project attempted to test the learning related to vocational identity. Did the experience of the LDM enhance the students' vocational identity? Was their identity as people of faith clarified or enhanced? Was there an increased ability to articulate the particular vocation to which they feel called?

Reflective critical analysis was incorporated as a means but it was also embraced as a goal. It would be hoped that, through the experience of the LDM, the students would identify personal, historical, political, and theological elements and dynamics in their own lives that impact on their self-understanding, social location and experience of faith. Did the LDM experience enable and empower the students to consider critically the influences of culture and society, power and privilege, minority status and oppression, on their faith and ministries?

The project, also, sought to test the element of subsequent action in transformational learning. Would the students behave in different ways by virtue of their connection with the LDM? Would they approach their lives and ministries in new ways? Would they commit themselves to acting upon new insights and

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[68] Regan, 95.

understandings they gained as a result? Would the LDM evoke a conviction in the students and lead to a new ways of acting?

Finally, the project tested an integrated learning of heart and head, word and deed, worship and work, body and soul. Would the three week encounter draw together the learnings into a new orientation for these students as individuals and as a community? Would the students feel *and* think in new ways about their lives? Would they express a deepened sense of understanding *and* a renewed spirit toward their ministries? Would they be more able to articulate the conceptual aspects of their vocation, *and* more eagerly desire to embody this ministry in the church and in the world?

These five schools of educational theory help to locate the pedagogical style and practice of the LDM. *Self-directed* learning is embraced in attempts to appreciate individual goals, needs and interests; the teachers do not dominate discussion or dictate opinions. An emphasis on community building and relational connection parallels much from *organizational* learning theory. The valuing of students and positive regard for the learners in a non-competitive atmosphere corresponds to the philosophies of *strength-based* schools of thought. Active learning exercises and attention to reflective practice match positions held by *experiential* learning scholars. Four elements of *transformational* learning theory – critical reflection, identity formation, integrative insight, and subsequent action – are employed in the subsequent chapters of this project to articulate the impact of the LDM on learners.

CHAPTER SIX

DYNAMIC PEDAGOGY:

PROFILES OF ENTHUSIASM

Following the LDM, four in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from 2007. The interviewees represented a variety of populations: one person continued in the full CCS diploma program, one took the course as a stand-alone continuing education opportunity, another registered in a CCS certificate theme year, and the fourth used the LDM to discern her future in ministry. Geographically, they came from a variety of regions across the country. Chronologically, they embodied a variation in age groupings. Taken as a group, they responded with excitement to the LDM and its integrated style of education, its depth of spirit, its richness of community connection, and its level of learning and insight. One of the interviewees enthused: "I just can't believe the stuff I've learned. And part of it is the way I learned it. It is so participatory and, I mean it's demanding but it's fabulous."

The interviews began with some introductory questions about hopes and goals for the module, stand-out LDM experiences or activities, and images or metaphors to describe the event. The interviews continued with a series of questions related to the four-part definition of transformational learning. Firstly, interviewees were asked about vocational identity and what changes in understanding of their calling occurred for them. Secondly, questions were posed

about reflective critical analysis related to self-understanding and socio-political issues. Areas of subsequent action formed the third set of questions: what actions were undertaken to make changes as a result of the LDM learning? Lastly, inquiries were made about participants' learning and whether it was integrated in a holistic way at the LDM.

Circle of Connection: Kathy and Her Passion for the Program

The first participant interviewed was someone who brings a great deal of hopeful energy to life. A powerful and positive woman, Kathy[1] spoke about the LDM in glowing terms: "I would say to anyone who is in any leadership situation which is faith based that they should take this module. I can't believe how much I've learned." She named numerous elements of the LDM as stand-out experiences. The group planning process was conceived as "a piece of very hard work but valuable work" where she learned about co-leading and co-learning. The spiral method of doing theological reflection was highlighted as a tool Kathy would continue to use. She "learned a new attitude about conflict that'll be very helpful." The sessions on personality inventories and learning styles clarified her "place in the world and understanding [of] other people's space." The faith journey sharing helped her to recognize that:

> absolutely everybody, whether I know them or not, has some kind of incredible journey that they've been on. And I may not know it, but, to sort of always be aware that there's this story behind everybody that I just don't know but it does make them who they are.

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[1] The names used for all the interviewees have been fictionalized.

For over twenty years, this middle-aged woman worked at multiple levels of the United Church, as a lay leader. With a successful career in scientific research no longer satisfying her passion, Kathy entered the UCC year-long discernment process which led her in the direction of diaconal ministry.[2] She came to the LDM knowing it was the first step toward the four year CCS diploma program. During the LDM, her understanding and valuing of diakonia broadened and "the history of diakonia [was] vital to that." This confirmation of her vocational fervour put her in conflict with her current paid employment. She was anxious to move into full-time ministry but, practically, needed to work in her present position, until she could claim her full pension. Clearly, the LDM had cemented this woman's commitment to diaconal ministry and fortified her vocational identity.

Kathy's ability to reflect critically was somewhat enhanced at the LDM. When asked about how the LDM enabled her to reflect critically on herself, Kathy indicated that she was both affirmed and humbled, "I know a lot in some realms and I've learned how little I know in others." She was more clearly able to see that her background in lay church leadership had been positively rich and varied.

As a long time union activist Kathy had been immersed in critical social analysis; she did not feel that the LDM was a "giant leap" in this regard. Yet, she felt the LDM had enabled her to enter into this work with a new more relational spirit. Positioning herself on the radical left, Kathy indicated that the LDM helped her to recognize that the most people in the United Church were in the safe,

[2] In The United Church of Canada, persons feeling a call to ministry ask their congregational board to set up a Discernment committee to test their vocational directions. The Presbytery, also sends a representative to sit with this group and participate in the year long process. At the end of the year, the candidate is recommended for ordained, diaconal, lay designated or continued lay ministry.

liberal centre. She felt the LDM had reminded her to stay open to other points of view and honour diversity, without losing her zeal for justice or her prophetic anger. Kathy came to the LDM with strength in critical reflection, and she was able to reinforce these skills and also open up new understanding, personally and politically.

Kathy had itemized a number of areas where she wants to continue her learning and she was in the process of setting up follow-up strategies and plans. One primary learning, for this sometimes direct and forthright woman, was that "[The LDM] has changed the way I treat people"; she identified that her recent interaction with others reflected a new commitment to gentler relationships and more pastoral conversations. Insights from the personality type indicators had also impressed Kathy; she wrote her research paper on this topic and developed a tool to aid her in considering these dynamics, particularly in tense relationships. Kathy realized that, prior to the LDM, she was new to goal writing; she committed herself to reviewing the CCS competency guidelines and naming areas for further development. She was favourably impacted by the introduction of the spiral method as a tool for reflection and pledged to its use, specifically in difficult circumstances. In general, she wanted to continue the intentional reflection modelled at the LDM and wanted to keep up the practice of journaling. As a bright and competent woman, Kathy also learned that she did not have to be so focussed on task:

> the change the LDM has offered me is knowing that I'll need to be patient even though I might see where things could go, need to go. But [to] offer my gifts to help, I might have to wait until the community is ready for those

things. So on a much broader scale... [the LDM] changed sort of how I will work in a group in the future.

Kathy vowed to continue, in the future, to monitor her behaviour and attitude in this regard. She also realized that during the LDM, "I've just consciously taken better care of myself." She wanted to continue this healthy pattern of self-care and self-regard. A woman with an intentional and capable way of working, Kathy demonstrated a strong ability to follow through by envisioning next steps in her learning and taking subsequent action.

Kathy was also well able to illustrate ways in which she had integrated, and in which the program had contributed to the integration of, her learning. As someone who had taken a number of courses in biblical scholarship, she felt the spiral reflection model and some of the biblical work sessions, had helped her to know the scripture not just at a cognitive level, but at an emotional level, as well. Similarly, she felt the engagement with theology challenged and deepened her ideas, beliefs, values and attitudes. Kathy noted that reflecting on her past experience in the church, proved beneficial;

> To have some of those experiences, a lot of those experiences, and find ways to review them, re-hyphen-view, with some of the lenses that the LDM provides like learning styles or critical thinking or any of those things. ... this seems to integrate things that I came with.

She noted that the review of learnings process identified one's insights and allowed for follow up on things that need to be addressed. Kathy also observed that the spiritual and the educational were frequently interwoven, something she appreciated greatly; "my soul has been fed to overflowing." Remarking on the difficulty of sharing such a profound experience with others, Kathy asserted, "it's

definitely deepened my understanding of me and deepened my willingness,

openness, desire to try to get folks to understand how [the LDM] changed me

and why."

Kathy spoke with excitement about the program's ability to prepare her for

ministry:

> ...coming into the LDM, I thought, you know, I'm open to whatever comes at the other end of the process and I'm sure the process will prepare me but now I truly believe that when I finish this process I will be able to do whatever is required of me to the best of my ability. I assumed that as a minister, there will be things that I might not be as well prepared for as others. And I can now see that if I do the work, in the way that the work is being introduced to us, that I'll be able to manage. More than manage.

I share Kathy's confidence; "more than manage" she will flourish because she

brings intentionality and commitment to her learning. Also, the CCS program

fosters an integrated approach to the four areas of competence – interpretation,

formation, contextualization, and performance – identified by theological

education theorists, reviewed in the second chapter of this study. Her training is

only begun and she is demonstrating gifts for ministry in her intellectual curiosity,

spiritual maturity, critical analysis, and leadership skill.

Kathy came to the LDM with a great deal of experience and confidence; she

asserted herself with good humour. In her employment, her union, her church,

her community volunteering, she had been trusted in important leadership roles;

in her university course work, she had her ability to learn confirmed. She did not

need the affirmation of a strength-based learning approach to overcome any

negative experience with education or to establish that she was capable of

leading. Nevertheless, the gentle, encouraging environment had an influence on

Kathy's outlook. Her biggest changes involved her relationships with others and the way her personality impacted others; she realized that she needed to move toward more patience, and she was examining the impact that her confidence and task orientation has on others who were less certain and less organized. She also indicated that she shifted in her understanding of her learning preferences. Previously, the bulk of her educational experience had been in academic, transmission methodology, and now she looked forward to having opportunities to participate in experiential learning models, as well. In making goals and setting up her field placement, she was grasping the demands of self-directed learning.

Asked for an image of the LDM Kathy said,

It would have to be the circle. ... It's complete. The whole LDM is one package. It's all encompassing. The connections around the circle. The connections across the circle. The holding of each other in the circle.

In the second chapter, theological educators were longing for a model that was less individualistic and more communal, less segmented and more holistic. Kathy asserts that the LDM is that kind of relational process of learning; she was expressing gratitude, feeling confident, and sharing her passion for this circle of understanding.

Gentle Stretching: Thomas and His Experience of Acceptance

In the second of the interviews, Thomas offered the image of stretching to capture his perspective on the LDM. He indicated, "Very much the stretch. Very much the stretch. I guess not just for me, but watching people be stretched in a

really good way..." He was able to identify many learnings, applaud the inclusiveness of the community, and celebrate the integrative nature of the pedagogy.

Ordained in another tradition, Thomas came to the LDM as part of his process of admission to the United Church of Canada. The LDM qualified as credit toward this admission and furthered his familiarity with United Church approaches and perspectives. A couple of previous participants in earlier LDMs had, also, highly recommended the course to him.

Thomas felt that his vocational identity had been "not so much change[d] as affirmed" at the LDM. He felt he was much more a nurturing, rather than a charismatic, type of leader. And the LDM had confirmed that this was perfectly acceptable style and vision for ministry. The LDM had led Thomas to do some thinking and processing of his vocational identity in relation to both his personal style and to his social location.

> I tended to view my position through the lens of marginalization, especially coming out of a denomination that continually said 'you [GBLT] people are sinful.' So I just really incorporated that... it meant that I carried that viewpoint of myself, focussing on the gay part and not on the man part. And the reality is that I'm also a man. And I'd forgotten that part. And so I, it's made me much more aware of the degree of power I carry as a male in ministry, in a dynamic that continues to favour men. ... I've always considered myself to be a feminist. But for a moment I was able to take the rose coloured glasses off and see that I'm perhaps not living out what that means.

During the LDM, he genuinely and honestly wrestled with the complexity of his privilege and his vulnerability.

Through his previous training and background, Thomas was someone well grounded in social analysis. Thomas was able to name many social realities that

arose for him during the LDM. He was particularly conscious of the pain of rural isolation and de-population as he interacted with those from country settings. He mentioned the work the whole circle did in relation to sensitively including a hearing-impaired participant. He was conversant with the oppressiveness of racism and ableism. He challenged CCS to be more creative and vigilant in addressing issues of heterosexist privilege and assumptions.

He, also, felt privileged to witness the transformation of others as they had their 'aha' moments around social issues. He noted that when someone recognizes oneself as an oppressor that can be overwhelmingly painful; he affirmed the CCS program for taking a compassionate approach in that work. With his rich background in social analysis Thomas was continuing, during the LDM, to reflect critically and deepen his awareness and understanding.

Thomas articulated a number of subsequent actions he was undertaking as a result of new insights and understandings gained at the LDM. The work on personality indicators enabled him to work against his natural inclinations and develop some skill sets connected to planning and organization. The session on multiple intelligences enabled him to overcome his fear and reclaim his musical ability. He had a number of books on liberation, feminist and aboriginal theology that he was committed to pursuing after the LDM. And he was living into the tension between being his authentic self – an energetic, vibrant, even mischievous, personality which can overwhelm – and deliberately scaling himself back so that there is more room for others to contribute. Thomas did not

withdraw from important insights he received at the LDM, he purposefully took action to address crucial areas for his growth.

Thomas identified that the primary place for his integration was on the planning teams for student led sessions. He worked on the impact of his "large personality" and the effect of his non-linear thinking on his team-mates. Thomas was intentional in his desire to integrate his learning into his ministry and into his behaviour. He valued the emphasis placed on both intentional opportunities for personal reflection and for interpersonal processing in discussion. He noted that the cognitive and the affective were interwoven throughout the LDM:

> ... the head stuff is there but it doesn't feel like it until at the end of it you go, oh wow, I just have a whole new knowledge piece I didn't have before. And yet it was brought through in such a non-head way. So it's like, how did they do that and how do I recreate that at home.

At the end of his interview, Thomas concluded, "I want to just underline how much the process itself really does the transformation that it's intended to." A thoughtful person of faith with a rich previous history in theological education, Thomas appreciated the program and felt it lead to important wisdom and meaningful change.

Thomas' recounting of his LDM experience reflects much of the essence of the LDM pedagogical approach. In the third chapter of this study, the characteristics of the LDM style were identified. In the interview Thomas ended up articulating many of these elements. He had important *personal insights*; he connected with others in the *community* and felt accepted; he noted the *variety* in the educational processes and moved into some less comfortable activities; as a gregarious man, he shared in the sense of *playfulness*; he noted the *affirmative*

and compassionate way that he and others were invited into tough learning; he appreciated the insight offered in *feedback*; he was able to *practise* new ways of being in the planning teams; *intellectually*, he realized he had a "whole new knowledge piece"; his work on vulnerability and power is intrinsically connected to the program's commitment to *justice*; he appreciated the interweaving of *spiritual* practices throughout the program; his *vocation* as a nurturing leader was affirmed. And he described his experience of the *integrative* nature of the LDM:

> I think there's a gentle step-by-step quality that takes place in the LDM that enables the participant to very slowly integrate material as they go along. And so fear at the beginning is acknowledged and affirmed. As people become more comfortable and more confident, [the process] slowly draws out more leadership until at the end you're exercising it very naturally. And so it enables skills and attitudes ... It's like water going into sand. Just ssh, very slowly goes down to its deepest level. This was done very, very carefully ...

Rediscovery of Self: Glen and His Renewal of Vocation

Almost twenty years ago, the third interviewee, Glen, was ordained in the United Church of Canada. Over the years, he had attended a number of continuing education events. Mostly he felt like he came back to his congregations, from these events, excited about a new program or direction and it would fall on deaf ears. Glen came to the LDM longing for continuing education that was deeper than information sharing; he was hoping for something to change within himself. He felt it was time in his life to embrace this new learning opportunity.

A creative and quick thinking person, Glen was able to generate multiple images to describe the LDM. In some ways, the LDM was like training and setting goals for a running race; it was testing the waters; it was a mirror reflecting back; it was putting on different glasses and seeing things in a new way. With a certain level of sadness and frustration, Glen indicated that he came to the LDM feeling constrained in ministry; his expectations had been funnelled and his dreams had been compressed. Poignantly, he felt that the LDM renewed his sense of the way he wanted to be in the world; he rediscovered himself and parts of himself that he had lost.

In the part of the country that Glen originally came from, and did his initial theological training, he had "never heard of diaconal ministry." Since moving to a region where diaconal ministry was more familiar, he named himself as more diaconal than ordained. He wanted to stay curious about that consciousness and to be careful about not claiming something or misappropriating the designation, but he felt he was "less a lone wolf" and that his more communal approach could be considered diaconal. Glen was questioning his vocational identity and moving into a new understanding of leadership in the church.

He bristled against a conventional understanding of ministerial leadership that was "like the army: over the hill and follow me. If we lose a few, oh well." He affirmed the LDM for modelling a process that called for a different way of being – "no one was left behind." He witnessed a learning circle that was "more communal than just a collection of individuals." He appreciated the encouragement to go deeper in feeling and thought, the creative engagement of

the whole person, the structured agenda and clear expectations of the event. He valued the responsiveness of the leadership and he saw others grow when they were listened to and they did not expect to be. He announced, "I grew more at the LDM than at any other event. That's what I want in ministry to be this kind of leader. The other is unsatisfying." The LDM offered an alternative vision for Glen, which re-shaped and renewed his energy for his vocation.

During the LDM, Glen had several opportunities to reflect critically on his approach and perceptions. For Glen, the LDM contained some wisdom that came from positive, pleasant experiences, and some that came from more difficult struggles; he distinguished them, respectively, as "aha" and "oh, oh" insights. The reading discussion group was an "oh, oh" experience; he explained:

> Two of us on the planning team were on the same page. The third person was not. We went round and round in the conversation and I wanted to move on. We hadn't agreed on the facts and we weren't hearing her. In the LDM model, we could pull out feelings and do a broader analysis. Finally we took the readings line by line. We began to realize that the third person was taking the readings literally and the other two of us were using our lived experience more than the readings. It took us an hour to work out definitions. We didn't feel like we had failed but that we had succeeded. We had discerned that we were not on the same page. This provided us with a beginning and not an end. This helped me to slow down in other processes. This happened early on and affected other opportunities. I became more patient with others and myself.

Glen also realized that he operates from an affective place of feeling. He reached the understanding that he had been "out of sync" with the structure of the church, and his education as clergy, that tend to come out of a cognitive place of thinking. Clearly, the LDM provided an important opportunity for Glen to reflect on his personal style and approach.

Glen came to the LDM with a fairly high awareness of socio-political issues. He possessed a keen consciousness of his privilege as a white, male, straight, educated, able-bodied person. Opportunities to do social analysis presented themselves over the years of his ministry, even though he felt he was "ill-equipped" by his initial theological training. Nevertheless, the LDM highlighted that he "didn't know enough" and challenged his "arrogance." He felt he deepened his understanding.

Glen also, sensed that the LDM enabled him to give language to his critique of, and dissatisfaction with, the church. In the LDM he appreciated that the reflective process was honoured as part of the journey. In the rest of the church, he thought there was an impatient emphasis on efficiency, bureaucracy, and win/lose paradigms. He longed for a church of compassion and caring, like he experienced at the LDM, where understanding one another is considered important. He began to realize the importance of getting people involved early on in decision-making and the crucial significance of asking questions like: who benefits from a decision?

At the time of the interview, Glen accepted that the LDM was still pretty fresh and he had not had a chance to act on any new insights and understandings gained. But because he was starting at a new congregation, immediately following the module, he was able to imagine new ways of proceeding. He was committed to taking more time for careful consideration when entering into the new situation and he wanted to take stock of group processes and ask "are we all on the same page here?" At the LDM, he learned

to let go of some of his need to share all his ideas, and in the future, he vowed to monitor the number of new suggestions he offered:

> Over the years I have offered many ideas that went no where. At the LDM I learned to ask "Why?" People have often not been receptive to my ideas. At the LDM I was given a process to examine my approach. 'Let's just do it' can be unsatisfying. It gets done but ... I don't know. It is the tension between productivity and reflection.

He thought that as a result of the LDM, he heard people in a different way and he promised to listen to the stories, emotions and intentions behind responses and positions. He also wanted to work on group dynamics; he developed a series of questions to ask in difficult situations: am I trying to control the outcome? what is draining energy? do people feel safe? Touched by the way diversity and difference were respected at the LDM, Glen pledged that he needed "to practise being inclusive." He was delighted and relieved to be stepping into a new ministry where he could break free and move on and make a fresh start.

Glen felt that LDM experience was an exercise in integrative learning: "I was tired but engaged intellectually, emotionally, spiritually." He appreciated the frequent and varied opportunities to practice new learning. He had new perspectives about balancing his head and heart, in order to aid in his communication. He wanted to work further on connection between worship and the church in the world. As well, Glen credited intentional reflection with helping him to contemplate matters more thoroughly and thoughtfully. Glen was integrating new learning into his style of ministry leadership.

At the end of the LDM, Glen made the decision to move into the Educational Ministry Year and take it as a CCS certificate year. He was "warmed" and

"moved" by the community created at the event. He identified that safe space had been created. He wondered about why that does not happen more regularly at the congregational level; "It should be more an expected experience than a rare one."

It is this insight from Glen – that the nurturing environment and creative power of the LDM could change the chilly climate of many congregations –that stood out for me from this interview. The rich communal life of the LDM raises questions about the lack of connection in much ecclesiological practice. Why is it the exception, rather than the expectation, to be greeted by safe community in the church? Traditional ecclesiological vision is marked, in the Nicene creed, by unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. I would argue that these creedal marks are paralleled in the LDM experiences of oneness, sacredness, inclusiveness and faithfulness to the gospel message. I also would contend that the classic characteristics of the church – *koinoinia, liturgia, diakonia, kergyma,* and *didache* –correspond to the community, worship, service, and learning emphases, which are integral elements of the LDM*.* The LDM models for students the possibilities that the church can be hospitable, mutual places of learning that are committed to principles of mercy and justice. If the students attempt to re-create this model in their ministries, potential exists to renew congregations and provide faith communities that will be responsive to the hunger for justice demanded by the gospel and to the desire for spiritual nourishment evident in our society.

Discerning Direction: Carrie-Anne and Her Claiming of Courage

Carrie-Anne came to the LDM hoping to gain "a sense of direction re: ministry." A young woman from a large, suburban congregation, Carrie-Anne was actively involved in her church as Presbytery representative, Sunday School co-ordinator, youth group leader and director of the annual musical. She felt nudged toward ministry but was looking for the LDM to provide guidance through testing her abilities and call.

One of the LDM experiences that stood out for Carrie-Anne was the hand washing ritual in the diaconal formation session.[3] She felt the tender power of having someone else wash her hands, and also, having the chance to wash someone else's hands. She commented that this interpersonal act symbolized the relational and communal character of the LDM. Another poignant moment came from one of the sessions on theological reflection. Her small group was addressing the question, "Who is God?" One of her colleagues was torn apart with internal conflict by this question because of a feeling of separation and distance from God. The group tried to comfort the colleague unsuccessfully, until this desolate person realized that the group's compassionate response was the incarnation of God's love "right here." Carrie-Anne was touched and enlightened by this exchange.

Issues of vocational identity were of primary concern for Carrie-Anne at the LDM. She contended that the experience gave her courage to see herself "more seriously in ministry." Confessing her fear of the unknown and nervousness

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[3] This session is described in chapter four.

around next steps, she, nevertheless, disclosed that she had asked her congregation to set up an official discernment committee for her, two days before the end of the LDM. She named that the experiences of taking on leadership, talking about ministry and seeing others in action at the LDM, allowed her to proceed. Throughout the module, she realized that she had lots of experience and skill to offer, that she had learned lots about herself, and that she had broadened her understanding of ministry. The LDM provided time to open up and claim her calling.

During the module, Carrie-Anne began to engage more with critical thinking and reflective analysis. Personally, she started to see her strengths better and recognize her gifts of creative energy. Previously, she had ignored her talents, but, after the LDM, she was committed to actively putting them to use. Earlier in her life, Carrie-Anne had experienced clinical depression; she commented at the LDM that she felt it was important to confront the social stigmatism related to mental health. Socio-politically, as the youngest participant at the LDM, she reflected on the dynamics of ageism. She also gave consideration to United Church policies related to anti-Semitism and investment in Israel, bottled water and privatization of natural resources, First Nations history and racism. The student led session on social ministry, particularly, helped her to contemplate the realities of oppression and the importance of social context. Prior to the LDM, Carrie-Anne's exposure to social analysis and the gospel mandate of justice had been fairly limited; at the LDM she was growing in her consciousness and awareness.

Carrie-Anne was able to articulate several areas of action subsequent to her learning at the LDM. She related a story about a First Nations political protest that was held near her place of employment. One of her work colleagues made an "impolite" comment and she "didn't stay quiet" (something she felt she "wouldn't normally do"); she challenged her colleague on his racism. Other opportunities arose during the LDM where she was able to act on her growing commitment to solidarity: she participated in the Gay Pride activities and she attended a rally in support of a refugee family in sanctuary. She felt it was important to "...not just think about but do. ... It was great to go. It felt good to lend support." After some work on creation and environmentalism at the LDM (and in other areas of her life), she also wanted to do her LDM assignment on eco-theology and "research what kinds of little things people like me can do." Personally, Carrie-Anne was considering some further counselling; after talking, in her faith journey, about her time of depression, she realized that she wanted to ensure that she surrounded herself with proper support. She was also going to continue with the silence and reflection that she so appreciated in the journaling time at the LDM. Vocationally, as mentioned previously, she had taken the steps to set up her discernment committee. Carrie-Anne was intentionally making plans to further the learning that she encountered and embraced at the LDM.

This learning was also being integrated into Carrie-Anne's perspective, person and practice of ministry. She appreciated the multiple opportunities to practice leadership, while paying attention to the needs of others, at the LDM. She identified that the spiral reflection model was a melding together of feeling

and thinking; "they are not necessarily completely separate, they flow..." She valued the interweaving of worship and work, prayer and task at the LDM, pointing to the processes that invariably started with centring, to the planning teams taking time for prayer, and to the hymn singing that was intermingled through the module. Her learning about teaming proved crucially important; she realized that she

> didn't need to do everything. This is a wonderful feeling. And when I don't – it's better... so many other ideas emerge and other leaders come forward and I don't have to take charge.

As part of this insight, she was internalizing the reality that her choice was not to be either a leader or a follower; she was beginning to address her "shadow monster" which told her "if I don't do it, it won't be done properly." Carrie-Anne had worked hard during the LDM and received significant insight; she continued to make the effort to integrate the learning in her life and ministry.

Carrie-Anne finished the interview by stating the LDM had been wonderful. She related that people had been asking her about the event and she wrestled with how to describe the experience: "Lately I have been saying, 'well... the short answer is I feel full.' I learned so much. It's a good full."

The first three interviews indicate some level of growth in the interviewee's vocational identity. Kathy felt confirmed in her diaconal choice; Thomas' nurturing style was affirmed; Glen's energy for ministry was reshaped and renewed. Yet, Carrie-Anne demonstrated the most clear decision and action in her calling. Carrie-Anne represents the participants who come to the LDM testing their call and understanding of ministry. Not all of them end up

committing themselves to life in ordered ministry. Individuals must identify their own path and direction. Equally, faith communities have a role in examining, nurturing and holding members accountable. Whether lay or ordered ministry is chosen, assessment needs to be individual and communal. The LDM provides a concrete, communal place for participants to test their call. Through immersion in an atmosphere of sensitive support, intentional reflection, spiritual connection, caring challenge and rigorous review, the LDM provides a tool for vocational discernment that complements the official processes of the denominations.

The needs of the world, also, have a part to play in discerning call. The world needs leadership that combines tender, invitational, warm, pastoral presence and forthright, demanding, prophetic action. The world needs ministers who will work for social and political change which will address oppressive and unhealthy situations and structures. Ministry involves serving and leading toward justice and compassion. Carrie-Anne has begun the process of preparing for this awesome calling.

To some extent, Carrie-Anne, Glen, Thomas and Kathy testified to the transformative quality of the LDM. They all showed signs of growth related to the four elements – vocational identity, critical reflection, subsequent action, integration – of this project's definition of transformational learning. As stated above, all of them considered issues related to their vocational identity. Kathy enriched her understanding of diaconia; Thomas affirmed his nurturing style; Glen renewed his vision of ministry; Carrie-Anne initiated her formal discernment

procedures. All of them critically reflected on their person and encountered

significant insights. Kathy was both humbled and affirmed; Thomas considered

the tensions of "making space for others" and being his authentic gregarious self;

Glen named his tendency to work from the affective rather than the cognitive;

Carrie-Anne claimed her strengths and gifts. They, also, addressed socio-

political analysis. Her radical place in a liberal church was more firmly grasped

by Kathy; the complexity of his power and vulnerability was something Thomas

grappled with; a vision of a healthier climate and culture for the church was what

Glen imagined; a bolder, more assertive voice for justice was given birth in

Carrie-Anne. All four hatched plans for follow-up to their LDM learning. Kathy

was embracing a gentler, more patient approach; Thomas was developing his

administrative skills; Glen was slowing down and monitoring his group

contributions; Carrie-Anne was naming strategies in personal, professional and

socio-political arenas. And all demonstrated commitment to integrating their

learning. For Kathy, the spiral model offered connection between scholarship

and spirit; for Thomas, the interweaving of personal and interpersonal reflection

was valued; for Glen, the link between safety and ability to learn was treasured;

for Carrie-Anne, the interlocking of spirituality and learning was cherished. All

spoke highly of the LDM experience and indicated that it transformed their

perspectives, and deepened their faith and sense of community.

However, it would be difficult to assert that many of these transformations

were monumental. Most of them did not refocus the direction of their call in

extremely radical ways. All of them reflected and worked on personal changes

but none of them felt compelled to reconfigure completely their personalities. All

of them confess to deepening their critical social analysis at the LDM, but all of

them brought some level of awareness into the LDM. All were able to make

plans about continuing their growth, but none of the subsequent actions involved

earth-shattering, new paradigms. All of the four would claim to be finding ways to

integrate their learning, yet they were still in process.

Brookfield observes that transformative learning has "connotations of an

epiphanic, or apocalyptic, cognitive event – a shift in the tectonic plates of one's

assumptive clusters."[4] He cautions that this magnitude of change can be

overwhelming and can set an educational standard that becomes impossible to

sustain. He reminds educators not to devalue or underestimate the work of

steady, incremental deepening and development of knowledge that constitutes

most learning. Cranton concurs:

> Clearly, emancipatory learning cannot be the single or even the most
> common objective of adult education. Little of what adults want to and need
> to learn involves revisions to basic assumptions and beliefs or
> transformations of perspective.[5]

The LDM can claim, most appropriately, to setting the stage for transformational

learning. Occasionally, transformation does occur, as in Carrie-Anne's decision

to pursue discernment. Mostly, the changes could be categorized as

adjustments; as indicated in these interviews, the changes are steady and

incremental. I do not see that as disappointing failure. I see the wonder and

excitement in that. Growth does not need to be measured in terms of Damascus.

The scriptural witness points to the grace-filled surprises that can come from

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[4] Brookfield, "Transformative Learning as Ideological Critique," 139.

[5] Cranton, "Individual Differences and Transformative Learning," 19.

small things. The gospel is full of the reversal of expectation. Little Bethlehem is the birthplace of a baby born in a stall. A child is named the one to whom the kin-dom belongs. A mustard seed, a lost coin, leaven are symbols of hope. The last are deemed first. These kinds of small but significant changes happen in the students of the LDM; they experience transformative theological education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EMBRACING CHANGE:

PARTICIPANT REFLECTION

The stories told, in the last chapter, gave concrete witness to the transformative impact of the LDM. Those who participated in the in-depth interviews offered evidence of meaningful changes that were initiated during the module. In this chapter, the surveys employed for this study corroborate and broaden the evidence from the interviews. This survey method of research also follows the changes in the participants over a longer period of time, and therefore, significantly substantiates the claim that the 2007 LDM led to transformation for the participants. Three forms – one before the LDM, one immediately following, one three months after – provided opportunity to test transformational learning by marking the changes and development in the four areas of vocation, reflection, action and integration. The results attest that the participants' sense of call was clarified and enhanced. Their ability to analyse critically their lives and social conditions was deepened and broadened. Strategies and plans were put into place to address new learning. Holistic approaches were evident in the work of integrating and embodying new ways of doing, being, thinking and feeling.

Unfolding Call: Vocational Identity

The responses from the survey forms point to changes in the participants'

understanding and connection to their call to ministry. Some were struggling with

their place in the institutional church. Some were wrestling with their own lack of

confidence in their abilities. Like the biblical stories of resistance – Moses,

Sarah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah – some were avoiding their place in ministry.

Others, convinced of their goals and direction, heightened their commitment and

expanded their understanding. New dimensions of knowledge, perspective and

background were explored, articulated, and lived into.

For some of the participants, the LDM was a place, intentionally, to address

vocational issues. One respondent began the module with a hesitant sense that

she was a lay leader who had a focus on ministry with women.[1] By the end of

the LDM she commented that she "felt strongly that the LDM was where I was

meant to be to start to define my ministry." Another respondent who tentatively

began the LDM not wanting to be "tied down to a long term commitment", was,

three months after the LDM, assertively envisioning her future: "I'll get

commissioned and work in a ministerial role in a church, but I don't believe that

will last long. I feel called to write about faith for a secular audience." One

participant declared that the LDM had "cemented my ministry identity…"

Although definitive clarity was not achieved for all of those responding to the

survey, evidently some were moved to a calmer, less anxious space and a

comfort level with the direction of their ministries. At the beginning of the LDM,

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[1] Despite the fact that the surveys were anonymous, the answers to the questions about gender, enabled me to determine that all the respondents who filled out two or all three forms were women.

several participants projected a level of frenetic worry about vocational direction, but by the end of the summer were taking steps to follow up with their goals and further studies. At the start of the module, one student chose an image of speediness and constant transition to describe her sense of call, but by the final survey had moved to a calmer image of balance.

Images of ministry were expanded at the LDM. At the beginning of the LDM, one participant pictured ministry limited to leading weekly worship, but ended the process with a sense of the possibilities beyond the institutional church. Another started the LDM with a vision of herself as a youth leader and by the end of the module was "feeling called to work with people of all ages." Still another initially described herself as an occasional worship leader and contributor to Sunday School, yet moved to place where she saw her role as empowering others "to be all they can be, in a congregational setting and beyond."

For several the expansion of vocational vision involved an awakening to the importance of social justice issues. In her autumn response form, one participant indicated that "as a result of the LDM" she felt compelled to embrace social concerns in her ministry. Another participant began the LDM with a clear concentration on congregational ministry but by the fall was widening that focus:

> I am called to work <u>with</u> and <u>for</u> others, under the umbrella of the church – with the hope of changing the world to better reflect a world of love – even if it is only changed within my reach and vision.

Still another participant who began the LDM with a somewhat pious and insular understanding of her vocation ended the LDM saying that she felt strongly urged

"to seek justice and peace." Another respondent, by the fall, was including stewardship for the environment and "health for the earth" as part of her vocation.

Evidence in the surveys also presents a growth in the complexity of vocational understanding. On her final form, one of the participants used the image of a spider web to illustrate her growing understanding of the interconnected complexity of her vocation. Another, in her third form, stated, "I am gaining a very small insight into the depth and enormity of body of knowledge – and responsibility for it."

A common development involved the movement from an individual to a more communal understanding and embracing of call. One participant began the LDM seeing her vocation in ministry as a ringmaster or gardener: one who had responsibility for oversight. By the end of the LDM her image became "a group of people walking together and laughing!" Another participant, wanted to "develop a theology of lateral leadership" in order to enable people to build their own abilities to do ministry.

The survey forms witness to growth in the participants understanding of vocation as a result of the LDM. A level of comfort and clarity was reached that reassured participants. The unknown was embraced with less anxiety and the journey of discovery was embarked upon with quiet determination. Images of ministry were enlarged and became more encompassing and complex. The agenda expanded to include the important concerns of social justice. Focus on individual call was widened to embrace communal aspects of ministry vocation.

Many of the participants in the 2007 LDM were testing their call and understanding of ministry. In chapter four, we discussed a session on diaconal formation that was instrumental in vocational clarification for students. Comments in the evaluation indicated appreciation for exploration of the diaconal history and the sense of "roots" this gave a number of students. One participant indicated that the session "helped me to start discerning my path."

Another session on ministry held at the end of the second week focussed on ministry. In three groups, students studied one of three texts.[2] They worked on images of ministry in the passage, and made connections to personal experience. An integrative activity asked them to develop a slogan/motto for a school or program that prepared people for the type of ministry described in their scripture passage. In 2007, one group highlighted the importance of authenticity, and their slogan read, "Live Your Inside Out!: Live Your Sacred Self." Another group wrote, "Companions R Us: Taking Journeys with You for 2000 years!" And the last group played with the "word" and "world"; they drew a large "l" between the "r" and "d" in word, and alongside the large "l" were the words love, light, living, longing and learning. Their slogan declared: "Bringing the 'L' to the WorLd."

The CCS theological stance states:

...God's activity in the world advances and supports love and right relationship, justice and compassion for all of creation. Through history prophets, priests, servants, healers and leaders have been called to action. God continues to call us to this beautiful and demanding life of faith.[3]

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[2] Acts 8:26-40 (Ethiopian Eunuch), Exodus 1:15-20 (Hebrew Midwives), Luke 4:16-21 (Jesus' Nazareth Announcement)

[3] CCS Theological Stance: http://www.ccsonline.ca/About/theology.htm Used on February 8, 2008.

The LDM reflects this statement about vocation; the LDM models a way of being in ministry that is, gently and fiercely, loving.

Considering Influences: Critical Reflection

The LDM provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on themselves, and to analyse and ponder their place and position in the world. Personally, they engaged in consideration of their personality characteristics, learning styles, spirituality and self-esteem. Politically, they began to grapple with economic, gender, racial, environmental issues, and started to identify the influences of social location.

Asking them to assess their learning abilities tested the participants' reflective capacities. For some, little movement was evident in their consideration of their learning. One participant remained constant across the three forms describing herself as a "quick study." One self-confident person, in all three forms, considered that she was an eager learner with excellent ability, although she did reflectively declare on her last form, "I love it when I see the connections between things I've learned in the past and new things I'm exposed to." Others demonstrated a growing confidence in their engagement with the learning process. One respondent moved from wanting to be taught by an expert, to realizing the importance of the affective in her learning, to being able to declare assuredly, "I'm smart." Another began by saying she was "open to learning" and on her final form asserts, "I can do this!" For the most part, the LDM, through intentional sessions, activities, and processes, engaged

participants in work that led them to ponder education and learning. They

showed signs of deepened and nuanced understanding of themselves as

learners.

Issues of self-esteem were also considered and contemplated. One

participant felt that she had deepened her appreciation for herself, "in no small

part due to the LDM, as I feel I am getting closer to my authenticity." Another

moved in an opposite direction; she had consistently identified that she had

pride, confidence, and a sense of value in herself but by the third form was

wondering if "perhaps [her self-esteem was] too good sometimes." All of the

respondents reflected on themselves with thoughtfulness and by the final forms

were naming and analysing influences on their sense of self-worth. One

recognized the vulnerability associated with entering a new field. Another

reflected on her lack of assertiveness and its connection to self-esteem. Another

began to identify areas where her strong and intact sense of self was more

fragile and unprotected.

The LDM affected the participants' ability to reflect on their economic

situation. When initially asked to describe some of their assumptions about their

economic resources, most of the comments related to personal spending habits;

references like:

> -I am conservative with my money; I don't need much to enjoy myself.
> -I choose to spend my money on things that are important to me and that make me and my family happy.
> -if something is a high priority, we'll make it happen and do without something else.

indicate that the reflection on economics was originally limited to the household level. By the end of the LDM, the consideration of economics was expanded. Some were beginning to notice their financial privilege. Others were setting their Canadian income level within the global perspective and realizing how fortunate they were. Still others were discussing the complications of class noting that it was not just economically determined but also affected by geographic, social, sexual, and educational status. The participants at the LDM had grown in their awareness and broadened their perspectives.

Thinking about gender issues also developed through the LDM experience. On the first form, one participant wrote a platitudinal statement about the equality of men and women; by the second form she notes with frustration that women are still expected to take primary responsibility for children and the household; on the third form she is challenging patriarchy and calling for pay equity and more women's voices in decision-making. She progressed from a banal liberal bromide to a more thoughtful social critique, and she was able to support her opinion with examples and illustrations. Another respondent noted, on one of the later survey forms, the difficulties of being taken seriously as a female; another reflected on the pioneering role women in ministry are playing; one other began to take note of her heterosexual privilege. The exposure to CCS's GLBT affirming and feminist stances opened eyes and provided opportunity for participants to consider issues of gender justice.

For bell hooks, the primary element that enables change is critical thinking.

Without the capacity to think critically, about our selves and our lives, none of us would be able to move forward, to change, to grow. In our society,

> which is so fundamentally anti-intellectual, critical thinking is not encouraged. Engaged pedagogy has been essential for my development as an intellectual, as a teacher/professor because the heart of this approach is critical thinking. Conditions of radical openness exist in any learning situation where students and teachers celebrate their abilities to think critically, to engage in pedagogical praxis.[4]

hooks writes about the experience of being confronted by one of her students. The student was complaining that hooks taught them to reflect critically on sex, race, class, orientation and that, "we can't enjoy life anymore."[5] In that moment, hooks recognized the pain, discomfort and estrangement that can be associated with new learning and shifting paradigms.

Critical thinking exercises introduced at the LDM, led to new insights and to some questioning and some readjustment. The participants in the 2007 LDM were all Caucasian. Those who responded to the initial survey indicated that their exposure to other ethnic and racial groupings had been limited. One forthright respondent revealed that she was "not aware of issues faced by others except through media." Another commented honestly, "despite my best efforts I have racist thoughts." Throughout the LDM experience, opportunities arose to encourage reflection about white privilege. In the first week of the LDM, a number of people were impacted by an exercise from the social ministry session. The students who led the discussion developed fictitious profiles of individuals of varying levels of vulnerability based on gender, class, physical and mental abilities, education, economics, orientation, and racial background. Profiles were distributed to participants. The leaders named specific societal advantages, "If your character is white take a step forward." By the end of the exercise those

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[4] hooks, 202.
[5] Ibid, 42.

with a high level of privilege had taken a number of steps and were at the front of the class room – unable to see the disadvantaged ones behind them. The debriefing from this embodied activity disclosed many poignant insights. This learning was echoed in the later survey forms,

> -My understanding is broadening as a result of the LDM.
> -I am wanting greater contact with diversity.
> -As a white person, I am in a place of privilege in society.

Participants were critically reflecting on their positions of entitlement.

Participants were further tested on their critical reflective development by questions related to social location. On the survey forms, they were asked to describe where they believed they were located in society and how that influenced their lives. One respondent, who felt blessed with financial and intellectual resources, stated in the pre-LDM form that she tended to assume she was "normal" and everyone had the same opportunities she had had. By the second and third form she was openly questioning her assumptions, and making commitments to think beyond her own constricted reality. Another respondent, in the progression of the survey forms, thoughtfully broadened her articulation of her privileges, adding age, heterosexuality, career status, family structure, neighbourhood. On the third form, with a tender directness, she stated, "I have known many advantages (and taken them for granted)." Other comments from the last survey forms mirror these insights; one example; "I don't see the issues that are part of every day life for those in a minority, in the lower classes and those that are not educated."

Participants in the 2007 LDM were asked to consider, critically, their place in society and to reflect, thoughtfully, on how that influenced their lives. One session was devoted to introducing the notion of critical thinking. In this session the students participated in an exercise where they identified some of the tools of bias and propaganda; also, in three self-selected groups they reflected on: media coverage, women in scripture, and militarism. During the session on biblical interpretation, ideologies of right-wing, liberal and radical, were introduced. Throughout the LDM, many exercises encouraged social and individual analysis, and helped participants to claim language to articulate their critical thinking. The surveys give evidence of a gain in considerable insight, at both the political and personal levels. The movement in critical thinking and the widening of awareness demonstrated transformative learning.

Altering Behaviour: Subsequent Action

The third aspect of the working definition of transformative learning, used in this study – subsequent action – captures the conviction that learning demands changes in the way one functions and behaves. Consequently, the survey forms asked participants to consider areas of recent learning and to identify follow-up actions and changed behaviours, which resulted from the learning. In reply, participants offered stories that revealed a serious engagement and significant commitment to personal growth and preparation for ministry.

One respondent focussed on learning about the extent of her privilege. Entering the LDM, she had little exposure to folks beyond her white, upper

middle class background. The LDM experience led her into connection with, and consideration of, those of lower income, GLBT folk and a refugee family in sanctuary. She committed herself to doing her LDM research assignment on the dynamics of power and powerlessness, and she set goals for her CCS field placement in relation to exposing herself to greater diversity. She concretely prepared herself to expand her limited view and strategically shifted her patterns to include those of different perspectives.

Another respondent was deeply affected by feedback she received at the LDM. Formally and informally, she was made aware of ways in which her behaviour affected others. In order to deal with these insights, she put in place several schemes for becoming more conscious of her impact on others. She pro-actively solicited specific feedback from her family, from those involved in her CCS field placement, from her diaconal mentor. She deliberately was working on cultivating the habit of framing her words more carefully. She was journaling on a regular basis in order process difficult circumstances. She was taking steps to address the feedback which she received at the LDM.

In the LDM sessions on conflict and group dynamics, another participant learned that:

> conflict is a normal part of life, an opportunity to grow and change, not something to be avoided, plus I've learned some strategies to deal with conflict rather than just ignore it and hope it will go away!

Her first steps involved developing her ability to identify and recognize conflict situations. She then wanted to work on sharing her feelings more readily instead of holding in resentment. She was going to exert her right to say "no" to

demands rather than feeling overwhelmed. The CCS spiral reflection model and process of setting learning goals were helpful in focussing her priorities. As an overall change in behaviour related to conflict, she was moving toward being more reflective and more balanced.

In many ways the LDM is structured to ensure that participants put in place plans that will follow up on feedback and new learning. The review of learning process ends with a reflective period where students consider responses to evaluation and ways to proceed. Throughout the CCS program, learning goals provide concrete priorities and shape action plans. The CCS's spiral theological reflection model climaxes in active experimentation: practical applications of theory. The importance of putting learning into practice is stressed; emphasis is placed on follow through. The students of the 2007 LDM picked up on this attention to subsequent action.

<div align="center">Embodying Wisdom: Holistic Integration</div>

Asked to describe how she was integrating her learning into her ministry and life, immediately following the LDM, one respondent offered: "I am absorbing the LDM still and trying to live it out ..." The participants demonstrated a desire to incorporate their new insights and experiences into their daily realities. The LDM was not viewed as an insulated, arcane event that one sequestered away somewhere in the back of one's brain. Rather the participants wanted to work with the new knowledge and insights in a way that lead to practical, embodied wisdom. Three months after the LDM, one respondent to the survey wrote:

> I often see things now in people, in groups, in readings, in the news (everywhere!) and I find connections between all of these with things I have learned thru *(sic)* CCS. The 'aha's' ... are numerous, and each time deepens my understanding of both my life and my ministry.

Participants were connecting their new understandings internally and externally, theoretically and practically, emotionally and intellectually, broadly and deeply.

Clearly, the participants in the 2007 LDM were imaging learning across a broad spectrum. They communicated a holistic and comprehensive understanding of revelation and growth: "I enjoy learning new things. I appreciate discovering them in a variety of ways."

Respondents discussed the dynamic between introverted and extraverted learning. One person commented: "I like to talk things thru *(sic)* in groups ...but I also need a balance – to reflect on my own as well." Individual reflection was named as important as it permitted participants to pull together their thoughts and reactions. Journaling and intentional time for meditation were mentioned as particular activities respondents found useful for processing their learning. Group discussion benefited participants by allowing others' perspectives to be heard, and thereby broadening exploration of concepts. Both personal and communal approaches to learning were highlighted in the survey; they were not perceived to be mutually exclusive enterprises but complementary, and necessary, aspects of learning.

The tension between theoretical and practical emphases in education was also discussed in the surveys. Respondents placed value on the conceptual and saw the importance of abstract ideas. Research, logical analysis and scholarly reading were mentioned as aspects of this approach. Equally stressed was the

importance of applying new learning in a "hands-on" fashion. Participants used study groups, sermon writing, field placements and worship leadership as venues to incorporate their learning. The participants did not see the theoretical and practical dimensions of education as competitive, "either/or", polar opposites. Ideas and actions were viewed as necessary, "both/and" components of learning.

The affective and cognitive dimensions of learning were also recognized in surveys. Feeling and thinking were sometimes described in dualistic ways, but more frequently the desire to integrate the two realities was held up as a goal. One respondent explained her journey from "organized, planned, logical, analytical" learner to a "more intuitive, feeling" approach. Another compared herself to her brother,

> We could read the same essay and I would internalize it, think of personal examples and embed the info in my emotions. My brother would retain the facts and concepts. So, when we discuss, he keeps referring to the facts and I keep referring to how I feel – makes it quite challenging.

The learning at the LDM, honours the importance of both head and heart. Students are expected to read scholarly articles, comprehend theory, discuss abstract concepts, complete research assignments. At the same time, an affective, relational and spiritual epistemology and pedagogy is also held to be important; emotions are acknowledged, community ties are developed, liturgical rituals are practised.

Other polarities were addressed in the survey forms. The continuity between past knowledge and future consequences were mentioned; one respondent wrote, "I like to be able to see linkages between something that I am learning with something I already know..." Breadth and depth of educational

approaches were contrasted; "I like to research and really understand things on a deeper level, so I tend to specialize in certain areas rather than know a little about a wide variety of issues." A respect for diversity and different styles of learning was evident. Participants showed openness to preferences other than their own; they realized that working "against" their preference stretched their understanding.

In chapter two, theological educators called for integrative approaches. They lamented the dualistic paradigms – church against academy, scholarship against practice, content against context – and longed for a holistic interweaving of matters of ministry preparation. Raymond Brady Williams describes the search at one seminary for:

> the elusive virtues of relevance and integration. Students move from class to class and from assignment to assignment searching for the unity that will create from their courses a curricular relevance to lived religion that is the context for their life and vocation.[6]

He concludes: "Attention to the breadth, grandeur, and unity of the theological disciplines is essential to the integrity and relevance of theological teaching."[7] Clearly, the survey forms indicate that participants view the LDM as such an integral, relevant, and circular process of education. Learning is understood to necessarily include revisiting and revising one's insights. One respondent wrote, "Read, journal, discuss with friends/partner, read some more." The process is perceived to be on-going, "I approach my learning as a life long journey ... I hope to take the skills I have learned and use them to help me to see where I need to inform myself more."

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[6] Brady Williams, 24.

[7] Ibid.

The survey forms indicated that participants at the 2007 LDM were transformed by the experience. The respondents stated that the opportunity clarified and deepened their sense of call to ministry; their vocational identity was enhanced. They engaged in personal consideration of their learning styles and self-esteem, as well as, political analysis of their social location; they were involved in, and increased their capacity for reflective critical thinking. As a result of the LDM, they developed follow-up strategies and plans to deal with new learnings and insights; in response to the experience, they changed behaviours and negotiated appropriate subsequent actions. They expressed desire to incorporate the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual dimensions in their continuing learning; they approached their education in a holistic, embodied fashion and with the hope of integrated wisdom.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATOR:

THE RESEARCHER AS LEARNER/TEACHER

In the course of this study, I have had the opportunity to engage with the insights of those writing about the future of theological education. It was affirming to hear voices from that community calling for change and asking for innovative training programs that prepare ministers in holistic and communal ways. From my perspective, the LDM provides one such example of alternative, creative pedagogy that integrates intellectual, practical, spiritual, and contextual domains of ministry. I take pride in my connection to the LDM's participatory, relational process.

As part of this project, I have also had the chance to become familiar with several branches of educational theory. The LDM, in my mind, reflects the best of educational theory, and is also able to sift, critically, the theories for excesses and deficits. We encourage students toward maturity following self-directed learning approaches, yet we do not overstress independence and autonomy to the detriment of interdependence in community. Indeed, we emphasis the co-learning aspects of organizational learning, without adopting those theorists tendency to support a capitalist agenda. We offer the affirmative, supportive environment espoused by strength-based models, but also challenge students with feedback that "speaks the truth in love." Our learning practices are "hands

on" and engaging, as prescribed by experiential learning, while insisting upon constant reflection.

Certainly, the responses to the survey forms and the in-depth interviews indicate that transformational learning was happening as a result of the 2007 LDM. Participants wrestled with and clarified identity and vocational issues; they critically reflected on their personalities and social locations; they planned for on-going change by designating next steps and subsequent action; they began to pull together their learning in integrative ways.

In this chapter, I articulate some of the aspects of my own transformational learning as a result of this project. I test my learning against the same four fold elements – vocational identity, critical reflection, subsequent action, integration – that I tested the participants against. My intention is to explore the impact of the 2007 LDM, and this research project, in a very personal way. One of my chief goals for this study was to deepen my practice as a theological educator by testing it against theory; I wanted to be more articulate and more integrated in my style and approach.

Creator of Learning Communities: Vocational Identity

On the fifth morning of the 2007 LDM, the planners of worship posed two questions for community check-in: How have you been stretched this week? And how are you feeling? This was the day when the first of the reading discussion groups were scheduled to present. Some reflected on the challenges of planning with others who operated in different styles; others mentioned personal or

vocational questions with which they were struggling. A number voiced appreciation for the community; one woman said, "Most people don't know me as well as you guys do." It had only been five days and this woman was declaring a deep sense of belonging!

As often happens in this kind of sharing circle, I was trying to listen attentively while in the back of my mind readying an answer for myself. When it came my turn, I blurted out, "I love the LDM." I managed to mumble a few words of explanation, in which I articulated my gratitude for the power of the learning, the richness of the creativity, the integration of the spirituality, but, most important to me, the sacredness of the community established.

In the course of this project, I have become more connected to educational theorists, like Palmer, hooks and Friere, who advocate for communal learning where everyone's presence is valued, and everyone's contributions, not just the instructor's, are seen as resources for learning. Theological educators, like Russell and Lebacqz, also favour this move toward training that is mutually empowering, that nurtures justice within community, and that challenges present patriarchal models.

In the interviews, in the survey responses, and in the evaluation forms of this study, participants are extremely appreciative of the learning that happens through, and because of, the relational connection and the sense of trust created at the LDM. I am firmly convinced that nurturing relationship and building community need to be held up as primary elements in educational ministry and theological education. Throughout this study, I have become more and more

convinced that my calling involves developing opportunities for communal learning, and sharing that vision for theological education.

In my first year after graduation from theological seminary, I was in a lay ministry position. I happily fell into a congregation that was re-vamping its education program; there was a desire to re-vitalize adult education. Therein started a whirlwind learning about adult education practices –something I was not exposed to, in my original, formal, seminary training – and began a life-long passion for being an educator. Over the years I have served in a rural charge, in interim ministry, in a new church development congregation, as judicatory staff, and now in a theological school. I have worked for the church for thirty years, and I have never lost my enthusiasm for the ministry that nurtures learning and growth. Central in that work has been the attempt to develop community connection where people could be their best selves, educationally, socially, politically, psychologically and spiritually.

Scripturally, many of the call stories recount a tale of immediate acceptance. Mary embraces Gabriel's announcement; the fishers leave their nets; Saul falls off his horse. In some ways this seems my story, I like what I do and I have fallen into this ministry easily and I have received my share of affirmation. Other biblical stories evoke the theme of resistance toward call. Moses lacks public speaking ability; Sarah laughs in the face of absurdity; Jonah would rather risk drowning than go to Ninevah; Isaiah feels his lips are unclean; Jeremiah reckons he is too young. Certainly, I have pondered my place in theological education. I am not learned enough; I am in over my head. In situations like the Churches

Council on Theological Education event[1], I realize that a large part of me feels like a pretender.

This project has, to some extent, nudged me away from that self-doubt. After all, it isn't about me anyway; it is about creating opportunities for learning in community. What we do at the LDM, and at CCS, is counter cultural, in that we try to establish a non-competitive, non-hierarchical, non-violent, non-domineering environment. We endeavour to model a climate of safety and trust where participants can take risks. We attempt to make learning approachable and accessible for those who have been too scared to learn. We recognize each person in the circle not in an exercise of therapeutic restoration, but because it is right to do so; each person does have something to offer to others' learning. This is not some version of liberal relativism; in my mind, this is a radical commitment to justice in a small circle of people preparing for ministry. In the last ten years, many have experienced the sacred power of this learning; my hope is that they will share this kin-dom reality in their ministries and have its vision direct their vocations.

Acknowledgement of Power and Privilege: Critical Reflection

I was at a small dinner party, a number of years ago, with my partner and her colleagues. The majority of the guests were extremely well educated members of the academy. I am usually fairly quiet at these affairs; the conversation typically runs to "shop talk" about university politics, and it can be interesting but, since I don't work there, I don't have a lot to contribute. At this event, one of the

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[1] As described in chapter two.

guests was regaling the table with tales about a beloved mentor from his days in graduate school. Apparently, this mentor made a habit of "making mince meat" out of students; he took great pride in intimidating the students and whittling the class size down to a quarter of its original starting numbers. In the midst of this storytelling, I uncharacteristically exploded. Suddenly, I felt myself erupt into a rant about the brutality of an education system that was elitist and based on competition; I can remember my voice rising as I asked the rhetorical question: "how does that engender the love of learning?" When I finished, a hush fell over the group. From their faces, I could see that a) they didn't know what I was "on" about, and b) I had embarrassed myself by getting emotional. My partner looked empathetically at me, and someone graciously changed the subject. My passion for an encouraging and empowering education seemed to go unheard.

My commitment to pedagogical reform has not waned. During the course of this study, my passion for another form of education has been enflamed. I have, also, felt my position clarified by the educational theorists. In the last chapter, I rehearsed some of the tension between the transformational learning theorists. Some theorists espouse a model of education that has an overt political agenda, and others do not feel that educators should coerce their students or lead them in a particular direction, even if the cause is noble and just. I can appreciate the non-coercive position. Great mistakes have been made when people in authority thought they knew what was best; residential schools stand as a heinous example. I want to carry, humbly, a level of uncertainty in my teaching; I am committed to maintaining a stance of openness to learning. On the other hand, I

believe that education is inherently political; there is nowhere to stand that is objectively neutral. Pedagogies of ministry formation that attempt to have a detached or impartial position, end up, (sometimes by default), supporting the status quo and domesticating the leadership of the church. This broken world does not need ministers who are assimilated into, and who accommodate, the present structures of power. We need ecclesiological leaders who will stand in solidarity with the marginalized and hurting, and who will listen and learn from a position of curiosity and compassion. We need ministers who will speak and stand up for justice and right relations. Lebacqz proffers that the excellence of theological education needs to be judged by the depth of engagement with the struggle of the oppressed.[2]

At the LDM, we introduce a discussion about the authority of scripture by reviewing a three-fold ideological paradigm. Using the work of David Lochhead, we explain the concepts of right-wing, liberal, and radical ways of interpreting the bible.[3] Over the years, I have become a little hesitant about this session; for some students, unversed in socio-political analysis, this is completely baffling material. It has been, particularly, difficult to "get across" a critical analysis of liberalism. Yet, for some reason, in 2007, this session went extremely well. Maybe my colleague and I were more prepared and had thought more carefully about how to present the material; maybe this particular group of students had had more exposure to political frameworks. Whatever happened, several important connections were made: one person deepened analysis of the 1988

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[2] Lebacqz, 79.

[3] David Lochead, *The Liberation of the Bible* (Toronto: Student Christian Movement, 1978).

United Church sexual orientation decision; another person reflected on the

implications of an evangelical history; others were able to demonstrate the ability

to imagine interpreting biblical passages from the three positions. I was pleased

that we had the start of a common vocabulary to assess, not only biblical

interpretation, but also acculturated assumptions and social location. I was

pleased that the interviews and survey responses for this study demonstrate that

the participants were engaging in critical reflection; Thomas came to a nuanced

understanding of the complexity of his vulnerability and power; a survey

respondent wanted to work on the realization of her economic privilege.

When the Syro-Phoenician woman comes to ask for Jesus' help, Jesus

initially dismisses her.[4] Yet, she is not easily dissuaded. With her comments

about dogs and under the table crumbs, she challenges him. In my mind, she is

confronting his racism and sexism. I picture her, determinedly and articulately,

compelling him to take her seriously,

> Hey, Jesus, you are treating me like I am invisible. Just because I am not
> the same ethnic background as you, and just because I am a woman,
> doesn't make me expendable. Listen, teacher: that is not good enough! Put
> me on your radar screen, buddy.

Maybe out of shame, maybe out of grace, but to his credit, Jesus hears her non-

defensively and takes action. In my social location of extreme privilege, this story

holds a great deal of significance for me. Its narrative reminds me to stay ever

vigilantly reflective about the danger of the power I carry, and the power that gets

attributed to me, as a white, male, able-bodied, middle-aged, economically

advantaged teacher in a heterosexual relationship. In an environment that

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[4] Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30

advocates for justice, I need to work on my own behaviour so that it is invitational and trustworthy. Each person's value and worth is foundational to my faith; no one is expendable. In a world where many are forgotten and overlooked, I need to do my part to make the learning climate safe and empowering.

Next Steps: Subsequent Action

On the second day of the 2007 LDM, anxiety was bubbling over, and a number of students raised questions of concern. One person asked what happened if the reading discussion presentation ran short of the allotted time. Another student wanted expectations for the post-module assignments clearly defined. Someone else bristled about jargon words; she felt she was de-coding our language. There were further issues with the student travel pool, and someone wanted clarification. Despite our best efforts, as staff, to establish a welcoming, calm environment, a residue of stress percolated to the surface. We acknowledged the tension; there was a lot of information to digest and absorb for a seventeen-day course. We recognized that the LDM was a different learning environment than most had previously experienced. We responded to the questions non-defensively. We tried to reassure the students that "how they did" was not a competition. We stated that whatever happens can be turned into a learning opportunity and that mistakes are allowed. But it was evident that they were feeling pressure. Some of that comes from internal messages; personal "tapes" that demand perfection or feel judgement. Some of that comes from external sources; educational systems that have emphasized measurement in a

contest climate. Yet, if I am honest, I recognize that I was irritated with the "need to know every detail"; part of me, that I am not particularly proud of, wanted them to "chill out." In some ways I felt like Jesus (ignoring the Christological implications!) quieting the storm and his evident frustration with the disciples' fear. Nevertheless, this level of frustration was not congruent with my understanding that educators need to be mindful of students' level of anxiety. Theological educators need to be especially conscious of this dynamic because in student populations largely made up of adult learners, coming back to school represents a very high level of apprehension.

Adult education theorist, Stephen Brookfield tells stories and reflects upon his experience as an adult learner.[5] As a middle-aged man, he tries to learn to swim despite his fear of water. He is unable to make progress because he cannot put his face under the surface. The young, brawny, unsympathetic lifeguard instructor cannot comprehend this dilemma and proves unhelpful. Brookfield recounts his sense of humiliation as he went to these classes. It is only when one of the colleagues in the class offers Brookfield her goggles, he is able to overcome his fear, put his face in the water, and improve his swimming. From this personal narrative, Brookfield draws conclusions about the profound vulnerability that adult learners experience. He advises teachers to be mindful of that sense of exposure. Also, from his story, Brookfield notes that a fellow learner proves more helpful than the instructor. He reminds teachers that we are not always the ones who will shed light; we need to make space for wisdom other than our own to arise in our classroom settings.

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[5] Brookfield, "Through the Lens of Learning: How the Visceral Experience of Learning Reframes Teaching," 21-32.

Throughout my ten years at CCS, I have personally engaged in formal learning programs. I have finished a STM degree, taken special studies to switch my ministry status from ordained to diaconal, completed a certificate in conflict mediation, embarked on this DMin work. I have been particularly conscious of what it feels like to be a student. I have an embodied, recent, experience of the check-the-mailbox-daily anticipation involved in waiting for an instructor's comments on a paper. I have lived through the stumbling and humbling reality of being in new, unknown territory and not knowing which path to follow. Despite being a basically competent, capable person, I sense the different dynamics in my student relationship with teachers; the instructor's approval carries more weight, and her/his feedback means just that little more. I think being a student myself has helped me to be more conscious and more sensitive to those realities. Nevertheless, I think there are areas I could improve in my relationships with students.

The story of Samuel's call (1 Samuel 3) speaks to me as an educator in this regard. I can easily imagine myself in the role of Eli. The first two times Samuel comes to Eli, Eli does not take his revelation seriously. Not until the third nocturnal interruption does Eli realize the full import of Samuel's words. Mostly, I think of myself as a sensitive facilitator who is aware of pastoral concerns and group dynamics. More times than I care to admit, I have, however, missed the significance of a student's question, because I have not always taken the time to listen behind the words. Sometimes I have not taken seriously enough the feelings with which students enter into the CCS learning circles.

One of the key marks of transformational learning that I identified for this project was subsequent action. One of the areas that I want to make some concrete changes is in relation to this area of student vulnerability. The profiles and survey forms witness to the fact that we address these concerns fairly successfully at present. We build a community that offers safety and develops trust. We offer gentle, nurturing leadership. We encourage a cooperative teaming model of ministry. I think I could improve in a number of concrete ways. My staff colleague was particularly helpful in pointing me in the direction I am headed. Because I am very familiar with the program, I have, on occasion, glossed over details and assumed knowledge and background. Also, because I am immersed in the material and processes, I have rushed through information afraid that it was tedious. Next year, I want to go more slowly. I want to monitor the anxiety levels. I want, repeatedly, to invite questions and make time for clarification. I want to follow-up with individuals who seem most tense and offer one-to-one reassurance. I want to make a clear commitment to the on-going improvement of my teaching and the creation of the best environment for learning as possible.

Beyond Reporting: Integration

After a first draft of this study, my supervisor wrote back and offered many supportive and affirming comments. In her wisdom and analytical insight, she also identified that I had a lot of good data and summaries of theory, but that I was merely reporting this data as information. She said, "This is where most

education stops." I needed to go the next step. She noted, appropriately, that an integration of the material and the concepts was missing. This deficit was especially ironic in a project where I was espousing a definition of transformational learning that included integration as an essential element!

The theological educators that I studied for this project call for holistic approaches. They envision training where practice and theory are not separated into two disciplines. They picture preparation for ministry where students develop areas of competence spiritually, intellectually, contextually, and professionally. The educational theorists who champion a *praxis* of action/reflection, also, uphold an integrative pedagogical approach. The interviews and survey forms of this study point to some ways that integration was in process: Kathy was moving to a gentler approach in her interactions; Thomas was living into his new perspectives on his power and vulnerability; Glen was adopting a new way of sharing his creative energy; Carrie-Anne was finding the confidence to embrace her call.

Subsequent drafts of this project have attempted to address my original integrative deficit, but the comments from my supervisor were a wake-up call. At a recent CCS learning circle, one of the participants wanted to collect all the flipchart sheets that got generated in various student small group discussions. He volunteered to type up all the material for himself and others. Although broadly enthusiastic about his learning with CCS, he was frustrated that all this material was produced and there was no synthesizing of the material. For him, without the summary the conversations had been a "waste of time." I disagreed

with him. At the time, I was slightly irked by his perspective. I even quoted to him, a First Nation elder who talked about the lack of note taking in aboriginal learning circles: "what you need to learn, you will remember." Now, however, I am deeply suspicious that I have an entrenched pattern of resistance to pulling material and concepts together. I find it easier to gather information; it is more difficult for me to retain a "big picture" point of view, and ask what does this data mean? Somehow verbalizing my interpretation involves a level of exposure that is uncomfortable for me.

In the gospels, when the rich young man comes to Jesus, he wants to know the answer to a big question.[6] Instead of answering directly, Jesus collects a bit of background data and asks a few questions of his own in response. In reply, the rich young man makes the case that he has followed all the rules, all of his life. Jesus makes one more important, all-encompassing, demand of the rich young man. And sadly, the rich young man is not able to make the last commitment, and he walks away.

I did not want to walk away from the last commitment; I needed to go the next integrative step. I wanted my learning from this project to be personally transformational as well. In order for it to be transformational I needed to work harder at the integrative piece related to long range conceptual integration. While I have been an educator who has been fun, creative, sensitive, and skilled, and I have offered richness of spiritual connection and community development, I have not always pulled together the big picture with intellectual rigour. I want to

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[6] Mark 10: 17-22, Matthew 19: 18-22, Luke 18: 18-23

cultivate that skill in my responses to student assignments, in my questions in student interviews, in my summarizing of sessions in the learning circles.

In this chapter, I have offered some of the insights that have arisen for me as a practitioner of theological education. I passionately have had re-affirmed for me my vocation as an educator who builds alternative communities as a model for ministry leaders to carry into their ministries. As a person of privilege and power, the importance of personal and political critical reflection was re-emphasized for me. I articulated some specific follow-up actions in the area of relieving participant anxiety in the 2008 LDM. I named areas of weakness in my teaching related to integrating intellectual concepts and vowed continued work in that area. In the next chapter, I will pull together recommendations for theological educators by pulling together the best practices generated in this study.

CHAPTER NINE

LIVING A THEOLOGY OF JUSTICE:

ONE MODEL OF TRANSFORMATIVE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

From a variety of quarters, dissatisfaction is being expressed about the traditional models of theological education. Internal voices, from the church and academy, are calling for alternatives, and external forces, of financial decline and secular disinterest, demand new directions. Historically, preparation for ministry has not been confined to one model; the present pervasive academic approach only emerged in relatively recent times. It is possible to imagine radical change. The church and world require leadership that embodies an integrated wisdom of head, heart and hand. Competent ministers, who exhibit a depth of spirit and a maturity of character, who demonstrate a knowledgeable background in the tradition and an ability to think critically, who comprehend social analysis and contextual sensitivity, who manifest pastoral skills and capacity for leadership, are needed. Training to ready such ministers involves a renewed and re-imagined pedagogy.

One possibility exists in the CCS program. The LDM stands as an example of alternative theological education. Students are spiritually, intellectually and emotionally immersed in a holistic approach. Individual differences are respected within a communal connectedness. Creative and varied activities and processes engage the learner experientially. With positive affirmation and a

supportive atmosphere, discovery is encouraged and nurtured. Regular feedback and frequent evaluation are normalized, within a clear set of guidelines, as ways to test insights and stretch skills. The realms of both hands-on practice and abstract theory are incorporated as an integrated whole. A central commitment to justice and compassion emerges in inclusive process and issues in prophetic passion. Intentional attention to spirituality and reflectivity are interwoven as healthy and grounding aspects of vocational formation.

The specific LDM sessions outlined in this study demonstrated the commitments and emphases of the program. Relationships are honoured and community is continually being built. Diversity is respected; processes vary to take into account different learning styles and personality needs. Tools for theological reflection and liturgical practice enhance belief and understanding. Life experience and personal stories are acknowledged and affirmed. Faith journeys and the sense of call are explored and tested.

This project establishes that the pedagogy of the LDM is positioned within a range of adult education schools of thought. Many of the tenets of self-directed learning are evidenced in the commitments to goal setting, self-assessment, competency outcomes, and individual responsibility. The emphasis on community and corporate connection within the learning circle are reminiscent of organizational learning theory. The appreciative tone and encouraging climate demonstrate a strength-based, rather than a pathological, position. The commitment to cycles of action and reflection and processes of creative engagement indicate the influence of experiential learning theory.

Chiefly, transformational learning best epitomizes the nature and impact of the LDM and CCS pedagogical style and approach. In order to test this assertion a clear and testable definition of transformative learning was employed in this study:

> the development of revised or new understanding and critical reflection leading to a revitalized and integrated identity.

The working definition followed four elements: identity development, reflective critical analysis, subsequent action, and integration.

The survey forms employed in this study witness to the transformative nature of the LDM learning. Participants developed and enhanced their vocational identities. They critically reflected on themselves personally and on their social location. They made steps to enact new insights and behave in new ways. They began to integrate their new wisdom in their attitudes, feelings, souls and practice of ministry.

Profiles included in this study corroborate the findings of the surveys and illustrate the power of the LDM experience. One person grew in self-awareness, and softened her personal approach. Another evolved a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of his vulnerabilities and privileges in society. Another participant, frustrated and constricted in his vision of ministry, renewed his sense of purpose and re-imagined his call. And one young woman claimed her courage and discerned her future in ministry.

The students of theology deserve the best pedagogical wisdom and practices available. The following recommendations are offered to theological educators who want to engage their classes in transformational learning.

Relate

At the LDM, we get to know our students through interviews, faith stories, and personal sharing. We care about who they are, and I think they intuitively know that. In the classroom, we deliberately sit in a circle so that we can see one another's faces. This simple configuration of furniture symbolizes our commitment to be with the students, and that we value them as co-learners and co-leaders. bell hooks recalls her first experience with this kind of set-up:

> I still remember the excitement I felt when I took my first class where the teacher wanted to change how we sat, where we moved from sitting in rows to a circle where we could look at each other. That change forced us to recognize each other's presence. We couldn't sleepwalk our way to knowledge.[1]

I do not want to stake my pedagogical convictions on a particular placement of chairs. Class sizes or building facilities may not allow this set-up in every context, anyway. However, this seating arrangement represents a relational approach to teaching; I would encourage theological educators to relate, authentically and genuinely, to students.

Of course, maintain appropriate boundaries, but do enter into the lives of those you are teaching. You might have to give up some of the time you devote transmitting content material. Your voice may not dominate quite so much. But if you get to know these people in all their complexity and richness of experience, I believe your wisdom, and the collective wisdom, will be broadened and multiplied. When life experience and perspective are shared, people feel known; from this sense of belonging, learners can take greater risks. From a place of

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[1] hooks, 146.

relationship, you can push harder and challenge more deeply than you can from a distant, unconnected, removed place where you may be unknown and/or feared.

Build community. Let the students get to know one another. Be humble and remember that what you have experienced is not the complete range of the human story, and what you know is not the sum total of all that is worth knowing. Remain curious and open. Ask: what can I learn from these students? Trust that learning is deepened in relationship.

Affirm

In the peer assessment process, at the LDM, staff and student colleagues are asked to offer feedback. On the forms for this evaluative process, they are invited to name four or five affirmations and one or two encouragements. The weighting privileges affirmations over encouragements. The very term "encouragements" sounds a more positive tone than harsher alternatives such as challenges, critiques, or failings. As discussed in chapter five, at CCS we practise a strength-based educational philosophy. Buckingham and Clifton note two assumptions when talking about leadership:

> First, "each person's talents are enduring and unique." Second, "each person's greatest room for growth is in the area of his or her greatest strength."… keeping a close eye upon our weaknesses may prevent failure, it will never generate success.[2]

I suggest that theological educators need to see their students as gifted, talented human beings. Rather than viewing them as problems, see them for their

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[2] M. Buckingham and D.O. Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (New York: Free Press, 2001) quoted in Tate, 37.

potential. Instead of seeing the scarcity in their character, look for the

abundance. This capacity building approach does not have to become an

unthinking, trendy, cheap grace. I would see this assets-based approach as a

commitment to the respect and dignity of each child of God. Of course,

inappropriate behaviour and character flaws need to be appropriately confronted.

Yet in a world where so many have suffered negativity and neglect, shame and

blame, this affirmative approach reclaims right relationship and offers hope.

Students can tell if they disappoint us or frustrate us or under-whelm us.

Authentically, hold them with positive regard. Sincerely, long for them to do well.

Be Creative

In the fourth chapter, I described the pedagogical use of reader's theatre,

group discussion, and an art installation, during a session on theological

reflection. In that session, we also danced. After the break, participants joined in

a simple spiral dance. While chanting a familiar tune and walking hand-in-hand

in a chain, the group was led, alternately, inwardly, and then, outwardly, in a

spiral. The dance provided a transition from the break, settled participants in the

music and movement, established a meditative mood for the next exercise, and

demonstrated the content of the spiral reflection model in one more embodied

fashion. In the LDM, we employ aspects of experiential learning (as examined in

the fifth chapter) and embrace experimental educational models (as suggested in

the second chapter). We attempt creative ways of teaching that engage the

whole person. Writing about the variety of ways seminar students learn, Mary-

Ann Winkelmes observes:

> Some are strong visual learners, while others learn best by hearing.
> Some learn best by reading and some by applying new principles in a
> tangible way. Some understand concepts best when they encounter them
> in formats that seem chronological, others do better with formats that are
> typological, while still others organize new information spatially.[3]

Responding to the vast variety of learning styles and needs in any classroom

requires thoughtfulness and imagination.

Obviously, not all theological educators are going to welcome dancing,

singing, acting and the use of art in their classrooms. But they can be reminded

that talking is not the equivalent of teaching. I am not suggesting that every

educator become an entertainer. Theological education does not have to

emulate *Sesame Street*. Yet, preparation for ministry does not have to be

tedious either. Although learning can be hard slogging and full of painful

revelations and cognitive dissonance; pleasure in learning is permitted, too, and

fun and laughter can be allowed in the classroom. We do not have to be

steadfastly earnest to be serious. And certainly, we do not have to be sedentary

to be learning.

Help students to understand in embodied ways. Expand epistemological

horizons beyond the cognitive. Try new ways of sharing content. Move into

small groups for discussion. Show a video clip to illustrate an idea. Get out of

the classroom for a field trip. Dare to be creative in the way you teach.

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[3] Winkelmes, 166.

Evaluate

At the end of each LDM session, the circle is reminded of the purpose and goals established for the topic, and students are asked to evaluate the design and structure of the experience. Psychologically, students are able to express, and thereby, begin to process any emotions that need airing, from delight to frustration. Practically, staff hear what is going on for students rather than making assumptions (whether they thought the experience was either wonderful or boring!) Pedagogically, people are making suggestions for improvements, identifying learning, and practising critical reflection. In my mind, this practice demonstrates our commitment to mutuality in learning, and shares the responsibility for learning with the class. As staff, we open ourselves up to the critique of the participants, and it constitutes a moment of exposure and vulnerability. It, also, normalizes feedback. Feedback needs to be seen as a necessary, on-going and integral aspect of student and program evaluation; it must be seen as an essential opportunity in theological education.

In chapter five, organizational learning theorists called for collective atmospheres of inquiry and openness. In chapter three, numerous ways that evaluation was collected and honoured at the LDM were reviewed. In chapter two, a number of authors were imagining changes in theological education. Gordon T. Smith's clearly articulated the mandate for evaluation:

> …assessment can and must be inherent in what is means to be teachers and learners. Assessment is integral to the character of our work. If we take the work of theological education seriously, we take assessment seriously because we take learning seriously. Theological education matters because the church matters and because leadership – theological

> and ministerial – matters. It matters enough that we want to have some degree of confidence that what we are doing makes a difference, that it actually does fulfill the ends for which it is designed, that it actually does provide effective ministerial leadership for the church.[4]

Theological programs, curricula and teachers should be evaluated. In their preparation for ministry, students also need feedback; there is danger when judgments are not made and/or avoided. Both individuals and theological institutions need to embrace evaluation as occasion for learning. This holistic approach to feedback for students goes beyond grading papers and marking examinations. A holistic approach to teacher evaluation cannot be limited to course evaluation form filled out by students anonymously at the end of the term. Rather this approach offers the opportunity to affirm strengths, to identify limitations, to name areas for improvement, and to recognize blind spots. Openness to assessment requires an attitude of curiosity. Without openness to evaluation, gifts can be taken for granted; failings are repeated; skills are never upgraded; shortcomings remain concealed.

I encourage theological educators to establish clear standards for students through outcome and competency documents. Be transparent about expectations in program and curriculum objectives. Review principles for fair and appropriate feedback. Provide frequent opportunities for assessment of your own work. Open up times (not just at the end of the course) when students give and receive evaluation. Allow feedback to come from a variety of sources (not just the instructor).

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[4] Gordon T. Smith, "Faculties That Listen, Schools That Learn: Assessment in Theological Education" in Warford, 229.

Reflect

At the LDM, students regularly journal. They pause to consider their present circumstances, to identify learning, to process questions, to name next steps. This discipline offers students the chance to pull themselves into the moment in a deeper way. At its best, this kind of exercise resembles the practice of contemplation; one can become aware and present to the world, and one can gather together thoughts and feelings mindful of the mystery and the spirit of life. Journaling is but one of the acts of reflection that happens at the LDM. Throughout this study, in chapters related to educational theory, describing the LDM, and assessing the participants' learning, the connection between reflection and learning is emphasized. Educational theorists, Boud, Keogh and Walker write:

> Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning. The capacity to reflect is developed to different stages in different people and it may be this ability which characterizes those who learn effectively from experience.[5]

Numerous internal barriers may prevent reflection (e.g. lack of self-awareness or self-esteem, negatively established patterns of thought, denial or avoidance, obstructive feelings); a myriad of external causes may "get in the way" of reflection (e.g. lack of time, past history, hostile environment, power dynamics). Despite the obstacles, I would contend that it is the role of theological educators to facilitate reflection.

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[5] Boud, Keogh and Walker, 19.

I encourage theological educators to structure their classroom time in such a way that allows students the time to interact with one another, with the material, with themselves, and with the holy, in a reflective way. Theological education is not just information gathering. Even in a course devoted highly to content, slot time for reflective writing like journaling. Pose questions that guide the pondering and move it through stages of naming, making connections, analyzing, evaluating. Open up opportunities to digest the material in pairs. Suggest students envision their assignments as devotional exercises. Respond to assignments in a way that continues the dialogue, and that probes and encourages further consideration.

Live Justice

At CCS, our daunting motto is "Living a Theology of Justice." We have openly announced our feminist perspective, publicly been declared GBLT affirming, candidly committed ourselves to liberative actions and positions. At the LDM, we include unorthodox readings, discuss social ministry, introduce critical thinking. We assume that elitism, classism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, racism, able-body-ism, ageism are real and operate in the world; patriarchal violence and domination control the planet in way that is leading toward ecological disaster. Dominance is like the air we breathe. This is not new. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathon Reed write about ancient Rome and the normalcy of Empire, as they discuss Paul's vision:

> …civilization has always been imperial, that is, unjust and oppressive.
> Paul's essential challenge is how to embody communally that radical vision

of a new creation in a way far beyond even our present best hopes for freedom, democracy, and human rights. The Roman Empire was based on the common principle of "peace through victory," or, more fully, on a faith in the sequence of "piety, war, victory, and peace." Paul was a Jewish visionary following in Jesus' footsteps, and they both claimed that the Kingdom of God was already present and operative in this world. He opposed the mantras of Roman normalcy with a vision of "peace through justice" or, more fully, with a faith in the sequence of "covenant, nonviolence, justice, and peace."[6]

I pray that we would live that kind of counter-cultural vision in our theological schools. Modeling a passion for justice and compassion, right relationship and peace, is a gospel imperative. We are called to act in ways that embody the dream of the realm of God, and thereby, offer hope.

As theological educators, we can begin by asking questions of ourselves: In what ways am I being coercive? Am I using the power of my position appropriately? How am I helping to make safe space for those most vulnerable? We can ask questions in the classroom: Who hasn't spoken? Whose voices control or command influence? What does that say about power dynamics? We can ask questions of the curriculum: Does our program contribute to liberation? Do our practices and perspectives foster domestication of the church, spiritualization of the gospel, conformity to the status quo? Questions and reflection can lead to awareness; awareness, then, demands faithful acts of solidarity with those who live as the least and the lost.

Integrate

In some ways the LDM is a strange hybrid: part classroom, part retreat, part skills development lab. One minute participants are wrestling with the concepts

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[6] John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004) 1.

of ideology; the next minute they are gathered in worship singing hymns; still another minute they are practicing their ability to lead a small group. At its best, the LDM offers an opportunity to integrate learning of the head, heart and hands. The program is structured so students are working at several planes all at once. Individually and collectively, they labour to comprehend the intellectual content of articles, to consider their learning in light of their faith, to practice the art of leadership in ministry. Students are constantly moving toward the interweaving of practice and theory, worship and work.

In the second chapter of this study, theological educators called for holistic approaches. In the fifth chapter, educational theorists suggested integration constitutes an essential component of transformational learning. The interview profiles and survey results demonstrated that LDM participants were pulling together their learning toward wholeness.

Much of the world has been artificially divided up into binary options: female and male, gay and straight, black and white, night and day, east and west. Body and spirit, action and contemplation, law and grace are separated. Earth and heaven, human and divine, prophetic and pastoral are contrasted. Prayer and politics, sacred and secular, word and deed are pitted against one another. These dualisms falsely segregate life into false choices. Generally, there is a hierarchy presumed in the pairings which privileges one side over another. Life is so much more varied and complex, so much more ambiguous and diverse, so much more rich and abundant than can be captured in these oppositions.

In your teaching I encourage you to embrace the powerful "both/and" of theology, of ministry, of spirituality, of faith, of living. Do not teach in segregated pieces. Weave together the past, present and future in your classroom: what do we bring to this topic from our personal and collective history, what is happening in the world right now that is related to this subject, what do we want to do by way of follow-up and changed understanding? Knit together theory and practice, scholarship and experience, content and context, church and academy. Dare to link transcendence and immanence in the classroom with moments of profound connected-ness. Offer a vision of ministry that entwines intellect, spirit, and action for justice. The church needs leadership who can keep before them what is most important and who can offer the wisdom of integrity and congruity in thought, word and deed.

In this final chapter, out of my experience in the LDM and from my encounter with educational theory and other theological educators, I offer a number of recommendations directly to theological educators. First, relate to your students and build community. Second, treat the participants in your programs with respect and dignity, and hold them in affirmative positive regard. Third, dare to be creative in the way you structure your pedagogical activities; appeal to a diversity of learning needs. Fourth, make evaluation and feedback a standard feature of your pedagogical practice; ensure that both assessment of your teaching and feedback to students becomes a normative exercise. Fifth, take up opportunities, in the classroom and through assignments, to enhance

reflection on learning experiences. Sixth, keep a commitment to "living a

theology of justice" as a central vision of the gospel and your work as a

theological educator. Lastly, integrate the theoretical, the practical, and the

spiritual in your work as a theological educator. This is challenging and

demanding work; it is a heavy responsibility and we want to do it well.

Remember, it is also an honour, privilege and blessing to be apart of so many

journeys of transformative learning.