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Creating Renovaré’s Fellowship of the Burning Heart: Addressing Longings for God, Spiritual Companions, and Community

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CREATING RENOVARÉ’S FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART: ADDRESSING LONGINGS FOR GOD, SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS, AND COMMUNITY

Written by

HELEN MULLIGAN EDWARDS

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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CREATING RENOVARÉ’S FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART:
ADDRESSING LONGINGS FOR GOD, SPIRITUAL COMPANIONS,
AND COMMUNITY

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
HELEN MULLIGAN EDWARDS
JANUARY 2019
ABSTRACT

Creating Renovaré’s Fellowship of the Burning Heart:
Addressing Longings for God, Spiritual Companions, and Community
Helen Mulligan Edwards
Doctor of Ministry
School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary
2019

This study explores and addresses the self-identified needs of people who long for intimacy with God with spiritual companions in community. The target audience is the dispersed constituency of Renovaré. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart, a religious order, was designed to meet this need.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s intent is to fan into flames participants’ love for God, each other, and the world through regional gatherings of a sustained community of Christocentric fellowship around a shared rule of life and shared experiences with God. This will happen both annually at a retreat and in small groups throughout the year. The potential impact can be transformational, reaching deep into relationships and culture.

The practice of community is argued to be intrinsic to humanity’s creation and vital to the wholeness and freedom God offers each Christ-follower. This need is not always met in a local congregation. Renovaré’s origin, core values, and beliefs are examined, as well as cultural and subcultural influences contributing to perceived isolation. Additionally, the benefits of a religious order in modern culture are highlighted.

Through an examination of Scripture, a theological rationale for this ministry initiative is developed. Theological contributions to the design of the order are drawn from the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers, early Orthodox theologians, Ignatius of Loyola, and Dallas Willard.

Core values, goals, strategies, and structures are created for the order, and the first local pilot is chronicled, including the implementation timeline, the process, and the evaluation of the initial phase. Outcomes were rated highly in participant surveys. A plan for future ongoing implementation and evaluation is provided for the subsequent development of additional sustainable local chapters.

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Words: 276
Soli Deo Gloria
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation project develops the theological foundation, design, implementation, and evaluation of a new ministry initiative of Renovaré, a community expression called The Fellowship of the Burning Heart (FBH). FBH embraces a dispersed community of Renovaré Christ followers to address their longing for the with-God life with spiritual companions in community. The FBH intent is to fan into flames participants’ love for God, each other, and the world through regional gatherings of a sustained community of Christocentric fellowship around a shared rule of life and experiences with God, both annually at a retreat and in small groups throughout the year.

Renovaré, whose name is Latin for renewal, began in 1988 as a ministry founded by Richard Foster. Its vision is to serve an “ecumenical, international, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse community of Christ-followers from all walks of life and Christian traditions who seek spiritual renewal in the way of Jesus.”¹ Several ministry expressions exist within the organization. The context of my current ministry is the Renovaré Institute, a two-year Christian spiritual formation program. The Renovaré Institute, according to Dallas Willard, the Institute’s first faculty member is “designed to put its participants in position to live fully in the Kingdom of God, whatever their real-life circumstances may be, increasingly manifesting the character and power of that Kingdom throughout the contemporary world.”²

² Ibid.
Within the experience of the Renovaré Institute the majority of students experience a unique Holy Spirit-filled depth of companionship, fellowship, and community amongst each other and with the faculty of each international cohort. Participants commonly express they experience a unique depth of relational connection, which comes from a shared understanding and their experiences with God through participation in the Institute teaching, experiential learning, resources, and the community life of the Institute. Many participants state this depth of relational connection is rarely experienced outside the Renovaré context.

**The Ministry Need**

A growing number of Renovaré Institute graduates express a sense of longing and desire to continue in a shared community of companions that encourages more experience in the with-God life. They seek other Christ followers who have similar experiences, vocabulary, and vision of life in the Kingdom of God. Additionally, members of the broader Renovaré constituency who participate in other expressions of Renovaré express a similar desire. These Renovaré constituents increasingly use the phrase “Renovaré orphan” to reflect a personal sense of loss of connection. They perceive the depth of companionship and community they long for and value is difficult to find in other settings and find it is an important but missing element in their current spiritual growth, life circumstances, and experiences with God.

This is the ministry problem this project seeks to solve; it aims to support Renovaré constituents who continue to long to experience the with-God life with companionship and community within Renovaré. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart
seeks to meet that need with the creation of a sustainable structure, a society or order. This order will provide opportunity for connection with others for companionship and community in the with-God life.

The design of FBH will also connect, guide, and encourage participants to cooperate with and experience the Kingdom of God wherever they live out life within their local context of relationships, local church, and community. Susan Phillips writes, “God’s calls to caritas [love] and communitas [community] exist interdependently.”\(^3\) This creates potential impact when the need for community is met powerfully transformational, reaching deep into relationships and culture.

As a consumer of Renovaré writings and a participant in many Renovaré conferences for over twenty years, I personally experienced the sense of being a “Renovaré orphan” within my local context, even though I influenced, taught, and led many others to explore learning, experiences, ideas, and practices learned from Renovaré. As a second-year student in Renovaré Institute’s 2009 first cohort I felt a sense of impending longing, knowing this level of unique community was coming to an end. The approaching sense of the Renovaré orphan longing for more was rekindled. My personal concern was abated when I was hired to work for the Institute. My role evolved over time such that my current role includes praxis grading, student care coordinator, community focus, hospitality, spiritual direction, and other duties. The combination of my personal experiences of longing and my role as faculty aware of this expressed need by people within each cohort sparked my desire to design a sustainable solution to address the

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expressed longings of Renovaré constituents for God, spiritual companions, and community.

**Importance of the Topic**

Community is vital to the wholeness and freedom God offers each Christ follower. The Spirit-empowered support and encouragement that spiritual companions offer within a community is life giving. As the *Imago Dei*, each person is created by the community of the Trinity and invited into the Trinity’s community of prayerful love. Humanity’s need for community is intrinsic in our creation.

As the theology section of his paper will explore, this theme of companionship and community with other followers of Christ is seen throughout Scripture and history as instrumental in the growth and health of a person’s soul. The community of the Trinity creates people for community. The growth of an individual’s relationship with God cannot be set apart from relationship with fellow Christians.

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with God is personal, but it is not private. Spiritual development takes place in the context of the corporate and sacramental life of the Church.

People often express that the depth of companionship and community they experience in Renovaré is not readily accessible in their local church. The sense of support and encouragement which spiritual companions or a community offers may be absent for a number of reasons. FBH does not intend to be a substitute for the local church; rather it seeks to meet an unmet need in the Renovaré constituency population. In addressing the self-identified needs of the Renovaré constituency, FBH seeks to serve and renew the local church as the effects trickle down to the local church of each participant.

**Target Audience**

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart will serve a population target within the larger Renovaré constituency in the United States, which currently numbers over fifteen thousand people. The target population is those persons within the constituency who self-identify as longing for more of the with-God life and companionship in community with others who want the same—over six hundred people to date. For the pilot project, which this ministry project created, the focus population resides in the state of Colorado.

**Overview of the Project**

This dissertation project is the creation of twelve-month pilot for FBH to address the unmet need for community within Renovaré. In collaboration with the Renovaré

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8 Trevor Hudson, Renovaré Institute lecture, Santa Barbara, CA, October 9, 2013.

9 Carey, “Introduction.”
Director of Community, I worked to create, develop, and implement, with a leadership team, a twelve-month pilot with seventeen participants from Colorado. The pilot was launched in September 2018 with the first Gathering Retreat. The Gathering Retreat was evaluated for this dissertation project.

In the pilot design, participants attend two Gathering Retreats, 12 months apart, commit to live out an individual rule of life based on the shared Renovaré covenant, participate in monthly guided small groups in person with a pre-set curriculum and participate in evaluation surveys. Following the completion and evaluation of this pilot, Renovaré leadership’s plan is to take the process, further evaluate, adapt, and operationalize FBH for replication in multiple locations.

**Conclusion**

Fellowship of the Burning Heart is designed as a Christocentric covenanted fellowship order to encourage participants to love God, one another, and the world. As part of Renovaré’s history, calling, and work to renew the Church, FBH is creating a covenanted community of Christ followers who offer each other companionship, community, love, and accountability for good, to spur one another on to love and good works as God designed each to do (Ephesians 3), and live this out in local relationships, family, church, and community. As Willard observes, “The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God himself at the center

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10 Individually and corporately the FBH commits to gathering together and to the Renovaré Covenant as a rule of life. This helps us to dearly love and delight in the Trinity and cooperate in the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God. The Renovaré Covenant: In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as our ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service. See “Who We Are” in Appendix A.
of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:10). "Longing for God, spiritual companionship and community are intrinsic, deep longings of the human heart. Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers a place of connection for Renovaré constituents who express this longing.

\[^{11}\text{Willard, The With-God Life, 477.}\]
PART ONE

MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHAPTER 1
THE PEOPLE OF RENOVARÉ

Chapter 1 describes the ministry context of Renovaré. It includes an examination of the diversity of the people in Renovaré’s constituency and a review of the affinities of the people of Renovaré and their implied priorities and values. It concludes with implications for this ministry challenge project.

Renovaré was a unique and early leader for Protestant Evangelicals in the field of Christian spiritual formation. Spiritual formation was an uncommon term and category of Christian study for this population in 1988 when Foster launched Renovaré. In Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican and some other parts of the Church, spiritual formation has been a common term and practice since the early Church. Foster drew from the rich writings and resources found in those traditions. He saw an unmet need and took action to advocate, resource, and model to the broad Body of Christ the fullness of life with God that Jesus proclaimed to his followers.

Jesus taught and promised that fullness of life with God can be experienced by God’s grace. Jesus’s spiritual practices and means of cooperation with God’s grace, while still available to Jesus’s followers, were not being actively taught or accessed by the
Western Church at that time and for years prior. Foster became aware of a void in churches’ and Christians’ understanding of, and access to, God’s grace and life. This motivated the formation of a 501(c)(3) and the launch of Renovaré. More of this history can be found in Chapter 2.

In the years that followed, Evangelical and Mainline churches around the world developed or changed department names and hired staff to focus on spiritual formation. Spiritual formation became a serious field of study in Protestant colleges, universities, and seminaries. These institutions currently offer spiritual formation as an area of academic study on the certificate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral level.

Now, forty years later, in 2018, Renovaré sits among a community of Christian ministries that address and advocate Christian spiritual transformation. Examples of ministries in this community are The Martin Institute and Dallas Willard Center, The Apprentice Institute, The Upper Room, Transforming Center, Grafted for Life Ministries, The Leadership Institute, *Imago Christi*, Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, and *KAIROS* School of Spiritual Formation. Foster and Renovaré influenced several of these.

Renovaré remains a community of Christ followers seeking spiritual renewal in the way of Jesus. This ministry exists within the global community of Christ followers. With internet access now available to the majority of people on the planet, people from all areas of the world contact Renovaré.¹

Generally, Renovaré attracts people who seek resources for growing in Christlikeness or who look for spiritual, intellectual, and emotional resources regarding

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praxis in Christian spiritual transformation. An internal 2017 Renovaré survey with over seventeen hundred anonymous responders highlights the variety of resources through which people become connected to Renovaré. People found Renovaré through Foster’s and Willard’s books, word of mouth, the variety of Renovaré resources offered through print and audio, and through the ministry opportunities Renovaré offers, which have included conferences, retreats, church consultations, book clubs, and the Renovaré Institute.

“The most significant Renovaré resource is the people of Renovaré,” according to a former Renovaré board chair. These people live out what they believe and teach within relationships with others. This includes the founder, the past and current board and ministry team members, staff members, and each person transformed by the Holy Spirit through the resources, teaching, and work of Renovaré.

Many people are drawn to Renovaré by their longing to be with God among like-hearted people seeking deeper intimacy within the community of the Trinity. Diversity on many levels is often an element of attraction for people who associate with Renovaré. Both the diversity of the people in the constituency and an ever-expanding personal and corporate vision and experience of citizenship in the Kingdom of God synergizes and empowers experiential knowledge, love, and service to the triune God.

The people who make up the Renovaré constituency represent a diverse demographic and also share a number of important affinities. They number approximately fifteen thousand. The next sections explore the diversity and affinity of the people who compose this constituency.

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2 Margaret Campbell, personal interview, June 20, 2018.
Diversity

Information gathered by Renovaré about the diversity of its constituency is very limited. The organization only collects the names and contact information of individuals, the Renovaré ministry venue they have participated in, and the nature of their contributions. Demographic information about the constituency is difficult to quantify because the ministry does not directly gather and track that information. Surmising from what is known regarding leadership and from personal knowledge of Renovaré Institute participants and conference sponsors, people in the Renovaré constituency seem to come from a wide variety of denominational affiliations, regions, ages, educational levels, and levels of spiritual maturity as well as being diverse in gender, race, and ethnicity.

Renovaré is not connected to any denomination and takes no political stance; its message is the availability of the Kingdom of God and the with-God life. The Renovaré mission states the ministry’s ecumenical breadth. It serves a wide variety of Christ’s Church. This is evident in the broad spectrum of denominations that have sponsored Renovaré events and the diversity of denominations represented on the board, the ministry team, and the staff, as well as among past and present students in the Renovaré Institute. The founder is Quaker. The denominational affiliations reported include a variety of Baptist denominations and non-denominational Bible churches, various Mainline denominations including various varieties of Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist and other Holiness denominations, and other denominations and movements including Vineyard, Pentecostal, charismatic, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Episcopal, Anglican,
Covenant, Reformed, and house churches—and more. Renovaré reaches broadly to and embraces all Christ’s followers.

Geographic diversity in the Renovaré constituency is international in scope. People from every state in the US are represented in the Renovaré database. Countries represented include New Zealand, Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, China, South Korea, Japan, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Togo, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Finland, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Brazil, Columbia, and Canada, among others. This global interest in Christian spiritual formation reflects both the widespread need for it and Jesus’s Good News that the Kingdom of God is available to all people everywhere.

The gender and age diversity of Renovaré, while not tracked, can be estimated anecdotally. Not including the founder, the Renovaré board members’ ages range from mid-thirties to late-sixties, half female and half male. The ministry team spans ages in the mid-thirties to age eighty-six and is half female and half male. The Renovaré Institute, in its nine-year history, has ranged between 44 and 80 percent women with an average of 58 percent. Renovaré Institute student age ranges span from mid-twenties to the oldest student to date at age eighty-one. Age and gender do not seem to be barriers for those attracted to Renovaré and Christian spiritual transformation.

The diversity of education level attained by people attracted to Renovaré spans every possibility. Renovaré staff members, ministry team members, board members, and institute students span the spectrum from people with no formal education to those who have earned PhDs. There is something at the Renovaré table of learning for each person,
regardless—and sometimes in spite of—the person’s educational background. The same can be said for the diversity of the spiritual maturity in the constituency of Renovaré. People who have just been introduced to the person and work of Jesus as well as people who have been life-long followers of Jesus find themselves welcomed and attracted to the vision, resources, and ministry of Renovaré.

The racial diversity of the Renovaré community is difficult to quantify, again, due to the lack of demographic information gathered by the ministry. The leadership of Renovaré does reflect some racial diversity. The board of trustees is 20 percent persons of color and 80 percent White. That ratio is consistent for the larger ministry team. The staff is currently all White. Within the institute’s courses, people of color range from 5 to 20 percent of cohort members. People of color are invited as guest faculty in the institute and to speak to the board and ministry team. This racial imbalance compared to the general population is an area of particular awareness and attention for the board, the president, and the director of education.

In summary, the diversity of the Renovaré community is broad. The diversity is especially remarkable in terms of the denominational backgrounds, geographic origins, and ages of the constituency. An area of concern and action for the leadership of Renovaré is the disparity in racial diversity compared to the country and the overall Body of Christ.

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3 The Renovaré board of trustees chair Jon Bailey and president Christopher Hall, email messages to the author, July 12, 2018, and July 10, 2018, respectively. The 2017 U.S. Census Bureau reports the following racial breakdown for the United States: Blacks 13.4 percent, Asian 5.8 percent, White 76.6 percent, mixed races 2.7 percent, and Hispanic (reported as an ethnicity, not a race) 18.1 percent. Quick Facts, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI625217#qf-headnote-a (accessed July 5, 2018).
The diversity of the constituency of Renovaré is one of its alluring features for many people. All denominations, ages, genders, races, and educational levels are welcomed, valued, encouraged, and resourced by Renovaré to join in the with-God life Jesus proclaimed. Jesus calls all people to himself. Each individual, with all her diversity, matters in the Kingdom of God. In all of this diversity, the greatest value is the affinity of the people in the community for the vision of Renovaré and their desire to love God wholeheartedly and seek his Kingdom.

**Affinity: Implied Priorities, Values, and Vision**

In general, desire is the implied priority that binds people together in the community of Renovaré, not sameness. Many Christ followers live with an awareness of their need and desire for greater intimacy with God or for something they are not currently experiencing in their spirituality. It is this awareness that draws people to seek Renovaré.

The affinity of values shared by the Renovaré’s constituency includes a high Christology. Other shared values include the centrality of Scripture, a practical vision of nurturing community, and a balanced vision of life with God. These values permeate every resource, vision, and priority of the ministry and people of Renovaré.

The affinity of people’s vision within Renovaré is threefold. First, is knowledge of and love for God. Second, is a desire for intimacy with God and others who follow Christ. And finally, is a desire to seek resources to support the first two.

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4 Campbell, personal interview.
The people attracted to Renovaré share a love for God that seeks Christian spiritual transformation into Christlikeness. They often express their longing for more intimacy with God. Through Renovaré’s ministry, people seek to develop openness, desire, and focus for living in the Kingdom of God now. The Renovaré mission is to model, resource, and advocate fullness of life with God through the spiritual practices of Jesus and of the historical church.

A second affinity among those who seek Renovaré is that they are attracted to intimacy with God and others who follow Christ. People in the Renovaré community belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds disciples that faith in Christ brings life through Christ’s dwelling in each person and brings a desire for Christ’s presence dwelling in each other. Christians belong to each other through and in Jesus Christ, “Chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity;” they need each other and come together through Jesus Christ.\(^6\)

The third affinity of vision is the desire for resources that support the first two visions. Renovaré resources these two visions with a variety of opportunities, which include books, other printed resources, conferences, workshops, the Renovaré Institute, the Renovaré book club, weekly podcasts, and web articles. Renovaré is set to launch another resource to develop knowledge of and love for God and the desire for intimacy with God and others who follow Christ. That resource is the subject of this paper and project: the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, a community expression of Renovaré.


People are drawn to Renovaré by their longing to be with God among like-hearted people, seeking deeper intimacy within the community of the Trinity. Diversity on many levels is often an element of attraction for people who associate with Renovaré. Both the diversity among the people of the constituency and the affinity of an ever-expanding vision and experience as a citizen of the Kingdom of God synergizes and empowers experiential knowledge of, love of, and service to the triune God. This has several implications for this ministry challenge.

**Implications for the Ministry Challenge**

This ministry challenge project provides two significant opportunities. First, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart can create a community experience to contribute to each participant’s expanded vision of the real and present Kingdom of God here and now—the with-God life. This also contributes to addressing the self-expressed longings for intimacy with God among companions in community. Second, the creation of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart as an order provides for the good of the Kingdom of God to impact people’s relationships and community.

**Expanding Vision of the Kingdom of God Now**

The formation of this ministry challenge, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, has the potential to contribute to each person’s expanded vision of the real and present Kingdom of God here and now—the with-God life. The with-God life is declared and demonstrated throughout Scripture. Jesus brought to the world a new type of community
in which, through him, God’s agape love came to live with power. This is the “Immanuel principle”—*Immanuel* being a Hebrew word meaning “God is with us.” Scripture reveals that not only is God with humanity in Christ, but also God created each person to be a dwelling place for God, and God intends this to be a reality on earth, centered in the person of Jesus.

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart has the potential to create a culture and be a place where people can find companionship with like-hearted people who seek to live the with-God life with an ever-expanding vision for this life within the Kingdom of God. Angela Reed, Richard Osmer, and Marcus Smucker coin the term companioning to refer to a “relational aspect of presence that encourages deeper awareness of God’s work in the soul of each person and community.” Companioning helps people to create space for divine awe and mystery while gaining an awareness of the immediacy of God in all of life—in one’s seeking and dwelling in the Kingdom of God. Community offers a place of encouragement, support, and safety.

Within this community, people may find encouragement to persevere with trust and experience joy and delight in the Trinity. It may birth motivation to bring more and more of a person’s entire life into that with-God life—to see more clearly God’s work in and around the individual. Along with this, community may bring safety to be authentic, as well as courage and support to venture with confident trust into the future and the areas

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8 Ibid., xxvii.


10 Ibid., xvii.
of Kingdom service God invites each person into with him. This can happen both personally in one’s own transformation into Christ’s likeness and missionally in the good work for which the person is created (Eph 2:10).

An Order for the Good of the Kingdom of God

People who wholeheartedly follow Jesus have available to them life with God, life in the Kingdom of God. The attraction of the lives of people who follow Jesus wholeheartedly is undeniable. Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit are the nature of the Kingdom of God (Rom 14:17). The Kingdom of God is attractive and now available to each person who seeks it. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart has the potential to be an attractive and thus naturally missional element to the expansion of people’s vision of the Kingdom and the with-God life. This attractiveness creates an experiential synergy between participation in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart and engagement in ministry at home for the good of the Kingdom of God now. For each participant in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, there is potential for his family, relationships, local church and community, and entire being to benefit from the ripple effect of his engagement in the with-God life.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a modern-day order; some use the term a “new monasticism.” The early church monastic orders were seeking solitude with God, situated in the desert, away from people, yet quickly became places with a tension

11 This idea is developed further in the theology section of Chapter 4.
13 This term began to be used in 1998 by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove.
between community and solitude. Today, the desert is now the city, and people live with the tension of being with or near people, yet not connected to them relationally. Solitary, isolated from spiritual companionship, rather than life in solitude often sought in traditional monastism, is the way many Christ followers in Renovaré identify feeling in their pursuit of intimacy with life in the Kingdom of God.  

Historically members of a religious order voluntarily commit themselves for a period of time, even for life, in obedience to a rule and constitution, or a charter, regarding the way in which life is to be lived as a loving response reciprocating God’s love. The order is set apart from general society in some manner; at minimum by its constitution and sometimes physically set apart and closed off to the larger society. Often, in an order, members hold all possessions in common; some orders commit to celibacy, and live in physical and spiritual community.

Monastics of the early Christian church initially intended to be isolated from community, hence the prefix mono, meaning one or single. Ascetic, the root word of monasticism points to the self-denial required to give oneself to the set-apart way of life these people embraced for the love of God. In a relatively brief time monastics realized they could not follow and love God without including love for people. Communities formed, some loosely and many others with more constraints.

In the case of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, the term order is used with a modern sense of intentional community around a rule and a purpose for existence as a community. Fellowship of the Burning Heart is an order in the sense that an order is a

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14 Communicated over the past eight year to the author by several hundred students in the Renovaré Institute.
group of people who, with some level of commitment, based on belief, devotion, and practice, join with one another to live these out in daily life. Persons in FBH commit whole-heartedly to God, to living out the beliefs and values in the Core Documents, to being with one another, and to living with intention through an individual rule of life around a common covenant. The elements in these ideas are reflective of Jesus’ words about life in the Kingdom of God, which sets it apart from general society, which is also what an order does.

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart joins a number of Protestant orders in recent history and Catholic lay orders. In more recent history Protestant examples of orders of intentional community include The Simple Way formed by Shane Claibourne, Rutba’s House formed by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, L’Abri formed by Francis and Edith Schaeffer, the Anabaptist Bruenderhof communities, the Northumbria Community, and the recently launched Sustainable Faith order to name but a few. Additionally, Alcoholics Anonymous and its self-help off shoots are in a sense orders with admission of dependence on a higher power and a rule of life by which the members seek to live.

The relatively recent surge of interest in Catholic lay orders has also been significant. In a 2016 survey the number of associate laypeople was found to have “more than doubled in 15 years. Over 55,000 are serving among the congregations of professed sisters, brothers and priests in the United States and Canada, up from to 25,500

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in 2000. And in 2000, there was an 11,000 increase from 1995.”\textsuperscript{16} The motivation for the increase is “mostly about relationship and deepening of the spiritual life.”\textsuperscript{17} These are the same motivations for the people of the Renovaré constituency that sparked the formation of this order, Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

The formation of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart as an order will provide its participants the opportunity for spiritual companioning within a community over the course of time—perhaps even a lifetime. Renovaré believes life with God is always expressed in community. This community is both possible because of and continues to live in God’s eternal, abundant, inexhaustible, moment-by-moment presence and love for each person.\textsuperscript{18} Life with God leads to personal transformation into Christ’s likeness. This is possible because of God’s grace and the supernatural power of God’s love in cooperation with one’s willingness. As an order, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart has the potential to provide longevity to relationships around this experiential mission and the great commandment, with the synergy of the Holy Spirit.

The community context of the ministry of Renovaré USA exists within a national culture that often lacks stability geographically and relationally, that is consumed with hurry-sickness, and demonstrates an entertainment and consumerist focus. These non-relational factors contribute to an epidemic of loneliness and its associated relational


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol, “Communities of Grace,” in The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation, ed. Alan Andrews (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 64.
pathologies. This is the community where Renovaré is situated. These factors are addressed by the formation of and commitment to an order—explored more fully in Chapter 2.

God offers each person stability and community in God’s self. This is evident in the triune nature of the Godhead. It is poured out in Jesus’s invitation to the with-God life. Foster writes, quoting Willard: “The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons, with Himself included in that community as its prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant.” Foster goes on to say, “Such a community lives under the immediate and total rulership of the Holy Spirit. They are a people blinded to all other loyalties by the splendor of God, a compassionate community embodying the law of love as seen in Jesus Christ.” It is into this loving community of the triune God that each person is invited, and in it that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to abide.

Forty years ago, Foster described a vision of such a community:

They are . . . a community in the process of total transformation from the inside out, a people determined to live out the demands of the gospel in a secular world. They are tenderly aggressive, meekly powerful, suffering, and overcoming. Such a community, cast in a rare and apostolic mold, constitutes a new gathering of the people of God. May almighty God continue to gather such people in our day.

The Renovaré Fellowship of the Burning Heart intends to reflect and participate in this community.

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.
Conclusion

People are drawn to Renovaré by their longing to be with God among like-hearted people seeking deeper intimacy within the community of the Trinity. Diversity on many levels is often an element of attraction for people who associate with Renovaré. Two things synergize and empower experiential knowledge, love, and service to the triune God: the diversity among the people of the constituency; and the affinity of an ever-expanding personal and corporate vision in conjunction with each person’s experience as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The formation of an order, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, will serve the purposes of the Kingdom of God, with the potential to address longings for God, for companionship, and for community while it provides longevity to relationships built around the mission of the Kingdom, the with-God life, and the great commandment.
CHAPTER 2
THE MINISTRY OF RENOVARÉ

The ministry of Renovaré is unique. This chapter will address the origins and early history of Renovaré, including recent transitions in leadership and expansions of ministries. It reviews the values and goals of Renovaré, along with its philosophy and decision-making and financial priorities. It will examine the cultural and subcultural influences affecting the people of Renovaré, such as the absence of deep relational connections and community, loneliness, disenchantment with religion, and modern-day acedia. It offers a vision of possibilities and hope for the ministry challenge with descriptions and analysis of the core ministry need and project. Closing out this chapter, obstacles and opportunities for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, including insights gleaned from religious orders of the past will be explored.

The Story of Renovaré

The uniqueness of Renovaré is found in this declaration by Foster: “Renovaré is not an organization, organism, or a movement, rather it’s a vision, an idea, a message that the Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it is at hand, available, and accessible to everyone
who wants to step into it.”¹ The Kingdom of God is a divine community involving God’s created reality that is already in existence under God’s care and direction, and his followers are invited to participate in it.² This with-God life is the core theological conviction undergirding the existence of Renovaré.

Origins

This core theological conviction arose from a number of factors that contributed to the spiritual formation of Foster and the formation of Renovaré. Foster categorizes these factors into three converging influences, three empowering catalysts, and three divine provinces.³ These factors lead to Foster’s writing of *The Celebration of Discipline*. The interest and calls for help from churches and individuals in the aftermath of that book were the impetus for the formation of Renovaré.

The first converging influence was ancient spirituality. The vibrant spiritually Foster found in the Scriptures lead him to study the writings and lives of followers of Christ throughout history. He was serving a needy congregation and aware of his inability to give them the pastoral care they needed. This awareness drove Foster to seek counsel from the ancient church. He found people who experienced Jesus as the “defining reality” of their lives with a “flaming vision of God.”⁴

The second converging influence was Foster’s experiential training in spiritual formation from his friendship with Willard, which began in 1970. Willard was a

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² Ibid.

³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, xii.

⁴ Ibid., xii–xiii.
philosophy professor at the University of Southern California and a Sunday school teacher at Foster’s first pastoral assignment, a church in southern California, following his seminary training at George Fox, a Quaker seminary in Portland, Oregon. Willard’s teaching and their friendship greatly influenced Foster’s worldview and his experience of community.5

The third converging influence was William Vaswig, a Lutheran Pastor near Foster’s first church, whom Foster asked to teach him how to pray. What he learned and experienced connected Foster with the ancient writers.6 Vaswig and Willard also connected Foster with Agnes Stanford, the founder of the Inner Healing movement. Willard said, “When Agnes prayed things happen;” Foster said, “Agnes . . . had a real and interactive relationship with the Trinity.”7 These three influences changed Foster.

In time, three empowering catalysts came together and encouraged Foster to write: a friend’s prayer for the “hands of a writer,” personal encouragement to write from D. Elton Trueblood—a well-known and respected Quaker—and the love, friendship, and practical support in writing he received from a couple he knew.8 Three divine provinces converged for the actual publication of the writing that in 1978 became The Celebration

5 Ibid., xiii–xiv.

6 Ibid., xiv.

7 Gary Moon, Becoming Dallas Willard: The Formation of a Philosopher, Teacher, and Christ Follower (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 171.

8 Ibid., v–vii.
of Discipline. Willard wrote that this book gave “accessible patterns of action through which interaction with his [God’s] Kingdom is assured to us.”

In the years following the publication of this book, churches and conferences sought Foster to speak on Christian spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines. However, Foster noticed a lack of teaching on these topics in the Church in general. He further noted that in their desire to be transformed to the image of Christ people were trying to perform the disciplines rather than training and using the principle of indirection.

These observations were the impetuses that eventually lead to Foster’s intentional withdrawal from speaking and writing for a season in order to explore how a more systematic and intentional renewal movement might be formed. He looked to the Franciscans, the Valiant Sixty (Quaker evangelists), and the early Methodist circuit riders as three historical models of living out the Gospel in community. As a result of this work with God, and the encouragement of others, the formation of Renovaré took place in November 1988.

Early Years of Ministry

Starting in the early years of ministry, Renovaré began to offer practical ways for people to find spiritual renewal in the way of Jesus and the with-God life through a

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9 Ibid., 210.
10 Ibid., 183.
variety of platforms. The board and ministry team that formed included Willard. He agreed to the role, as long as “we are actually doing the work of the ministry ourselves.”

Renovaré began to offer local conferences, and over time national, and international conferences for spiritual renewal, with overwhelming receptivity and interest from the Body of Christ. The first Renovaré conference was held in 1989 in Wichita, Kansas, at Friends University where Foster lived at the time and taught. From 1989 to 2008 over 57,000 people attended 114 regional, national and international Renovaré conferences in 33 states and Canada. The first Renovaré international conference with all board members teaching and participants attending from multiple countries was held in 1991 at Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena, California. Most conferences involved multiple hosting churches, some conferences included up to twenty-seven sponsoring churches. The breadth of denominational involvement was wide.

Seminars, retreats, and additional local conferences from 1989 to 2011 totaled eighty-three events. Fifty-nine of these events reported 7,450 people attending. Events not reporting attendance were held in England, Scotland, Nairobi, Kenya, Toronto, Vancouver, Seoul and some US cities. Renovaré hosted a Houston regional conference in 1997 and in 1999 an international conference on the theme of Willard’s *The Divine Conspiracy*, with people from forty-two countries attending.

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13 Information gleaned from spreadsheets provided by Lynda Graybeal, a long time Renovaré employee and administrator of the events, accessed October 18, 2018.

14 Margaret Campbell, personal interview, at Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs, CO, July 19, 2016.
As the concepts of the with-God life and spiritual formation spread to spiritually-hungry people in the Evangelical Church, additional large national and international gatherings took place in collaboration with other groups. These include an international conference at the Los Angeles airport in 2004. In Denver in 2005, the newly published *The Life with God Bible* was introduced at another large international conference. In Long Beach, California in 2006 a large international gathering was held that continues to have ripple effects through the lives of people in the Kingdom of God. Here discussions began that launched the idea of the Renovaré Institute. A Houston conference took place in 2008, followed by a San Antonio conference in 2009 that centered on Eugene Peterson’s book *The Jesus Way*. These are but a few of the conferences that point to the widespread national and international interest in the teachings of Renovaré. Churches and the people of God were offered a balanced vision and a practical strategy for life in the Kingdom and for the spiritual transformation of the whole person. The message was a return to the Gospel Jesus taught and how one can live with him in the Kingdom of God.

In addition to workshops and conferences, Renovaré created extensive written resources for individual and group study. These included *Devotional Classics* by Foster and James Bryan Smith and *Spiritual Classics*, a book on the twelve classic spiritual disciplines by Foster and Emily Griffin. These books featured readings and exercises based on the work of Christian writers through the centuries. Renovaré offered models for formation in community, most notably using *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, influenced by Foster and written by Smith and Lynda L. Graybeal. Many other books and written resources followed in the intervening years of the ministry.
The Renovaré ministry team members also assisted in grassroots spiritual formation in churches that requested their assistance. The team accepted a variety of opportunities to provide in-depth, focused spiritual training. As part of their ethos, Renovaré ministry team members always worked as a team, in community with one another, wherever they served. They also encouraged multiple denominations to sponsor them rather than accepting single-affiliation events with any one denomination. Community is an important concept and practice in Renovaré.

Changes in Leadership

In 2004, Foster announced to his board president, Margaret Campbell, that he wanted to transition from his leadership of Renovaré and asked Campbell to lead a clearness committee about this question, also considering whether or not to keep the ministry open. As a result of this process, Chris Webb, an Anglican priest and Benedictine monk from Wales, was offered and accepted the position as the president of Renovaré in 2007. Leadership transitions can be tough, especially when a founder steps down. Campbell observed that Renovaré weathered the transition from its founder well—especially considering that Foster was so “dynamic and charismatic a founder.”

In June 2010, more transitions took place as the board of trustees, through a mutual discernment process, took the step to collectively resign from the combined ministry team and board while simultaneously replacing it with a more efficient and nimble board comprised of some of the same individuals. This board would meet more frequently. The remaining board members formed the larger ministry team. A year later,

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15 Ibid.
in late-2011, the ministry again reorganized, creating a position for an executive director with directors reporting to this person. Webb stepped down as president while maintaining his involvement and teaching with Renovaré in the US and also in the UK and Ireland Renovaré.

In February 2012, Rachel Quan accepted the position of executive director. The fall of 2012 brought new board members to Renovaré, including the current chair, Jon Bailey. In 2014, after a nationwide search, Christopher Hall, became the president of Renovaré. According to Campbell, “The grace of God was evident and active, step-by-step. The hand of God was holding and shaping the work of Renovaré all these years and through all the transitions.”\(^{16}\) All of the ministry work, relationships, and transitions were undergirded by the core values of Renovaré.

**Core Values of Renovaré**

The foundational beliefs of Renovaré are the centrality of Jesus as Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend and the availability of the with-God life Jesus invites his followers into with him. Core to this is belief in the absolute necessity of grace to participate in and cooperate with the presence of God in his Kingdom purposes. The ministry values and goals of Renovaré flow from these convictions. Crucial values of Renovaré are the centrality of Scripture, a practical vision of nurturing community, and a balanced vision of life with God founded on classic Christian writings.\(^{17}\) These ideas and their theological foundations are discussed in detail in the theology section, Chapter 4.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

Core Values and Goals in Ministry

Renovaré is a Christian community with relationships at the core of its values. Renovaré values relationships, both with God and with all people. Along with these relationships, the value of moving slowly and carefully while listening to the Holy Spirit is central in all decisions made in Renovaré. This is lived out in the manner the board of trustees, ministry team, and staff members function, as well as in the formation of new ministry initiatives, such as the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Renovaré values include a high Christology. Renovaré believes and teaches that Jesus is who the Scripture says he is: Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend. He holds all four of those offices and will relate to his people in those roles through the Holy Spirit. Renovaré also highly values the local church, worship, prayer, respect, humility, listening, honesty, and openness.

The Renovaré board of trustees has written about and summarized the values of Renovaré with the following statement:

Because we are first and foremost a Christian community we value each member and show respect and demonstrate loving kindness in how we interact with one another. In all that we do, we are committed to the following values:

Love: giving supreme importance to relationships with others as we share our life together in unity with the whole Church.

Humility: joyfully acknowledging that the power at work within us comes from Christ, and not from ourselves.

Listening: being responsive to God by practicing patient discernment and surrendered obedience.

Generosity: freely and openly sharing ourselves and our gifts according to the measure of God’s self-giving grace.

Excellence: exalting God through the quality of our work, speaking, writing, music, and art.

Integrity: ensuring whatever we do is honest, just, and true.

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18 Campbell, personal interview, telephone, June 26, 2018.
Transformation: seeking first to experience the life with God we are then called to share.19

The goal of Renovaré is to communicate to people that God made each person to engage in the with-God life and to encourage and aid each person who discovers this life to seek it, pursue it, and turn into it.20 As a ministry, Renovaré seeks to advocate, resource, and model the “fullness of life with God experienced by grace, through the spiritual practices of Jesus and of the historical church.”21 All aspects of Renovaré leadership and ministry align with these core beliefs, values, and goals, including this ministry initiative. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a relational ministry that reflects Renovaré’s beliefs, values, and goals.22

Philosophy of Renovaré

Philosophically, Renovaré is “Christian in commitment, international in scope, and ecumenical in breadth.”23 The philosophy of Renovaré can be seen in the following Scriptures.24 People will learn to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pt 3:18, NIV) while “outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16); therefore, “whatever you do,

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19 Renovaré Covenant of Affiliation, a Renovaré internal document.


22 See Appendix A for the values in the core documents of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

23 Foster, conversation with author.

24 Campbell, telephone conversation with author.
whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).

Renovaré’s specific mission is to work for the renewal of the church of Jesus Christ. The word *renovaré* is the Latin for “renewal” found in 2 Corinthians 4:16. Renovaré holds out the message from Scripture that life with God is now available to all who place their confidence in Jesus and who follow him. This philosophy is reflected in the Renovaré goal to advocate the with-God life, to resource it, and to live it.

Renovaré has an intentionally narrow focus on how Christian spiritual formation—life with God—happens. Institutional weakness is integrated into the ministry so that unless the Lord graces and blesses it, it will not endure.25 One of the original board members, Roger Fredrickson, predicted Renovaré would pass out of existence when it is no longer needed—when the Church regains understanding of how Christian spiritual formation happens and leads its people into it. He said that would be a day of rejoicing.26

Fredrickson’s remark reflects the fact that the vision of Renovaré is not to become a denomination or replace the Church but rather to come alongside local churches and help them fulfill their God-given mission. In so many places, the Good News of the Gospel has been reduced to salvation as getting in the door, to social justice, and to conversion. These are what Willard called the Gospel on left and right, and the third

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25 Campbell, telephone conversation with author, quoting her husband Justin Campbell.

26 Campbell, telephone conversation with author.
The Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it is life with God and transformation into the likeness of Christ’s character in the context of each person’s unique life.

Churches have replaced a personal relationship with Jesus in his four offices of Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend with something less. This has reduced and diminished people’s understanding of the Gospel. Renovaré’s philosophy is centered on the conviction that Christian spiritual transformation is about life with God. Foster wrote, “Our task is to take people off an over-dependence on human beings and human organizations (including us) and turn them to Christ, their present teacher. Life with Jesus is what people need and what we must focus upon. Always.” This focus drives the decision-making and financial priorities of the ministry.

Decision-making and Financial Priorities

Renovaré’s board and ministry team lives out its value of community in their planning and work. A ministry team member noted, “Renovaré is God’s work; we listen as we lead.” A board member reported, “As a board and as a ministry, we live in utter dependence on Jesus as our Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend (and the order is

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27 Dallas Willard, lecture, Renovaré Institute, Mt. Hermon, CA, October 14, 2009.

28 Campbell, telephone conversation with author.

29 Richard Foster, “Heart to Heart,” Renovaré newsletter (May 2004).

30 Richard Foster, speaking to the board and ministry team (June 21, 2018).

31 Comment attributed to Emily Griffith, a ministry team member, by Margaret Campbell, conversation with the author, June 19, 2018.
important); this is God’s work. We listen as we lead and we bow down as he teaches us.”

Having this mindset and the practice of an “open hand” is a philosophy of Renovaré that impacts its decision-making and financial priorities. An “open hand” means to hold loosely any plan or idea—to not make it into a predetermined image. Renovaré’s leadership seeks to allow the Holy Spirit and the community to give the ministry its shape and seeks to model what is taught. The leadership community, listening together to God, shapes Renovaré direction, finances, and initiatives.

Today, Renovaré has a working board of trustees comprised of nine people. Foster, and current president, Hall, both serve on the board ex officio. Seven other people serve renewable three-year terms and are joined by an acting secretary who is not a board member. The Renovaré board of trustees has the normal responsibilities of any non-profit board: to set the course of the ministry, to guide the strategic direction of the ministry, and to provide fiduciary oversight and responsibility. The board of trustees follows best practices for board governance and has used BoardSource and various consultants over the years as resources. The board meets three times a year. The board members are selected from and also serve on the Renovaré ministry team.

The ministry team makes a commitment to the vision, work, and people of Renovaré at both Renovaré-specific events and in their own ministries and vocations.

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32 Campbell, telephone conversation with author.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
The ministry team is comprised of diverse people: writers, artists, musicians, speakers, and people with leadership and organizational gifts from a wide variety of denominational, social, cultural, generational, and ethnic backgrounds. The ministry team meets annually and currently has twenty-five members. Ministry team members are invited for a three-year appointment of service, renewable by the board of trustees. After forty years, several members of the original ministry team still serve God through Renovaré, although three members of the original team have passed away in that time.

Renovaré currently has six paid staff members. Four of the staff members are also ministry team members. The staff is comprised of two support staff members and three directors (education, communication, and community) who develop and oversee the day-to-day tactical aspects of the ministry and communicate with and report to the president, the sixth staff member. The president communicates with and reports to the board of trustees for all decisions regarding ministry initiatives, direction, and oversight.

Decision-making in Renovaré is a careful and prayerful process involving time, discernment, and attentive listening to the Holy Spirit. It may use the Quaker method of a clearness committee. Renovaré practices discernment, surrender, and obedience to God by walking slowly but without hesitation as the Spirit leads, seeking to give God room to work. This method is “with-God,” as opposed to simple study, analysis, and decision-making without God. The Renovaré board does not come to an issue with a predetermined idea of outcomes; rather it makes major decisions with a clearness

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36 Campbell, telephone conversation with the author, quoting Justin Campbell.
committee, believing that it takes more than one person to listen well to the Holy Spirit.  

A clearness committee is used in the calling of the president, of directors, and of ministry team members.

The staff seeks to listen well to the Holy Spirit and has focused times of prayer together weekly. The staff also keeps an open mind, remaining willing to change direction when God leads. They are open to learn from other models and filter these through listening to God and to one another.

Renovaré does not try to create programs. While all projects do have a certain shape, what is more important to Renovaré than programs is people and treating them with care. This includes the spiritual, physical, and emotional health of its staff, ministry team, and board. The Renovaré focus is on process, not outcomes. The health of each member’s walk with Christ is too important to sacrifice on the altar of programs.

Developing relationships within the ministry team and staff is a very high priority. Renovaré lives out of a Kingdom confidence that God is with his people and will sustain them and direct their path. It is God’s business whether to prosper or whether to end the work of Renovaré.

Financially, the Renovaré priority is for each ministry initiative to be self-funded, avoid debt, set a realistic budget, and to meet its budget. The Renovaré philosophy of fund-raising and development is very low key. Renovaré requests its constituents give

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37 Campbell, telephone conversation with the author.

38 Foster, “Heart to Heart.”

39 Campbell, telephone conversation with the author.
financially to their local churches and to the poor before giving any funds to Renovaré. The ministry is funded through contributions, events, speaking or teaching income, product sales, royalties, and interest.

Most of the income is spent on salaries and programs. Very little is spent on fund development. Renovaré views its donors as partners in the ministry and places a high value on financial integrity, trusting God for money, paying bills on time, and practicing financial stewardship. The ministry has never owned land or buildings and relies on volunteers rather than acquiring a large paid staff.

Expansion of Ministries

After Foster founded Renovaré in 1988 in Wichita, as a ministry effort focused on Christian spiritual transformation, the ideas, means, and influence of the ministry grew. With its vision to be “Christian in commitment, international in scope and ecumenical in breadth,” it spoke to many people across denominational lines and geography. The ministry grew its influence, its constituency, and its message through relationships, conferences, and writings.

In time, interest in Renovaré spread to people outside the US. Global expressions of Renovaré were eventually established in several countries: Britain and Ireland (2003), Korea (2005), Brazil (2007), South Africa (2012), and Canada (2014). People in other

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40 Foster, conversation with the author.

41 Foster called this “staying light on our feet” in the “Heart to Heart” newsletter, May 2004.

42 Renovaré, “Overview.”

43 Campbell, Renovaré covenant of affiliation document (date unknown) shared with the author on June 26, 2018.
areas of the world, with the blessing and encouragement of the Renovaré board, have taken ideas and resources from Renovaré and launched similar movements in their own countries. Australia’s Lightstream, offered through the Australian College of Ministries, is one example.

A major and fruitful expansion of Renovaré ministry was launched in 2009. As a result of a vision to equip people to seriously study and experience the core teaching themes of Renovaré, Gary W. Moon developed a two-year, four-course study program. The Renovaré International Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation is a two-year experience of becoming like Jesus. “The Renovaré Institute,” according to Willard, the Institute’s first faculty member, “is designed to put its participants in position to live fully in the Kingdom of God, whatever their real-life circumstances may be, increasingly manifesting the character and power of that Kingdom throughout the contemporary world.”

Using a cohort-based model with academic study and praxis experience in community, the Renovaré Institute began effectively influencing individuals, and their ministries, around the world to live the with-God life Jesus invited them to live. Since it launched, the institute has profoundly impacted over 360 people, their relationships with God, and their lives in the Kingdom of God. My own experience and subsequent work with the institute lead to my involvement with this project.

Moon resigned from the director role in 2015 to develop and lead the Dallas Willard Center at Westmont College. He remains a guest faculty member and consultant for the program under the current director, his successor, Carolyn Arends. Arends took on

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44 Ibid.
an expanded role as director of education. In this role, she not only directs the Renovaré Institute but also has expanded Renovaré ministries to include a nationwide virtual book club—reaching over a thousand members by the second year and including local small-group in-person gatherings by the third year. Arends contributes to resource-development for devotionals, the website, and Renovaré’s social media presence; organizes retreats and conferences for Renovaré; and speaks selectively at conferences and retreats. She, on behalf of Renovaré, also raises funds, writes for publications, and contributes to the writing of new initiative proposals.45

In 2016, Renovaré expanded the ministry to include a second director: Nathan Foster, a longtime ministry team member. He joined the staff as director of community life in 2016 to form and cultivate the relational capital of Renovaré through speaking, coaching, and writing. Under his leadership, Renovaré’s ministries expanded to include weekly podcasts. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart falls under his oversight in his task to “nurture the community health within Renovaré.”46

A third director, Brian Morykon—also a ministry team member—was hired in 2017 to direct communications and special projects and initiatives. Morykon directs, designs, and manages content on the Renovaré website, including revenue-generating components and online video resources. He handles all communication and marketing


concerning special projects and revenue development. He has extensively expanded the resources offered on the Renovaré website.\textsuperscript{47}

Renovaré is poised to expand another ministry initiative: the Fellowship of the Burning Heart—a community expression of Renovaré. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is this dissertation project’s topic and pilot project. The values and methods of discernment and the decision-making and financial priorities of Renovaré have been consistently honored in the creation of this ministry and pilot. The same values will be used to discern and evaluate the results from the pilot for the wider expansion of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart within the larger Renovaré organization.

**Cultural (US) and Subcultural (Church) Influences Affecting People of Renovaré**

The community context in which the ministry of Renovaré is situated in is a culture that is highly individualistic and often lacks stability geographically and relationally.\textsuperscript{48} As Foster writes, “Distraction is the primary spiritual problem in contemporary culture.”\textsuperscript{49} The culture is consumed with hurry sickness and has an entertainment and consumerist focus. These non-relational factors contribute to a culture of loneliness and its associated relational pathologies.

Cultural issues of many kinds influence the world in which Renovaré exists; those discussed here include loneliness, the absence of stability for people created for stability, and modern-day *acedia*. The potential exists for the revival of the ancient practice of a

\textsuperscript{47} Job description of Brian Morykon, Renovaré internal document shared with the author, June 23, 2018.

\textsuperscript{48} Angela Reed, *Quest for Spiritual Community* (New York: T & T International, 2011), 111.

\textsuperscript{49} Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (2018), x.
spatial order to counter some of these influences. A modern-day order with commitment, continuity, and community offers pathways of hope to address some of the cultural maladies of the current time.

US Cultural Amplification of Loneliness

Society in the US, in the beginning of the twenty-first century, is busier and more filled with opportunity for social engagement than ever before in history. Interest meet-ups, Facebook and other social media connections, church, sports, self-improvement groups, and community organizations abound. Yet amid this smorgasbord of options many people feel isolated and lonely. Several decades ago Robert Putnam's best-selling book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* sounded a warning that societal changes were causing new levels of alienation and loneliness in spite of all the options available for being with other people.\(^{50}\)

Research has shown that loneliness does not depend on the quantity of a person's relationships but is a perceptual state that depends more on the quality those relationships.\(^{51}\) Many people sense the superficiality of conversations and relationships in life. As is often noted, people ask, “How are you?” but really do not want to hear any other answer than, “Fine.” Superficiality exists in the marketplace, the neighborhood, and, sadly, the Church. The longing for safe, honest, authentic conversation and relationships is the cry of the soul. Although authenticity may be a hallmark cry of the

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millennial generation, all people long for it. The absence of relational safety and authenticity can contribute to the experience of loneliness.

Another prominent researcher in loneliness, John Cacioppo, claims loneliness is a real and present pain in people, and like such other forms of pain as physical pain, thirst, and hunger, it motivates a person to seek what is needed to survive and thrive.\(^52\) Lonely people look to their family, their friends, their churches to provide connections. The demands of life and the differences in needs and personalities—and even sin—make this search for connection often less than satisfying.

People’s lives are often filled with a variety of stressors, absent of adequate support, often leading to a sense of isolation.\(^53\) Part of being human means longing to be understood and valued.\(^54\) People long to be accepted, enjoyed, loved and respected. It is common to have many casual relationships. Finding people who are trustworthy and care is a difficult task in an individualistic and transient society. The absence of deep, local, and relational spiritual connections and community amplifies the feelings of loneliness.

**Amplification of Loneliness within the Church**

This cultural lack of connectedness affects the lives of the people in the Renovaré constituency. Additionally, a spiritual shift has taken place for many of these people. Through their experience with Renovaré, they taste and experience the with-God life, which meets a deep God-created soul need. It is not uncommon for people to experience

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Reed, Osmer and Smucker, *Spiritual Companioning*, 3.

difficulty finding others in their local settings who understand their experience and desire for more intimacy with God. Since they are made for community with God and with others, this absence of others who share this desire can lead to a sense of loneliness.

Local churches are often focused on seekers and new believers, filling roles within the community life to make “church” happen—projects and programs—such that those who long for something more intimate with God and others can feel disconnected from the community life churches offer. Cacioppo notes that the person experiencing pain from loneliness is motivated to seek connections to end the pain and to relationally thrive.55 Those who have experienced deep community in Renovaré look for more from Renovaré.

In The Critical Journey, Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich explain what can happen in a person’s spiritual journey to bring about a sense of loneliness. The stages they propose invite self-discovery, awareness, and often challenges that may elicit fear, desire, love, or faith.56 The stage that can evoke loneliness is the inward journey that may feel like hitting a wall, addressing issues arising from crisis, spiritual boredom, a deep longing, or even issues arising from entrusting oneself to community that failed or caused harm.57 If one goes through the wall, dealing with God rather than avoiding the disappoints, pain, and longings of one’s faith journey, that person can integrate faith with life, release herself into God’s love and care, and release all outcomes to God because she

55 Ibid.


57 Ibid., 114.
experientially knows God as good, able, and loving.\textsuperscript{58} Fellowship of the Burning Heart can be an aid to some people in this journey of going through the wall.

Many people feel lonely with the context of a church community. It is often the story for many in the Renovaré Institute.\textsuperscript{59} The reasons for this can be as varied as the number of people affected. Some contributing factors may be deficient of language, alienation and isolation. For instance, a person has experienced God in a way for which their tradition has no language to connect with the experience. A person may find no one in their community who understands them when approached with the subject, so the person feels alienated. A person may experience disenchantment with life-as-usual within their churches, once realizing God has offered something more to them, the person may feel like an outsider, isolated and no longer content with what the person may now perceive as the message of an incomplete Gospel. Isolation may also be a factor if the person’s church caters to what some term seekers or new believers and the person feels unnourished in the maturation process. These factors may be helpful concerns for local churches to consider.

Issues of Stability

For most people, a great deal of life has a quality of instability. Instability means uncertainty and unpredictability—something one has no control over. This includes everything from the responses received from other people to prices in the grocery store or the stock market to the longevity (or not) of a job to the weather and natural disasters and

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 253.

\textsuperscript{59} Author’s personal observation from conversations with students over eight years.
to the mundane reality of a just-cleaned house that begins to collect dust even while the cleaning work is in progress. Time has the quality of instability: moments leave, bodies age, children grow, jobs and relationships evolve or end, and physical death comes to everyone. However, one’s nature needs stability to grow and to feel safe.

Stability of any sort—physical, emotional, or spiritual—requires one to stop and pay attention. Stability in a community of even two people can allow the nurturing of trust, respect, and love and can help someone accept life’s circumstances with peace and joy and discern the call of God. Relational stability with like-hearted people who seek the Kingdom of God is a gift of God’s grace.

True stability rests on the character of God, who roots his people in the reality of his love, our hearts’ true home. Fellowship of the Burning Heart as an order seeks to create the possibility for stability in local chapters, establishing commitment for the same group of people to meet monthly or quarterly and then meet at the same time of year for retreats over long periods of time. This offer of stability of relationship—where one knows and is known, loves and is loved—can help create safety and growth in each person’s spiritual journey in the with-God life.

Disenchantment

In Hagberg and Guelich’s model, persons who have hit the wall and gone through it often become disenchanted with religious traditions once practices and institutions


61 Ibid., 14, 16.

become suspect. Religious traditions are incomplete and unable to provide the faithfulness and steadfastness that only God can with his infinite love and extravagant grace. For a variety of reasons the word evangelicalism takes on negative connotations for some in their ecclesiastical experience, causing them to feel disconnected from what they once knew.

Institutions often betray the trust of the very people from whom they expect trust, eroding those people’s ability and desire to make commitments. Added to this is culture’s emphasis on personal freedom and self-fulfillment. This, too, has left many people disenchanted, emotionally fragile, and lonely. This has been a reality for some who have found their way to Renovaré. But their experience in some aspect of the Renovaré ministry has given them hope that safety and goodness might be possible in community, and with renewed hope in the character of God, they persevere in their faith, longing for more.

**Modern-day Acedia**

*Acedia* is a Greek word meaning absence or lack of care. *Acedia* is also described as care-less-ness, apathy, and lack of effort, which can also coexist and exhibit itself in busyness and workaholism. At its core, *acedia* is a laziness about or lack of love—an unwillingness to contribute the effort needed to keep “the bonds of love strong and living

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64 Ibid., 3.

65 Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 82.
and healthy” regardless of how one feels. Rebecca DeYoung writes, “Our love for God, our choice to be like him, must be lived out over and over, day after day.” Acedia is an inner spiritual resistance towards one’s calling and identity in one’s relationship with God.

The desert fathers and mothers observed acedia as a common problem that plagued people who went to the desert to seek God and a purity of life that would allow them to receive God’s love and to love God wholeheartedly. Modern-day acedia hits everyone at some point in life. In the broader culture, it is exhibited in a distracted life, a seeking of comfort and pleasure that keep one from thinking about the big questions of life. It is also exhibited in leaving relationships, locations, and communities. Lack of stability in both place and relationships contributes to acedia.

People in the Renovaré constituency are not immune to acedia; it is a temptation for everyone. The companionship and the community of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart can help in several ways. First, it can raise awareness of the possibility of acedia; second, it can provide helpful community efforts to address and avoid acedia; and third, it can affirm that no one is alone and encourage people to wholeheartedly embrace the calling of God’s love on their lives.

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66 Ibid., 87.

67 Ibid., 88.

68 Ibid., 85.
A Taste of Possibilities and Hope

Regardless of the challenges to healthy community from culture, from within churches, and from one’s own sin, soul-nourishing community and companionship can give a taste of eternal possibilities and hope. Trevor Hudson puts the benefits of a God-centered community into a Trinitarian perspective: “Within community, God is known, Christ takes shape, and the Spirit burns with transforming power.”69 Because of this, Christ’s people are enabled within community to “gradually become the people God wants us to be.”70 Only in community can people become fully human, where they know and are known, love and are loved.71

The koinonia of the Scriptures, which English translations render as fellowship, is a sharing of life with God and one another at its deepest levels. The hope of the beauty of a shared life with grace and love creates a desire to be a part of a community that is caring, faithful, and life-giving. It motivates working at the building of this community.72 Companionship can be found within this community as people seek to be “friends along the Way,” providing one-on-one support, encouragement, and care, which are absolutely essential for a strong and growing faith.73 This is the kind of community and companionship the Fellowship of the Burning Heart envisions.

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70 Ibid.
71 Willard, “What does it Mean to be Human,” 40:30.
72 Pohl, Living into Community, 3.
73 Hudson, Discovering our Spiritual Identity, 60.
Description of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Pilot

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart, a religious order, is being created for the constituency of Renovaré who self-identify as longing for deeper intimacy with God in a community of people who are committed companions in the with-God life. From among over fifteen thousand people in the constituency, eighteen volunteer applicants were selected to participate in the pilot. The people selected live within the eastern portion of the state of Colorado.

Each participant committed to three core elements of the order. These were to live out a shared rule of life based on the Renovaré covenant, to meet monthly in small groups, and to participate in annual regional retreats. Each element was designed to meet Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s intent to fan into flames participants’ love for God, each other, and the world as a sustained community of Christocentric fellowship. These elements and processes are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The first pilot Gathering Retreat took place September 15–18, 2018. The retreat was evaluated in this project along with the first two months of small-group meetings (see Chapter 6). The groups are designed to continue to meet monthly, and the pilot will culminate with a second retreat with the same people at the same time of year in the same location with a similar program. Following a mutual discernment process, the Colorado pilot participants may be invited to launch as an ongoing chapter of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.
Obstacles and Opportunities for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart

Every new initiative faces both obstacles to its goals as well as potential opportunities. The obstacles are challenging and require awareness to identify, assess, and mitigate potential negative impacts. The opportunities need awareness and nurturing; they can provide hope and motivation to persevere. The following sections examine these potential obstacles and opportunities.

Obstacles in a Culture of Distraction and Acedia

Time and effort, vulnerability, and availability are all required for the depth of relationships God invites his followers into with Jesus and his family. Each of these is limited in quantity—a byproduct of being human. Choice is required and is also a limiting factor in experiencing the depth of relationship with God and one another—which people’s hearts are made for and desire. The limiting factors of time and effort create a vital need to aid people in keeping the relational vision alive, in prioritizing relationships, and in nurturing the love required.

The willingness to engage in a community with vulnerability and availability may be hampered due to past wounds within the Body of Christ. People in authority, institutions, and the rupture of trust in relationships may all create wounds. The byproduct of these wounds often leads to self-protection and a resulting wariness to put oneself in a position that might risk re-wounding. This can be an obstacle to the ministry pilot. Taking care to follow through on commitments and communication and taking care with promises and assumptions are important for building trust with all people, and especially with wounded people.
Competing opportunities and indecision are also potential obstacles. Culture places value on the capacity to choose and on individual freedom.\textsuperscript{74} The growing number of spiritual formation venues and organizations may make it difficult for some people to commit to just one option. Additionally, some people have difficulty choosing just one option of anything, often holding onto a nebulous hope that something better may come along, coupled with a fractured need to not miss out on anything and so commit to everything. These people are consumers rather than co-workers in a community.\textsuperscript{75} For many, over-commitment can become personally debilitating, as can the opposite—the inability to commit to anything. Each can leave the desire of longing unaddressed and unattended.

The formation of an order may be helpful for people who struggle with commitment, and also for the community of which they want to be members. An order requires a commitment to commence the relationship with the group. Commitment eliminates an ongoing series of decisions regarding one’s involvement that may be affected by the whims or wounds of the moment.

Opportunities for the Future from Religious Orders in the Past

Fellowship of the Burning Heart as an order is a lay movement similar to those of the early church, at a time when monasticism was a lay movement.\textsuperscript{76} Like Augustine’s religious community, the relational focus of Fellowship of the Burning Heart is brought

\textsuperscript{74} Pohl, \textit{Living into Community}, 71.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 72.

together by a friendship founded on a “common love of God and not by submission to a human teacher.”

One of the major influences for Augustine’s monasticism was his lifelong need for companionship. Augustine, like all people, was a person who “needed the support and consolation of the society of other human beings.” A modern monastic community can be similar to Augustine’s community, which existed in an urban location; the desert was “largely a matter of the human heart, never a matter for geographical relocation.” At the heart of Augustinian monasticism, and likewise of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, is Jesus’ command to love God with all one’s heart and soul and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self.

While seeking to learn from the early church and other Christ-followers in community from the past, Fellowship of the Burning Heart does not idealize or romanticize monastic life. Gleaning from the efforts of the Church, Fellowship of the Burning Hear seeks to embrace a minimum of requirements, offer space for individual freedom of expression, provide a minimum of oversight, maintain safety for the people involved, and ensure the integrity of Renovaré and the Fellowship of the Burning Heart order. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

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77 Ibid., 93.
78 Ibid., 54.
79 Ibid., 51.
80 Ibid., 12.
81 Ibid., 98.
The early church monastic efforts for a meditative and ordered life helped individuals to take the teachings and life of Jesus and put them into practice in their own lives. Virtues were developed in community, such as devotion to God, humility, obedience, hospitality, evangelism, listening, and stability. Jesus calls each person—and Renovaré invites people—to become cultivators of the with-God life with Christ rather than consumers. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is one opportunity to aid in maturation in the with-God life. It can be a community of people who depend upon each other, learn together, and suffer, weep, pray and laugh together all within the context of the with-God life, deepening in intimacy with God and each other, for the sake of the world.¹⁸²

Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to be both a bridge-building and a bonding community.¹⁸³ Bridge-building communities are inclusive of people across diverse social, denominational, color, gender, age, and educational spectrums. This is true in the leadership and the constituency of Renovaré. Bonding communities can undergird stability and solidarity, social and spiritual support, and a sense of belonging and safety.¹⁸⁴

Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, chose to not cloister his followers, as was standard for religious orders in his time. Like Jesus, Ignatius knew the value of community and mission. Both Jesus and Ignatius sent followers out two-by-two to minister to the world for the sake of the world, creating both a bonding and a bridge-

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¹⁸² Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, xviii.


¹⁸⁴ Ibid.
building community of Christ-followers. This is the hope and potential for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

**Conclusion**

Over its forty-year history, Renovaré has carefully, prayerfully, and slowly expanded the ministries it offers with steadfast commitment to Jesus Christ and its foundational values and vision for ministry. Cultural, psychological, and spiritual influences affect the people of the Renovaré constituency, contributing to an increased sense of spiritual and relational disconnection for many who have experienced deep relational companionship and community within Renovaré. To solve this problem, Renovaré is poised to create a religious order: the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. This order will address its constituency’s self-identified longing for long-term connections with like-hearted companions to journey with and be supportive of one another as all live out their personal callings with God as citizens of his Kingdom here and now, wherever and with whomever they live life.
PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews writings and wisdom regarding Christian community from three eras. These include early monastics of the fourth and fifth centuries, Ignatius in the sixteenth century, early-twentieth century and more recent writings from the twenty-first century. The friendship relationship God invites people into with the Trinity is examined in an overview of Willard’s significant body of writings, which gives the foundations for the theology of the creation of an order, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Wisdom from the Past

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - *Life Together*

**Thesis**

According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christian community and fellowship are not an ideal that humans create; these are a reality created by God, in Christ, in which people are invited to participate.¹ The Church is the fellowship of Christ centered on Christ—a divine community rather than a human community, which is merely a group of people with a common purpose.² Christianity means community through and in Jesus Christ; its members belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. Christ’s presence indwelling the individual, the basis for all Christian community, guides the ordering of time, relationships and practices within a fellowship of Christians.

**Summary and Contribution to Topic**

Bonhoeffer’s distinction between true divine community and human community is important for guarding against a ministry design that might impede a person’s complete dependence on God’s work in that person and in that person’s local community. Bonhoeffer encourages understanding the difference between true Christian community and the false idealized type of “extraordinary social experience” one might envision based on a human wish or dream.³ These two communities differ in many ways,

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² Ibid., 26.
³ Ibid., 34.
including their basis, as well as their essence and the kind of fellowship, influence, service and love that results. Bonhoeffer also warns about the destructive result of loving the dream of community more than the real community. These ideas and warnings are important for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart constituency to be aware of because these people long for something they have not found in their local community.

Bonhoeffer stresses the importance of understanding the unity of the whole Church and stresses that, for people’s part, there can be no selection process for the community of Christ. God gives his followers to each other; each individual is a part of a whole, Christ’s Body, his Church. If people become selective, they are in danger of leaving out Christ who indwells the potentially excluded other. The design of Fellowship of the Burning Heart needs to guard its application process against exclusivity, which in this sense would leave out Christ.

Bonhoeffer also warns that the experience of fellowship or community is not what holds us together, but rather it is “a solid and certain faith in brotherhood that holds us together;” so faith, not experience holds us together. Bonhoeffer concludes that Jesus Christ alone is a Christian’s unity and peace, and through Christ his followers have “access to one another, joy in one another, and fellowship with one another.” The chapter on ministry offers helpful insight to Fellowship of the Burning Heart regarding how to treat one another with love without self-justification.

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 28.
6 Ibid., 39.
7 Ibid.
Bonhoeffer offers practices to consider in the design and implementation of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. These include silence, listening to God’s word and each other, helpfulness and bearing with the other’s freedom and the other’s sin. Additional community practices include encouragement, admonition, confession, forgiveness and trust in God alone to judge the other, a strong commitment to truth and love, faithful proclamation of the word of God and communion. These suggested practices are employed in the retreat and in individual rules of life.

Bonhoeffer offers his ideas for a Christocentric communal fellowship as the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world where Christ’s followers are at present a scattered people. Bonhoeffer builds a case that God is the only author of Christian fellowship with Christ and grace as its central pillars: “Without Christ, there is discord between God and man and between man and man. . . . Christ opened up the way to God and to our brother.”8 Companionship with another Christian is a physical sign of the presence of the Trinity.9 This is important for Fellowship of the Burning Heart to acknowledge in the gathering of its people. This can be seen in the meeting liturgy.

By their physical presence, Christians mediate the presence of Christ to one another and thus strengthen Christ in the individual and offer a source of incomparable joy.10 Christians belong to each other through and in Jesus Christ, chosen from “eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.” We need each other and come together through

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8 Ibid., 23.
9 Ibid., 20.
10 Ibid., 19.
Jesus Christ. In the trials of life, in discouragement, in uncertainty and in confession, Christians need each other to be Christ’s presence to each other, to speak God’s word to each other and to bring the message of salvation to each other. These are elements reflected in Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theology and practice.

God alone creates true Christian community as God meets his people in Christ, redeems them by Christ, delivers them from sin and calls them to faith and eternal life; this is then the model for meeting one another in Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Christ opens to each person the way to God and the way to each other so that all his followers can belong to each other and experience love and peace together. God in Christ teaches his followers love, mercy and forgiveness; the more these gifts are received the more these are able to be given. The only possible response to these gifts is to gratefully receive them. This is an important value in Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Limitations

The application of a number of Bonhoeffer’s specific ideas to this ministry challenge is limited in some respects since the advice he offers is to those living in a physical community, while Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a dispersed community. He is bound by his experience in time, place and geography. It is of particular importance to note that he concerns himself with a White, male residential community, whereas Fellowship of the Burning Heart will be multiethnic, coeducational and non-residential.

11 Ibid., 21.
12 Ibid., 25.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 28.
These limitations mean that while the text provides helpful theology and concepts to explore, they are incomplete, and a careful reading requires one who would apply the principles to keep these in mind.

Additionally, Bonhoeffer seems overly prescriptive in the chapters describing the organization and use of both time together and private time. He frequently uses “must” and “should,” even while he claims this is not legalism. However, Bonhoeffer suggests these are ideas to offer orderliness and a way of being faithful to Christ and each other. Aspects of his prescriptions may be useful to Fellowship of the Burning Heart in the large gathering worship times or in developing personal rules of life; however, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart design does not provide for a day-to-day communal life as Bonhoeffer describes. Bonhoeffer does not directly acknowledge or address longings for the with-God life and companionship in his community, which Fellowship of the Burning Heart addresses.

William A. Barry - *Finding God in all Things*

**Thesis**

William A. Barry’s *Finding God in all Things* points to the central insight of Ignatius: “The idea that God can be in all things, that every human experience has a religious dimension or meaning.”¹⁵ This book serves as an introductory outline of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, which offer a dynamic process for discovering and experiencing God in all things. The exercises help the individual to realize the possibility of life in the presence of God and to interact with God.

¹⁵ Barry, *Finding God in all Things*, 77.
With God, Scripture and a spiritual director who leads a person through a series of guided desires, questions and prayer practices in the exercises, the experience reveals God and the person in light of the truths discovered. In the experiences of the exercises, people learn to listen to God and to their own heart. This leads to interactively, with God’s grace, unpacking the life of Christ within the person’s own unique life and calling. All created things are for humankind’s honor and glory to know God and to love and serve him; hence, God can be found in all things and all experiences, even ones that seem bad or simply ordinary. Learning this truth is a life-long process—a dynamic, challenging, exciting and life-changing ongoing journey to seek and find God. Its impact continues over a lifetime of inner transformation to freedom and love, which serves God.

**Summary and Contribution to Topic**

The theological assumption of the spiritual exercises is “God creates this universe precisely in order to invite other persons into the relational life of the Trinity.” Ignatian theology aligns with Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theology that the Triune God creates people by and for community within the with-God life. Ignatius teaches that in every moment of one’s existence, God is communicating himself while drawing each person into greater awareness of who the person is in God’s sight. God sees his people as his beloved. Experiential knowledge of this reality is foundational to participation in the with-God life of the Kingdom of God, as well as to healthy community life, both of which are foundational aspects of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

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16 Ibid., 14.

17 Ibid., 29.
Fellowship of the Burning Heart does not offer the complete spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius to its participants; however, many elements of Barry’s book provide valuable insight for the with-God life of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart community, which are both practical and relevant to modern life. Barry reminds the reader that at the core of all desires is a desire for God that only God can meet.\(^{18}\) This is important for Fellowship of the Burning Heart to remember as it seeks to address desires for the with-God life, for companionship and for community. Barry’s book offers ideas from the exercises that can guide people to experience God and his grace, and to draw people to experience Christ’s life within their own life. These insights aid people as they embrace the lifelong journey of trusting God’s love in all of life, even in suffering, dealing with sin, as well as discovering divine purpose and calling - all in the light of God’s abiding, unconditional, ever-present love. The spiritual exercise help people to seek and embrace the with-God life; this aligns with Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s purpose.

Practices from the spiritual exercises of Ignatius helpful for Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s use include the prayer of *examen* and other methods of prayer, engagement of Scripture with the imagination, meditation, contemplation and *lectio divina*, and embracing the qualities of gratitude, honesty and trust. Other important practices for Fellowship of the Burning Heart are learning discernment of longings, growth in awareness, means to indifference and to overcome resistances and inordinate attachments. Resistances and inordinate attachments keep the soul from living God’s

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 42.
hope for the individual.\textsuperscript{19} Additionally, the practice of learning to be a more sensitive listener helps each person to take care with God in the attitudes and actions that develop within the soul, as well as what is offered in a person’s speech. This practice is an important element in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Listening Groups. Care-filled engagement within Fellowship of the Burning Heart of practices from the spiritual exercises can contribute to the creation of safe spaces for the soul, both as individuals and within the community seeking to live out the with-God life.

Barry points out that God uses all things to help a person find and abide with him. Desires are important, and one’s discernment of them is imperative. Allowing God to heal the wounds of life is foundational to building trust in God. Trusting God’s unconditional love opens a person to experience both God’s love and a desire to know God. Experiencing healthy spiritual companionship where “finding God in all things” is valued and demonstrated strengthens trust in God. Experiencing trust in God within a community like Fellowship of the Burning Heart extends courage to seek and trust God in all things.

**Limitations**

Barry’s work is directed to spiritual directors and individuals within the context of offering or engagement in the Ignatian exercises. This is where the limitations of the book lie for Fellowship of the Burning Heart. The full impact of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius is not possible to experience within Fellowship of the Burning Heart. However, the design and implementation of Fellowship of the Burning Heart can creatively and

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 14, 139.
prayerfully offer vision, intention and means to wisely steward the use of these Ignatian ideas and exercises to offer people deeper engagement in the with-God life. As Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers its participants exposure to the theology and practices of the spiritual exercises each participant can discern God’s invitation regarding the pursuit of the full exercise experience. Care can be taken in how this is communicated to avoid inadvertently creating a culture of those “in” and those “out” for any reason, including participation with God in the full experience of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius.

Kathleen Norris - *A Cloister Walk*

**Thesis**

Monastic rhythms of life, liturgy and hospitality and the writings and practices of the desert fathers and mothers offer the modern Christ-follower a unique and helpful perspective in living life with God. The mystery of God, worship, community, disciplines and choices faced in living life are themes that every follower of Christ encounters.

**Summary and Contribution to Topic**

Topics that directly offer insight for Fellowship of the Burning Heart include community life, worship and the value of liturgy, discipline and friendship. Norris, as a poet, touches extensively on varied topics with metaphor and symbolisms. She opens up the wonder of the monastic liturgy that “plunges you into scripture in such a way that . . . [invites] you to commune with them, and [they] can come to serve as a mirror.”

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Life in the modern West, for the most part, is filled with choices and opportunities, yet unmet longings, lack of direction and loneliness are common dis-eases. With the gifts and skills of a poet, modern mystic and researcher, Norris “reveals the fault lines hidden beneath the comfortable surface of the worlds we invent for ourselves.” She shows how to address these ills from the teaching of the monastics and desert fathers and mothers. The book’s format uses the liturgical year as structure for the book, sprinkled with memories and insights from Protestant Norris’ experiences in a Catholic Benedictine monastery. She models openness and sensitivity to the sacred in all things.

Norris, an astute observer with honest reflections, offers a perspective that appreciates metaphor, especially as she intermittently refers to classical writings from the desert fathers and mothers that inform Benedictine practices. She offers thought-provoking twists on these writings that make them more accessible to the modern reader. Her thoughts were personally enriching and helpful, drawing out fresh dialogues with God as she interpreted and applied the ancient writings.

Norris discusses the value of the practices of oral recitation of Scripture and the daily Liturgy of the Hours. She promotes the values of discipline and rhythm that liturgy offers. She suggests that rhythms and descriptive forms of liturgy have value because they “foster a way of knowing that values image over idea.” Using liturgy, oral recitation and praying the hours is helpful for Fellowship of the Burning Heart to include in the design of both the annual Gathering Retreats and the Listening Groups throughout the year.

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21 Ibid., 34.
22 Ibid., 10.
Additionally her ideas regarding the value of being an oblate—one who has offered the self to God—is helpful for the design of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, as an order. Popular wisdom suggests that keeping one’s options open gives a person freedom; however, Norris develops the idea that freedom really comes in responding to the call of inner authenticity. She points out that the monastics called to communal living may remove some choices of daily life, but gain freedom to learn to hear their heart and learn to love God because the world and its competition for the person’s thoughts and emotions is silenced.

Norris is frank about the aspects she found difficult in her adjustment to community life. She shares intimate personal struggles with her identity and place in the larger community. Norris endorses making a commitment to a community of love. She notes that loneliness is one of the greatest problems for individuals in society. Benedict wrote that the purpose of individual growth is to share with others. Norris acknowledges the value in learning within the company of others the virtues of honesty, trust and focus on others. She suggests that communal life is like a rock tumbler, smoothing rough edges in a person. Relationships and accountability in communal life draw its participants toward community feasts and celebrations. Together, these aspects can be helpful to wear away the harmful sharp edges of the individual.

Limitations

This book is rich with wisdom and ideas helpful for Fellowship of the Burning Heart, including the values of community life, liturgy, worship, discipline and friendship. One limitation from the book is that the author is joined within a residential community
that comes with some, but not all, of the restrictions and commitments of the full order. This is not the case with the pilot project. This pilot, while not a residential community, can engage with many of the valuable transferable concepts from Norris noted earlier. Norris asserts people’s lives are bound up in one another’s, and that is why learning to live with each other matters. As Christ-followers, whether within residential communities or not, how each person lives with each other person matters both to the Body of Christ and to the watching world that does not yet embrace the with-God life offered to them.

**Twenty-first Century Needs and Longings**

Parker Palmer - *A Hidden Wholeness*

**Thesis**

According to Parker Palmer, each person possesses a hidden wholeness that is obscured from the person’s consciousness due to the stresses, fears, violence and injustices of life in the world. These cause a person to lose moral bearing, the ability to know the self and the ability to love. Small groups with carefully curated “circles of trust” that use indirect reflections and strictly-implemented group guidelines allow a soul to emerge within a safe community. As the soul is revealed, the inner teacher of the person speaks, offering guidance. Engagement in this process aids the integration of life and transformation, which together contributes to nonviolent social change.\(^{23}\) Compassionate community in this form welcomes the soul and brings people together in

a way that helps them discover and reclaim their created wholeness. The results can be life giving and possess world-healing power.\textsuperscript{24}

**Summary and Contribution to Topic**

Palmer, a Quaker teacher, offers formation instruction to leadership of small group “circles of trust.” Palmer’s research and practice in the field of education led him to develop and refine this idea, making the method teachable and transferable. Circles of trust offer guidelines that align with Fellowship of the Burning Heart values and are helpful for modified use in the pilot’s Listening Group interactions.

Palmer’s circles of trust discuss “heart ideas,” and their ground rules honor the soul. At its inception, each group adopts and agrees upon the ground rules. Respect for the rules helps individuals as free moral agents to be present with, listen to and honor each other. Each person must take great care to avoid any attempt to fix, advise or correct the other.\textsuperscript{25} Ideas and problems are approached while in community through a “third thing,” such as a piece of visual or written art, like poetry, to help individuals listen to the inner life. The goal is to bring down the walls that keep the soul hidden from the self. The soul is believed to be generous, wise, hopeful and creative, with regenerative powers that are helpful to the world.\textsuperscript{26} This “third thing” of Palmer’s circle of trust is similar to *lectio divina* with Scripture as often used in Renovaré.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 184.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 114.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 184.
Creating compassionate communities where trust is built and safety is developed takes time. Reflective of the values of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, a safe group experience can enable people to live undivided lives and honor their own souls and the souls of others.  

Perfection is not the goal; wholeness is. Wholeness requires embracing brokenness as an intrinsic aspect of this life, rather than ignoring it, denying it or faking wholeness. This parallels Jesus’ invitation of the whole person into relationship with the Triune God with his healing and transformative power in all aspects of the person.

Among the paradoxes in life, Palmer suggests, “The deeper our faith, the more doubt we must endure; the deeper our hope, the more prone we are to despair; the deeper our love, the more pain its loss will bring.” In Fellowship of the Burning Heart, awareness of these paradoxes will bring healing and wholeness rather than denial, and it will bring encouragement rather than fixing or correcting. Wholeness requires embracing grace and the gifts of the Spirit for the self and for others.

Palmer asserts people are created as communal persons that need each other to heal the soul and avoid an endless capacity for self-absorption and self-deception. Companionship can offer both courage and the assurance that no person is alone. Teaching healthy companionship that abstains from advice giving provides safety for the other’s soul so the other can hear, listen and distinguish the inner voices of fear and truth. Communities like Fellowship of the Burning Heart offer help with discernment without

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27 Ibid., 186.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 22.
30 Ibid., 26.
the presumption of correction. Circles of trust create and protect a safe space for the soul to be known, be real and exercise its power of choice. For Fellowship of the Burning Heart, the concept of circles of trust will be enhanced with spiritual direction principles.

Palmer suggests that solitude means never living apart from one’s self. Community allows creation of a circle of trust “as a space between us that is hospitable to the soul, a community of solitude where we can be alone together.” The monastic traditions reflected this, as does the Quaker practice of honoring the soul in clearness committees. People in circles of trust know how to quietly sit with each other and wait for the soul to show up. Participants learn how to be present and attentive and honoring each other without invasiveness, evasiveness, judgment or violation of the other’s space with the intention of being helpful. This practice can be implemented and explored in the monthly Fellowship of the Burning Heart virtual small group connections between the annual gathering retreats.

The leadership skills needed in a safe community require a relational culture and a leader who is grounded “in the principles, skilled at the practices, and granted the authority to lead,” without coercion or manipulation. Palmer outlines leadership practices intuitively used in Renovaré, such as extending invitations without requiring acceptance, using inviting language such as “I invite you,” “if you wish,” and so on, and using silence and allowing people to self-select participation rather than requiring anyone

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31 Ibid., 29.
32 Ibid., 56.
33 See the Fellowship of the Burning Heart values in the Appendix A.
34 Ibid., 76.
to speak. An additional helpful practice is to offer a space of silence at the end of a community time for those who may be hesitant before moving on to the next thing.

Other ideas for Fellowship of the Burning Heart include the observation that life is a “constant interplay” between the things within, for which a person has responsibility and the things outside, over which they have little control. Other helpful ideas include giving attention to aspects of the setting and schedule that create a conducive atmosphere for soul work, honoring learning styles and the balance of time for solitude and for groups. Palmer also suggests the leader approach real life topics by intentionally using metaphor and indirection that allow freedom for individuals, note-taking that records the words or images that rise up within the soul and setting boundaries with the group so the soul can drive the agenda, and not the ego or intellect of the group members. These ideas again reflect the values of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

**Limitations**

The setting created for circles of trust includes the absence of agenda, other than to “help people listen to their own soul and discern their own truth.” As followers of Jesus, Fellowship of the Burning Heart believes what Palmer identifies as “the inner teacher” is the Holy Spirit of the Triune God. Palmer himself does not make this

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35 Ibid., 79.
36 Ibid., 80.
37 Ibid., 83.
38 Ibid., 85-87.
39 Ibid., 94.
40 Ibid., 53.
connection. Palmer’s intention is not clear. What Palmer advocates is similar to a practice
used in spiritual direction, similar to Jesus’ example and Ignatius’ admonition to trust the
creation to the Creator, to trust the work and power of the Holy Spirit to indwell and care
for the Christ-follower. A danger of a “circle of trust” without God is the potential to
open the soul to spirits other than God’s Holy Spirit. The with-God life is central to
Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Angela H. Reed - *Quest for Spiritual Community*

**Thesis**

Angela Reed argues that spirituality is best nurtured in religious communities.⁴¹ Humans long for spiritual meaning, and ancient practices of spiritual guidance and
formation can help the contemporary church respond to this need.⁴² The individual and
spiritual guidance are best understood in a community of spiritual practices and
friendships that connect the individual to the community and then through this
community to the larger world.⁴³ Reed asserts that the best kind of community for this is
the local church congregation. She develops a theology of spiritual guidance for local
congregations linking them with spiritual guidance practices.

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⁴¹ Reed, *Quest for Spiritual Community*, ix.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.
Summary and Contribution to Topic

Recognizing and addressing genuine spiritual hunger is an important task for traditional religious institutions. Ancient spiritual practices, modified for contemporary use, can be a bridge to addressing authentic spiritual hunger. Reed, a practical theologian, suggests that the practice of spiritual guidance can facilitate this modification while honoring tradition and maintaining theologically-sound methods. Spiritual guidance helps believers pay attention to God’s activity and presence in their lives, pointing to God as the true spiritual guide.

Reed presents case studies of spiritual guidance ministries within congregations. Her book identifies the strengths and weakness of historical spiritual-direction practices in light of reflections on Protestant theology and a sociological analysis of contemporary congregations. She offers a vision for practices and processes that attend to the person, the community and the mission within congregation-based spiritual guidance. The practices “can and do lead to both a personalized faith and a socially relevant Christianity,” as well as spiritual maturity and new energy for congregations. These are results that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart is also designed to foster.

Reed suggests relationships of spiritual guidance provide people with needed care, discernment and a sense of accountability, which enables them to pursue and fulfill God’s best for their lives. God’s best includes participation in Christian fellowship and  

44 Ibid., 41.  
45 Ibid., 42.  
46 Ibid., 40.  
being God’s ambassadors to draw the world to God’s Kingdom. The core functions of spiritual pastoral care—healing, sustaining and guiding—are served through spiritual practices that are not individualistic or private.

Reed advocates reclaiming spirituality “for the purposes of redefining the religious.” She examines historical trends regarding institutionalized religious faith in contrast with private spirituality, which, she claims, lacks stability to support spiritual formation into Christ’s likeness. Support and stability are also goals of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Engaging in practices of spiritual guidance gives people new language to describe experiencing God. Spiritual guidance facilitates discernment through Quaker-like clearness committees, where members listen to God with one another. It also can result in missional convictions regarding both individual and congregational actions within the culture. She remarks, “Sometimes the effects are a tiny ripple in the pool of God’s purposes and sometimes they make a splash.” This also reflects Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s design intentions.

Reed presents a vision that is theologically accountable regarding community and mission while also attending to the personal spiritual quest. Jurgen Moltmann’s
theology of formation is a core part of this vision. There are several similarities between Moltmann’s theology and the theology of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. God’s presence in all things is a part of both theologies, in light of which Fellowship of the Burning Heart encourages the intentional practice of silence to make space for God in the midst of a group.  

Silence allows space to listen to God. The theology of the Trinity, as well as God’s immanent and transcendent qualities, is important to this process.  

Because of the qualities of the Triune God, people can use spiritual guidance practices to reflect on everyday life with God and do so in community, resulting in a growing awareness of God’s presence, his intimacy and one’s belonging to God and one another. These ideas support the vision, intention and means of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.  

The importance Reed places on the integration of interior and exterior growth is helpful. She demonstrates how spiritual guidance taps into the power of the Holy Spirit’s work of restoring people to the image of Jesus Christ for the glory of God the Father, which promotes the flourishing of the individual, the community and the mission: “The community of the Trinity is extended to all of us who are willing to participate.”  

Reed clearly shows that the heart of Christian spirituality is relationship as individuals are invited on a spiritual journey with God. She asserts that this journey requires community characterized by accountability and nurture with God as the model of

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54 Ibid., 123.
55 Ibid., 124.
56 Ibid., 152.
57 Ibid.
self-giving love and compassionate fellowship.\textsuperscript{58} Because the spiritual journey connects a person to the heart of God, that person will hear the call to serve the world. The Spirit’s presence makes compassionate caring possible. Believers can imitate Christ’s methods to care for those who are poor and in bondage, thus allowing them to participate in the fulfillment of the Father’s purpose of bringing redemption and wholeness.\textsuperscript{59}

Reed’s theology validates the theology of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Her sociological work among congregations demonstrates that practices of communal spiritual guidance contribute to the growth of the individual and the community, reaching beyond into each person’s world—a major intention of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. The elements of spiritual direction Reed highlights reflect the values of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart and the design of the Listening Groups.

**Limitations**

Reed looks at ancient practices of spiritual guidance only within the context of the communal formation of the local congregation and shows how the pastoral roles of preaching, teaching, administration and worship are tasks that can benefit from her suggestions. Reed also suggests that seminaries give greater attention to spiritual guidance and formation. This is a limitation of the book with regard to this project, since Fellowship of the Burning Heart is neither a local congregation nor a seminary. Fellowship of the Burning Heart is modifying ancient practices of spiritual guidance as a foundation of the format for Listening Groups. Fellowship of the Burning Heart is

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 155.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 157.
communal, but it does not take place within a local congregation, which is where Reed argues the practice of spiritual guidance belongs.

Invitations from the Trinity: Dallas Willard – *Renewing the Christian Mind*

**Thesis**

*Renewing the Christian Mind* is a collection of Dallas Willard’s material offering wisdom and God’s grace to each person who seeks God and the eternal quality of the life Christ offers in his Kingdom. According to Willard, relational realities of the Kingdom of God shape the follower of Christ. These include the true knowledge of God and knowledge of the human soul, its nature, and its transformation. Pursuing the truth about God and humanity affects every area of life; many of these areas are addressed in the book.

**Summary and Contribution to Topic**

Willard teaches the power of ideas and the importance of understanding that power, encouraging his readers to choose their ideas wisely because ideas influence a person’s formation. He suggests that the greatest freedom humans have is where they place their minds, and a person’s ideas and understanding of God and self are central to the process of learning to live the with-God life. Add to this God’s grace and a person’s cooperating will, and that is where transformation into Christ’s likeness takes place.

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60 Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, viii.

61 Ibid., ix.
Seeking the truth about the nature of God and one’s creation are lifelong pursuits. Willard presents relational realities of the Kingdom of God; these shape the follower of Christ. These ideas are central in Fellowship of the Burning Heart theology about the availability and participation in the with-God life offered to each person.

Willard’s work gives perspectives for the pursuit of truth and ideas about the nature of God and people, as well as crucial insights about the theology of the Kingdom of God central to Fellowship of the Burning Heart theology. Fellowship of the Burning Heart values a high Christology. Willard and Fellowship of the Burning Heart agree that Jesus is interested in every area of each person’s life and desires to be master of these areas. In this book Willard presents a Christocentric understanding of all of life. This Christocentric understanding woven through the book includes an understanding of reality, of purpose, of God’s nature and persons, and the eternal kind of life God offers to his children both in the present and eternity. Willard connects each area addressed to the available truth of Christ, with its grace, love, wisdom and experiential knowledge.

Additional topics addressed in the theology section are helpful in the development of Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theology. Willard’s book, The Divine Conspiracy, is more encompassing for this, but the ideas in this edited collection reflect many of the major themes of The Divine Conspiracy. Some of the leadership ideas offered, such as gender issues, soul care of a leader, qualities of faithfulness and humility, among

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62 Ibid., x.

63 See the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Values document in Appendix A.

64 Willard, Renewing the Christian Mind, xiii.

65 Ibid., 424.
others in the book, are helpful considerations in the creation of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart order as well as the training of new leaders.

**Limitations**

The limited nature of interviews, articles and talks, leave the reader with questions. However, the reader is able to access longer works of Willard helpful in addressing these. Black offers helpful notes and cross-references. Some topics may not be central to the formation of the ministry of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, such as Willard’s interview on pornography. However, since Christ wants lordship over every area of life, this and other topics may surface in Fellowship of the Burning Heart as people deal with real life in the context of a safe community. Because the with-God life is at the core of this book and Fellowship of the Burning Heart, everything offered in this book, like all Willard’s writings, is helpful.

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*Ibid., 427.*
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGY OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART

The theology underlying the Fellowship of the Burning Heart is based on a triune understanding of God.¹ To know God as Trinity is to be invited to enter deeply into the life of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity calls people to share in the divine life as God’s image bearers. Humans are created by and for community and enabled by God’s grace to cooperate with and enjoy the consequences of loving community.

God’s friendship character is at the center of this theology of spiritual companionship and community.² Throughout the Bible it is made clear that God has created people for intimate friendship with himself—both now and forever. As a person enters this intimate friendship with God, the person is automatically engaged in community with the Trinity and with all people and all creation. God has eternally existed as community in unity within his triune nature. The with-God life offered in

¹ The concept and validity of the theology of the triune nature of God is assumed for this final project. Scripture points to the triune nature of God from beginning to end (Gn 1:26 to Rev 22:3). Countless books have been written on and centuries of debate and schisms have transpired over this topic. To defend this concept is outside the scope of this final project.

² Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 329. Willard writes, “The acid test for any theology is this: Is the God presented on that can be loved, heart, soul, mind and strength? . . . set a loveable God — a radiant, happy, friendly, accessible, and totally competent being—before ordinary people.”
Scripture invites each person into community with the Trinity to participate and cooperate in the with-God life and in companionship and community with one another.

Created for Community

All people are created in the image of the Triune God, created by the community of the Trinity for community with God and each other. Inherent in humankind’s creation in the imago Dei are relational desires to be known and accepted, to belong, to be safe, and to love and be loved. People are created for and naturally long for this intimacy. Sin, separation from communion with God, makes intimacy fearful and taints life-giving companionship and community. Jesus provides people a way into the with-God life they are created to partake in.

Willard proposes that God’s friendship character should be at the center of any theology of spiritual companionship or community: “The main point is that God has created us for intimate friendship with himself—both now and forever. . . . It is made clear throughout the Bible, especially in such passages as Exodus 29:43–46, 33:11; Psalm 23; Isaiah 41:8; John 15:11–15, and Hebrews 13:5–6.”\(^3\) As a person enters this intimate friendship with God, the person is automatically engaged in community with the Trinity and with all people and all creation. God has eternally existed as community in unity within his triune nature. The with-God life offered in Scripture invites people into community with the Trinity. Darrell Johnson writes, “From all eternity the living God has existed in community as Community; in fellowship as Fellowship; in relationship as

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Relationship. . . At the center of the universe is intimacy, a deep, abiding, tender, affectionate belonging." Every person is invited to participate and cooperate in this with-God life.

Trust in the nature and character of the Triune God, who is love, accesses God’s grace for people to experience intimacy, companionship and community with God and others. All people are invited and empowered to live this with-God life if they desire it, trust Jesus and cooperate with God to do so. People who have experienced the with-God life in community often long for more experiences in the with-God life and community with like-hearted people. Fellowship of the Burning Heart is designed to provide a covenanted community context for Renovaré constituents who long for more of this shared with-God life within the Renovaré community.

Humankind’s nature is created for community with God and each other. God made people by love, in love, to love. This is reflected in the great commandments Jesus summarized in Matthew 22:36–40, to love God and love others. Community and spiritual companionship within the with-God life offer deepening love, personal growth and commitment. Trust in God fosters experience in the with-God life, which fosters love, which fosters more trust, and the cycle continues.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart provides a space for people to come together within a covenant community, apart from their local context, to fan into flames a burning heart of love for God and others, then carry it back to the context of each person’s life.

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Fellowship of the Burning Heart serves the local church and fans the flame of the love of God and ignites love for the world. Fellowship of the Burning Heart promotes a biblical elevation of the idea of Church—the *ecclesia*, the called out ones—to take home to wherever the with-God life is lived out: in relationships and homes, local church gatherings, the larger community and the world.

The love relationship of God and the with-God life is inherent in the creation and theology of Fellowship of the Burning Heart and is at the core of Renovaré theology. The next section draws on a theology of the loving friendship of God in several aspects of Renovaré theology. This is greatly influenced by Willardian spirituality and offers connections to show how these theologies inform the ministry practice of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Other theological contributions from selected spiritualities, such as desert, Orthodox and Ignatian spiritualities, that influence the theology of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart ministry initiative will be discussed.

**Theological Themes in the Ministry Initiative**

The theology of Fellowship of the Burning Heart aligns with Renovaré’s values and theology. The foundational theological idea of Renovaré and Fellowship of the Burning Heart discussed here is the availability of the with-God life. Following this is the theology of the nature and absolute necessity of grace to participate in and cooperate with the presence of God in his Kingdom purposes. The theology of the centrality of Scripture, a practical vision of nurturing community and a balanced vision of life with God founded in classic Christian writings are also discussed.⁶

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⁶ Renovaré, “About.”
The Availability of the With-God Life

Life in the Kingdom of God is Renovaré’s foundational theological teaching. Renovaré teaches that the with-God life is available through Jesus Christ both here and now and forever in the Kingdom with God to all who place their trust in him. Willard proclaims, “The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God himself at the center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.”\(^7\) All people are invited into this life and being built together to be where God dwells by his Spirit (Eph 2:19–22; Rev 21:3).

Jesus repeatedly invites people to “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is at hand,” (Mt 3:2, 4:17, 10:7). Willard explains, “This is a call for us to reconsider how we have been approaching our life, in light of the fact that we now, in the presence of Jesus, have the option of living within the surrounding movements of God’s eternal purposes, of taking our life into his life.”\(^8\) Everyone is invited to come and dwell in the presence of the Triune God. Everyone is invited to awareness and participation in God’s Kingdom. Jesus is the great includer; he invites all people. And God himself, whose prime activity is to heal, bless and save the world, is the prime inhabitant of this inclusive divine community.\(^9\)

Fellowship of the Burning Heart is an intentional community that invites people to an ongoing rethinking (metanoia, repenting) of how to approach life in the presence of God and learn to notice more of God’s movements. The correlation between faith in

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\(^7\) Ibid.


\(^9\) Hudson, lecture.
Christ and the obedience/abundance of life in Christ” in an apprenticeship commitment to Christ is necessary to open one to a spiritual “engulfment” in the Trinitarian reality.\(^{10}\) The with-God life is at the core of fellowship with God and with one another and Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Willard said people are led to become disciples/apprentices of Jesus by “ravishing them with a vision of life in the kingdom of the heavens in the fellowship of Jesus.”\(^{11}\) Those who venture by faith and grace into with-God life experiences seem to find a longing created within for more, as expressed in the Renovaré constituency that Fellowship of the Burning Heart serves. Listening Groups are one mechanism designed, in Fellowship of the Burning Heart, for more noticing with God of those movements.

The Nature and Necessity of Grace

The necessity and means of grace is a second important theological tenet of Renovaré. Grace is God’s action on behalf of humanity to do for them what they cannot do by themselves.\(^{12}\) Renovaré teaches that each person is utterly dependent upon Jesus Christ as ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord and Friend for genuine spiritual transformation into his likeness.\(^{13}\) Grace is vital for salvation, transformation and fellowship.

Grace makes fellowship and companionship possible in community. God’s grace goes beyond the common understanding of forgiveness of sins. Willard and Black write,

\(^{10}\) Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 313.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 305.


\(^{13}\) Renovaré, “About.”
“Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action.”

God gives a variety of ways to be open to his transforming grace and invites cooperation and effort with it. God has given means of grace through intentional spiritual practices. Renovaré teaches these have a crucial role in the transformative work of God to form, conform and transform each person into the Christ-like character God intends for humans to enjoy and live out in the Kingdom of God. Fellowship of the Burning Heart invites participants to covenant being intentional in spiritual practices, including by creating a personal rule of life around the Renovaré Covenant.

**Rule of Life**

As noted above, grace is never earned but it is not opposed to effort. Developing a Rule of Life empowered by intention with one’s effort and God’s grace offers practical help in the training program of bringing one’s personal kingdom, where what one wants done gets done, under God’s Kingdom rule. Willard offers two primary objectives for a rule of life. First, is to bring an apprentice of Jesus to the point where they “dearly love and constantly delight in that ‘heavenly Father’ made real to earth in Jesus,” certain he is all good and all-powerful. Second, is to “free the apprentices of domination, of

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15 Renovaré, “About.”

16 See Footnote 10 and Who We Are in the Appendix A.


‘enslavement’ (John 8:34; Romans 6:6) to their old habitual patterns of thought, feeling, and action.”

Primary areas of life that benefit from a rule include where one places one’s mind, one deals with emotions, the will one exercises in choices and the character one engages with others in social relationships, and how one rules one’s body. As a “child of light” (Eph 5:8, Jn 12:36) one’s thought life is enthralled with and centered on God. One’s feelings are based on love and one’s social relationships are marked by the ability to love the sinner and hate the sin. The will is surrendered to automatically do good, and the body is prepared to obey. The soul is “at home with God,” and has an effortless flow of eternal and abundant life welling up originating with the Trinity where one abides.

Through time and experience with God, people grow in grace, enabling them to place all the resources of the self before God (Rom 12:1). One result of this trust is people naturally and freely express Christ’s character, such as the qualities found in

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19 Ibid., 322.
20 See Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*.
21 Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 323.
22 Ibid., 324.
26 Ibid., 220.
Galatians 5:22–23. These grace-enabled qualities of Christ allow Christ’s followers to love each other in community. Fellowship of the Burning Heart enjoins its members to create a personal rule of life around the shared Renovaré Covenant. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

**Grace in Community**

Enabled by God’s grace, Christ’s followers, according to Scripture, are to experience certain qualities and activities as a community living out the with-God life. These include building each other up, faithfully meeting together and stirring one another to love and good works (Heb 10:24–25). Christ’s followers are to care for the needs of each other, the poor, the imprisoned and the physically needy in the name of Christ (Mt 25:35–36). Additionally, Christ’s followers are to love and encourage each other, exhibiting the qualities of Christ within to one another (Gal 5:22–23). The Triune God provides for his people to dwell in unity with God and each other, having the same mind as Christ (Phil 2:1–11) through the help of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit (Jn 14). According to Romans 12:4–5, there is a diversity of gifts and functions within this unity of the Body of Christ. The community is instructed in 1 Thessalonians 4:18 to comfort each other with the truth about life and death. They are also to bear each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2) and to encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, [and] be patient with all (1 Thes 5:13). God’s grace empowers each of these qualities. The values of Fellowship of the Burning Heart reflect these scriptural descriptions of love in action. 

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27 Willard, _The With-God Life_, xxxiii.

28 See Fellowship of the Burning Heart Values in Appendix A.
The hallmark of the Christian community is unity, and it is good and right (Ps 133:1). Unity empowers believers by grace to bear with each other and forgive as Christ forgives, having “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience,” and putting on love, “which binds all the virtues together in perfect unity.” Love and peace are the ultimate result of unity and gratefulness is a byproduct. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (Col 3:12–15).

Christ’s followers grow in these qualities and activities in relationship with each other as each person, in cooperation with God’s grace, grows in Christlikeness. Examples of community and spiritual companionship in the New Testament include Jesus and his disciples and the early apostles who traveled together: Paul, Silas, Barnabas, Timothy and Luke. Other examples in Scripture are the small groups of believers who gathered together in their local communities to encourage each other and to learn together how to follow Jesus and how to love, serve and worship God. Scripture and experience make it clear community is not without its challenges. Challenges, however difficult, become learning spaces for individuals and communities in the with-God life. God’s presence and grace is adequate and endless.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart envisions a community of Christ followers who, by grace, offer each other companionship and accountability for good, to spur one another onto love and good works as described in Hebrews 10:24–25 and Ephesians 2:10. With respect for each person’s stories and boundaries, Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers commitment in a transient consumer society with its life-crushing byproduct,
loneliness. Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers belonging, lightheartedness, safety and confidentially. It offers companionship in a manner where people come as they are and leave their egos, titles and insecurities at the door. In cooperation with God’s grace, this covenant listening community seeks to be honest, available, vulnerable and intentional about Christian spiritual formation and community.  

The Centrality of Scripture

The centrality of Scripture is a third important theological tenant of Renovaré. God has given the Scriptures to reveal his nature and purposes throughout history for humankind and for discovery of the with-God life Jesus provides and offers to all people. Scripture is also the basis for all other spiritual disciplines. The revelation of God’s purposes in history is offered to those immersed in the Bible.

Scripture offers a practical guide into deeper understanding of and experience with God. Scripture provides a reliable and rich guide for spiritual formation into Christlikeness that guides the actions and qualities of relationships and community life. Scripture is the central means by which God reveals a part of the mystery of himself, along with his creation and his presence with humanity. Scripture is the vision and guide for the function of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Scripture provides qualities of the fellowship and actions of engagement for community life that are expressed in the values and the design of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart ministry initiative.

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29 Ibid.

30 Renovaré, “About.”

31 This will be discussed further in later sections of this project.
A Practical Vision of Nurturing Community

In *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer describes community as a gift of shared life that God gives to his people. Christ dwells in each believer; therefore, the source of community is Christ in each one. This echoes Jesus’ promise, “I in them” (Jn 17:23) and Paul’s proclamation, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

Community is a unified body of individuals who share Christ in common (Jn 17:21). Fellowship is a shared life. When Jesus comes into a life he does not come in alone—his arms are around his family and they come into that life, too. To be united with Christ is to be united with Christ’s Body. Life with God is not merely for a sense of feeling good. One’s relationship with Jesus is never private; it is personal and corporate at the same time.

From its beginning, Renovaré has held that spiritual formation groups and other forms of spiritual friendship help create and nurture a form of mutual support that is vital to the with-God life each person is invited by God to participate in.

First Peter 2:9–10 makes it clear that God calls, gathers and forms his people as a community. People are created for and meant to be in relationship with God and others in a way that is dynamic, whole and fresh every day (Jn 17:24; 2 Cor 4:16). These relationships extend beyond church services into every facet of life. God creates humankind to be a community of love, to express this love and make it known throughout

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33 Ibid.
34 Hudson lecture.
35 Ibid.
the whole earth.36 Fellowship of the Burning Heart is an expression of this belief. The natural effects of being a part of Fellowship of the Burning Heart will be felt in each person’s home relationships, local church and community. The transformative power of God lives in each person and influences all aspects of life.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers a structure for connections to allow people to connect with others who share their longings for the with-God life and to walk through life with them. Community does not necessitate physical proximity to share in and experience Trinitarian fellowship and movement in daily life. The Fellowship of the Burning Heart design gathers people into annual gatherings out of their ordinary context to fan into flames the love of God within a community of like-hearted people. Monthly touch points in Listening Groups allow encouragement in noticing the movements of God and connection in companionship in the span of time between the annual gatherings. These elements will be more fully discussed in Part Three of this paper.

A Balanced Vision of Life with God through Classic Christian Writings

Renovaré and Fellowship of the Burning Heart promote a theologically-balanced vision of the with-God life through life in Christ and spiritual transformation. This is done by embracing the abundant life of Jesus “in all its fullness: contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical, and incarnational.”37 These six have come to be

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37 Renovaré, “About.”
known and written about as the six great traditions of the Christian faith.\textsuperscript{38} Within these traditions, ways of training in righteousness can be discovered which grow love for God and others.

Also, throughout these traditions, the historical “great conversations” about the with-God life and spiritual formation are developed from Scripture and found in the classical writings of the Church.\textsuperscript{39} The Holy Spirit has a history,\textsuperscript{40} and these writings reflect the Spirit’s work though the ages. To ignore these and neglect discerning the Spirit’s movement in them impoverishes the present expression of the Church. Renovaré values these writings as helpful for the growth of the Church. Furthermore, Renovaré affirms the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds and “stands within historic Christian orthodoxy.”\textsuperscript{41} These are common theological foundations that members of Renovaré share and experience. These are foundational within the formational experiences created for Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

**Theological Contributions of Selected Spiritualties**

Some of the “great conversations” about the with-God life can be found in desert spirituality, orthodox spirituality and Ignatian spirituality. Elements from these spiritualities that inform the theology of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart are discussed in the following sections.


\textsuperscript{39} Renovaré, “About.”

\textsuperscript{40} Christopher Hall, Fuller SP728 lecture, Malibu, CA, September 2017.

\textsuperscript{41} Renovaré, “About.”
Desert Spirituality

The desert dwellers practiced an early expression of monasticism; they offer a central focus on God and love. Their visual representation of mutuality in the Circle of Dorotheos is especially valuable to the theology of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, as well are their insights on love, virtues and prayer. The Circle of Dorotheos demonstrates the way in which love for God and love for other people are interconnected.\footnote{Robertta Bondi, To Pray and to Love (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 96.} The circle represents the world. At the center of the circle is God. Lines extend from the outer circle toward the center to represent people’s life journey to God at the center of the circle. The point of the illustration is one cannot move closer to God without moving closer to the lives of others. This is a truism of community in Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

In desert spirituality, this mutuality of love has to be learned by unlearning deep patterns of domination, submission, passivity and violence that are found in the passions and the \textit{logismoi} (evil thoughts) that feed them.\footnote{Ibid., 97.} Virtues, such as offering compassion, forgiveness, healing and love, must be cultivated in intimate Christian communities before they can be offered to the pagan world in the name of Christ.\footnote{Ibid.} The Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers opportunity for growing in these virtues so people return to their homes and communities able to offer these virtues to others in love.

Desert spirituality, helpful in managing expectations of Fellowship of the Burning Heart participants to the reality that there are no quick fixes for love, calls people to lay aside instant expectations, perfectionism and perpetual guilt. This is necessary for the
lifelong process of learning to pray and love. Learning to love involves patterns of listening, seeing and actions of virtues. These are qualities exercised in Fellowship of the Burning Heart activities explained later in this dissertation.\textsuperscript{45} A simple application of virtue is found in Theodore of Pherme: “There is no other virtue than that of not being scornful.”\textsuperscript{46} This virtue in Christian community and relationships reflects a reality of the heart of love for one another. Love is at the center of desert spirituality and inherent in Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theology and design.

Desert spirituality teaches that virtues, like passions, are interrelated. For instance, “Nonjudgmentalism is impossible without humility; humility is not possible without consultation, consultation depends upon forgiveness; forgiveness is never independent of discernment.”\textsuperscript{47} Desert spirituality teaches to learn love a person must unlearn anything in that is not love. The ripple effect of the interconnectedness of passions, vices and virtues allows small changes to have a multiplied effect. Cassian contributes the conclusion that “true harmony and undivided union” in community can only exist among “those whose life is pure, and who are men of the same goodness and purpose.”\textsuperscript{48} He urges his readers to “offer to God a perfect and clean heart and to keep it free from all disturbances.”\textsuperscript{49} A pure heart is a core admonition in desert spirituality. Unity of purpose and a pure heart are theological values in Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

\textsuperscript{45} See also Fellowship of the Burning Heart values in Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{46} Bondi, \textit{To Pray and to Love}, 99.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 100.


\textsuperscript{49} Bondi, \textit{To Pray and to Love}, 12.
Desert spirituality believes prayer is the first of all virtues as well as the “foundation of life together within the people of God.”\textsuperscript{50} In community, prayer is “fundamental to the growth of our lives in love of one another and the world.”\textsuperscript{51} In addition to the primary virtue of prayer, the desert spirituality virtues of humility, discernment, consultation, forgiveness and awareness of one’s own sinfulness are cultivated within the community life of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Prayer and these virtues, and purity of heart from which divine love can flow, are offered in experiential practices of Fellowship of the Burning Heart—for love’s sake. These reflect the heart of God and his friendship that makes all love, companionship and community possible within Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

**Orthodox Spirituality**

The Orthodox teaching on \textit{theosis}, or union with God, reveals how Christlikeness is possible and generates the qualities of healthy community life. Orthodox theology and spirituality teach as each person becomes a partaker in God’s divine nature the person can attain the likeness of God (2 Pt 1:4).\textsuperscript{52} This is reflected in the theology of the with-God life and the renovation of the heart God undertakes with a person’s cooperation. Humans do not become God in essence, but through God’s energies humans are allowed to experience God.\textsuperscript{53} For instance, “God is by nature love, and by grace we become love; He

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 235.
is by nature holy, and by His grace we are made holy; God is by nature eternal, and by His grace we have everlasting life.” This happens because God created humanity in his image, and now through the synergistic cooperation of the human will with the divine will, God’s children can acquire the likeness of God. This aligns with Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s and Renovaré’s theology of grace discussed earlier.

Through the presence of Christ in his followers and God’s offer of a grace-empowered pathway to take on qualities of Christ, Christian community has the hope of living in the love and unity to which Scripture calls it. God’s grace invites cooperation in the process; humans are incapable of merely willing to possess a certain quality to make it a reality. Fellowship of the Burning Heart models and encourages its community as it envisions, intends and practices living the qualities of Christ out of grace. This Orthodox concept reflects Renovaré’s dependence on and cooperation with grace.

In the Orthodox theology of the “Holy Trinity” of the spiritual life, faith, hope and love, are seen as one. This “Holy Trinity” of faith hope and love embraces all virtues and is rooted in the knowledge of God. Renovaré’s theology of the centrality of Scripture reflects this. Love is “a fountain of faith, an abyss of patience, a sea of humility.” Without these qualities, a spiritual community cannot exist. Faith, described

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Willard, Divine Conspiracy, 44.
57 Papavassiliou, Thirty Steps to Heaven, 238.
58 Ibid., 239.
59 Ibid.
as trust, faithfulness, loyalty and dedication, both shapes and influences a relationship with the Divine Trinity, which directly influences trust and relationships with each other. Hope is also the foundation and the fruit of one’s relationship with God, and the source of divine love.\textsuperscript{60} Hope is ever increasing in \textit{theosis}, because \textit{theosis} does not have an end. “We can progress ever deeper into the infinite holiness of God . . . as our joy grows ever greater throughout eternity.”\textsuperscript{61} Community in Fellowship of the Burning Heart is dependent upon hope in God’s faithfulness and character and transforming presence with us in the with-God life people long to experience.

Reflected in Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theological foundation of the with-God life is the Orthodox theology of the relational and everlasting divine love, the very essence of the Trinitarian unity of God.\textsuperscript{62} In cooperation with God’s grace the expulsion of all of the passions within allows the experience of divine love (which is absent of any passion), joy and being carefree in the care of God.\textsuperscript{63} Divine love is never isolated from love for other people.\textsuperscript{64} This theology of divine love is imperative for divine community as Fellowship of the Burning Heart envisions it. The divine ascent is the process of the grace-empowered expulsion of passions and associated vices so that virtues are given access and divine love is experienced. These processes offer insights for

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 240.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 243.
the individual and the formation of community life, such as spiritual union. Fellowship of the Burning Heart creates space to pursue these realities.

**Ignatian Spirituality**

The theme of friendship with God is a strong theological foundation in Ignatius’ life and legacy. Ignatius’ perspectives on this friendship, God’s purposes for man, on love and community, on the sacredness of all things and finding God in all things and trust in God’s *Magis* (greatness) are integral in Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theology. Ignatius, through his journey of life with God, offers a central purpose for all humankind: God is always creating, drawing people into the community of the Trinity. Ignatius teaches people are created to love, praise and serve God. Learning God’s nature and God’s desire for creating each person and engaging in the divine friendship offered by God provide a pathway for an alignment of all choices with what better leads to deepening God’s life within the person. It also leads the person to look for and find God in all things and to live in freedom from disordered loves and attachments in order to choose the things that bring oneself to life in God, with trust that God is greater than all things and lovingly choosing the path that leads to this. Reaching for the *Magis* (God’s greater glory) is an exercise in wholehearted trust and humility; it requires God. One’s greatest strength is dependence on God (2 Cor 12:9). Life in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart community, and the Kingdom of God, requires this dependence.

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65 Barry, *Finding God in all Things*, 75.
Ignatius describes love as a mutual sharing of what one has and is. This is possible only because God shares his life and love with humanity. God wants love in a mutual friendship and community where mutual sharing is the hallmark of the community, where no one worries about self and everyone is void of self-protection. Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s values reflect this hallmark. This can only be hoped for because of the life of the Trinity each person is invited to experience and enjoy. Community of this type is a safe place, where love reveals itself without fear, even if what is revealed may seem unsavory.

Ignatian exercises lead people to contemplation in action as they contemplate and find God in daily life and activity, enabling an approach to all, each person and everything, with reverence and experiencing a sense of the sacredness in all things. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius are not required for Fellowship of the Burning Heart participants; however, its theology informs Fellowship of the Burning Heart. The ripple effects will be evident within the community and beyond in the daily life of each participant. The creative action of God is always at work “to bring us and all persons into

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66 Ibid., 131.
67 Ibid., 132.
68 See Fellowship of the Burning Heart Values in Appendix A.
69 Barry, Finding God in all Things, 137.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
the reign of God, into the community of the Trinity,\(^{72}\) as expressed in Fellowship of the Burning Heart theology.

Ignatius demonstrated the importance and influence of spiritual companions in how he lived his life with God and in how he organized the Jesuit order. People within the community of Fellowship of the Burning Heart are not a part of each other’s daily lives; however, the mutual encouragement and connections with one another are valuable. These can strengthen each person’s resolve and practices so they seek the Trinitarian presence, love and the sacredness of everything. Ignatius admonished his followers to go forth and set the world on fire.\(^ {73}\) It is hoped that the burning hearts of Fellowship of the Burning Heart participants go and do likewise.

**Conclusion**

The disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced a burning heart within them in the presence of Jesus (Lk 24:32). Jesus’ presence is in his Church today, in each of his followers. Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers a context for individual burning hearts to come together within a covenant community apart from their ordinary context to fan into flames their burning hearts of love for the Triune God, and carry that love back to the context within each person’s home, relationships, local church congregation and community. This is the with-God Life each person is created for and invited to live and enjoy in the intimacy of relationship, with the power of God’s grace at work in and through each person as members of the Body of Christ. Fellowship of the Burning Heart

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 30.

is designed to serve the local church, fanning the flame of the love of God, igniting love for the world.

The theology of Fellowship of the Burning Heart aligns with Renovaré theology and is informed by the theology of the historic spiritualties discussed in this chapter. Together these offer a strong and rich foundation and vision for building the design of this ministry practice. Fellowship of the Burning Heart provides the organizational opportunity for people in the Renovaré constituency to experience the community of the with-God life of the Trinity and each other.

Similar to a practice of Alcoholics Anonymous, in every Fellowship of the Burning Heart Gathering Retreat and Listening Group, the Core Documents reflecting Fellowship of the Burning Heart theology will be read. This practice will serve as a liturgy, a reminder of who God is and who his people are. The appendices contain the current founding Core Documents (who we are, core beliefs, and our values) for Fellowship of the Burning Heart that reflect the theology discussed in this paper. The content design of Gathering Retreats and monthly Listening Groups, the resources and the eventual shepherding of leaders reflect and serve as praxis of the theological foundations of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. It is hoped that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart will be for each person’s everlasting good and for God’s everlasting glory.

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74 See Fellowship of the Burning Heart Core Documents in Appendix A.

PART THREE

CREATION OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART PILOT
CHAPTER FIVE
FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART GOALS AND STRATEGIES

This chapter details the development of the ministry plan for a pilot chapter of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart designed to meet the ministry needs previously described. The pilot design is informed by the theological conclusions drawn in Chapter 4. Theological conclusions are highlighted in this chapter in the development of the order’s core documents.

Development of the project began with the formation of three of its foundational aspects: the project’s goals, the core documents of the order and a leadership team to implement the pilot. This was followed by an assessment of interest for this order within the Renovaré constituency and the development and implementation of an application, interview and selection process for pilot participants. These elements are detailed in the first section of this chapter.

The second and third sections of this chapter detail the creation of strategies to implement the desired goals for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. The strategies include the design and creation in Colorado of a local pilot chapter, including an annual Gathering Retreat, monthly Listening Groups and the introduction of a shared rule of life.
around the Renovaré Covenant. These three elements of the order are described with the implementation plan for the Colorado pilot project.

**Fellowship of the Burning Heart Pilot Goals**

This project was created to address the expressed longings within the Renovaré constituency for a life of intimacy with God in the community of like-hearted companions.¹ To meet these ministry needs, this ministry project design had three major goals: a cognitive goal, an affective goal and a behavior goal.

The cognitive goal, aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding, was that participants would emerge from the first pilot retreat with a cognitive understanding and biblical vision of the trinitarian invitation into community with God and others. The affective goal, aimed at changing peoples’ attitudes, was to encourage and motivate participants by addressing each individual’s intentions and longing for community that cultivates hope for the individual within the Body of Christ. The behavioral goal, aimed at facilitating new experiences, building skills and shaping behavior, was that participants of the Colorado pilot would experience, participate in and facilitate the means for like-hearted companionship in the with-God life.

These three goals, along with the theological analysis, informed the creation of the core documents for the founding of the order. The core documents also detail specific components of this new ministry strategy.

¹ For this ministry project I worked under the authority of and in collaboration with the Renovaré Director of Community Life, Nathan Foster.
Core Documents

The creation of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s founding core documents detailed answers to who, what, how and why questions. Much prayer, research, writing, rewriting, editing and discussion culminated in the core documents used in the pilot. Care was taken to align the order with the core documents of the Renovaré organization. To add to the text of the documents, Brian Morykon, Renovaré’s director of communications, designed a logo of intertwined hearts on vine leaves, an homage to John 14:4-5. The logo’s byline is from Luke 24:32: “Did not our hearts burn within us?”

The core documents consist of “Who We Are,” “The Renovaré Covenant,” “The Core Belief and Ideas,” and the “Core Values.” These documents, written with an inclusive first-person plural pronoun, became the foundation and guidepost for the creation of the pilot. A much longer FAQ document was developed to address apparent questions and details that were difficult to address in the four main documents.

The document “Who We Are” details the identity of the order, the friendship of Jesus, the invitational relationship of the Trinity and the three distinctive elements of the order. The document states that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a dispersed community of Jesus’ friends who long for deeper intimacy with the Triune God. They are committed to Jesus, to one another, to shared values and beliefs and to the Renovaré

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2 Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s Core Documents were developed in collaboration with Nathan Foster, Renovaré Director of Community Life.

3 The logo, designed by Brian Morykon, Renovaré Director of Communications, can be seen on the documents in Appendix A.

4 Language in the following section reflects language from the document affixed in Appendix A.

5 The FAQ can be found in Appendix B.
Covenant as a general rule of life. The community share brief monthly connections and an annual local gathering retreat. It strives to be a listening community of diverse denominational expressions marked by love, availability and vulnerability to God and one another in friendship, mutual support and encouragement in the with-God life. The primary purpose is to grow as disciples of Jesus—for transformation, for the good of others and for God’s everlasting glory.

“The Renovaré Covenant” states, “In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service.” This covenant is used as the basis for each participant’s individually crafted rule of life. Individually and corporately, the community commits to gathering together and to the Renovaré Covenant as a rule of life. This helps each one to dearly love and delight in the Trinity and to cooperate in the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God. Living intentionally around a shared rule deepens the worship, fellowship and faithfulness of individuals in the midst of God’s ongoing presence and the wooing of the community.⁶

The twelve core values of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart reflect the theology of Renovaré and this ministry initiative as detailed in Chapter 4. First, is valuing a high Christology regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ. The second value is worship and prayer as central in all community. Third, is a value of Scripture as a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness and engaging in the historical great conversation about the growth of the soul in classical Christian writings.

Fourth, is valuing community as important in transformation into Christlikeness. Fifth, offering availability and vulnerability honors the sacredness, mystery and individual pace of each person’s unique experience with God. The spiritual significance of stability in a culture of isolating discontentment is also valued. FBH commits to one another, to brief monthly connections and to an annual gathering retreat. Sixth, FHB also values listening. The community seeks to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and one another. This creates a welcoming and confidential culture where it is safe to know and be known.

Seventh, is a combined value of honesty and openness, seeking to love with wise boundaries and to discern without judgment. Eighth, there is also an inherent value in people as God’s image bearers. In interactions, his followers seek to forgo temptations to impression-management and to leveraging relationships or attempting to fix one another. This leads to valuing humility and the freedom it brings—cherishing gratitude, joy, laughter, creativity and lightheartedness in life together, the ninth value.

Tenth, is a value of loving respect. The community is for one another. Each gives encouragement as often as possible. People share advice once in a great while. They bring correction only when absolutely necessary. They condemn never. Eleventh, is valuing each person’s unique gifting. Gatherings are relationally focused and member-led, with each person serving as is appropriate and helpful. Time together is a blend of teaching, practice and community. Twelfth, FBH values various local expressions of spiritual formation efforts: relationships, families, small groups and local churches. Spiritual formation always has a local address.

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to reflect the carefully-curated words and ideas of the thirty-year history of the Renovaré organization. The theology, statement
of belief and ideas for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart discussed in Chapter 4 are, for the most part, reflective of the core beliefs and ideas of Renovaré.\textsuperscript{7} Renovaré is Christian in commitment and ecumenical in breadth. It stands within historic Christian orthodoxy and affirm the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds. “The Core Belief and Ideas” state eight tenants.\textsuperscript{8}

The first belief regards life with God. The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with the Triune God himself at the center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.\textsuperscript{9} The Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to be one expression of this “all-inclusive community of loving persons.”\textsuperscript{10} The second belief addresses the availability of God’s Kingdom. People can experience genuine, substantive life in God’s Kingdom through Jesus Christ, beginning now and continuing through all eternity. The third belief addresses the necessity of grace. Humanity is utterly dependent upon Jesus Christ, their ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord and Friend for genuine spiritual transformation.

The fourth belief regards the means of grace. FBH recognizes the crucial importance of intentional spiritual disciplines among the variety of ways God has given to be open to his transforming grace. The fifth idea calls for a balanced vision of life in Christ. Believers seek to embrace the abundant life of Jesus in all its fullness: contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical and incarnational. The

\textsuperscript{7} Renovaré, “About.”

\textsuperscript{8} See Appendix A for an abbreviated list of the Core Beliefs and Ideas.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
sixth idea calls for a practical strategy for spiritual formation. FBH encourages spiritual friendships, small groups and healthy community as important elements of mutual support and nurture in spiritual transformation.

The seventh belief confirms the centrality of Scripture. Adherents immerse themselves in the Bible. It is the great revelation of God’s purposes in history, a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness and a rich resource for our spiritual formation. There is also a value in tradition. FBH engages in the historical “great conversation” on spiritual formation developed from Scripture in the Church’s classical spiritual writings.

The goal for the design of the core documents was that they would be concise and filled with meaning. These documents were used to guide and shape how the leadership team operated and also used as the basis of the development of each element of the order. These core documents became the basis of the liturgical elements for both the Gathering Retreats and the Listening Group process discussed later in this chapter.

**Development of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Strategy**

Following the development of the core documents and the Fellowship of the Burning Heart goals was a strategy and design for the creation and implementation of a local pilot of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart in Colorado. This phase involved forming a leadership team, selecting participants and designing the program. The following sections discuss each of these steps.

**Leadership Team Formation**

Among the Renovaré community, many people desire a deeper relational connection with others living the with-God life. Potential interest in the Fellowship of the
Burning Heart exceeded the ability of one person to carry the vision to completion, so a five-member leadership team with a variety of skills and gifting was formed. The gifting and skill sets sought in the team included technology skills, communication skills, small group experience, leadership gifts, organizational skills, financial acumen, hospitality gifts, pastoral and spiritual direction gifts and experience leading retreats.

Each member of the leadership team had experience with Renovaré and an eagerness to see this project become a reality for the people of Renovaré. The team attended a three-day team-building retreat and vision launch. The leadership team intentionally functioned according to the values in the core documents of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. The team also tested ideas and techniques for how small groups might function in the order. Subsequent to the retreat, the leadership team functioned using virtual meetings and required communication and work management across multiple time zones.

Initial Target Population

To assess the effectiveness of the concepts of the order a local pilot group was formed. A one-minute electronic survey helped determine interest levels and the locations of interested people. Seven hundred thirty-three people were selected from the Renovaré database and invited to take the survey. The people selected had either participated in the Renovaré Institute or at some point indicated their interest on the

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11 Implementation leadership team members included Zane Creamer, Judy Boyles, Brian Morykon, Nathan Foster and the author.

12 This survey can be seen in Appendix C.

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Renovaré website for more information about the order. The invitation letter briefly outlined the idea of the order with some of the vision:

Can we create a safe environment where even leaders and pastors can be vulnerable and known long term? Can we create meaningful community that helps people be more fruitful in the local church where they are already planted? Now imagine gathering with twenty folks from your regional area for a retreat each year—same people, same place, and same time of year. Imagine the time is a blend of sharing, experience, and teaching led by the people in the group. Imagine the whole group is committed to a shared rule of life. Imagine within that group of 20 you’re part of a smaller group which meets virtually each month to listen and encourage each other in your with-God life. And then imagine you’ll see them all again at the yearly retreat. And imagine this would continue year after year. This is what we’re envisioning.\(^\text{13}\)

Two hundred thirty-five people (32 percent of those selected from the database) responded to the survey. One item in the survey asked if the individual sensed “Fellowship of the Burning Heart may be a fit for you in this season?” It was apparent the interest was strong. Of those respondents, 98 percent, or 231 people, all but 4 people, expressed interest in participating in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Sixty-three percent expressed interest in participating immediately with the tentative dates put forward in the letter. The remainder (35 percent) also expressed interest in the order. Although the dates and timing of the pilot did not fit their schedule at that time, they indicated a desire for more information when the project fully launched. It was apparent the desire for involvement exceeded the capacity of a local pilot.

The Plan Expanded

Through prayer and discussions, the leadership team developed a plan to continue creating one local pilot while also adding two leadership pilots. This dissertation project

\(^{13}\) From the survey introduction letter sent to 423 people selected from the Renovaré database and invited to take the survey.
only evaluates the local pilot in Colorado. Two leadership pilots occurred simultaneously with the local pilot. The leadership team researched retreat locations and dates and, by faith, secured them with contracts and deposits.

The leadership pilots were intended for people who indicated desire to launch local chapters in their areas and showed leadership potential. A plan was developed for people in the leadership pilot to go through the same experience as those in the local pilot and then, through a mutual discernment process, determine whether God was inviting them to start a local chapter of the order. The leadership team plans to shepherd these leaders through the process and provide them with a “chapter in a box” using what is developed for the local Colorado pilot along with improvements based on the feedback results of the pilot.

Application and Selection Process

Prayer was a central part of the application and selection process. The leadership team prayed, asking God that the process might be a beginning—a birth of something very special in each person’s life. The leadership team prayed for clear discernment for each applicant. They specifically prayed: “Bring your people, Lord, to mold and shape this into the little pockets of communities you would like. May this be a gift, an answer to prayer, a sense of hope, a doorway out of isolation and deeper into life with you.”14

The development of the application process involved an online application, references and an interview with a leadership team member. Contact information and application answers and references were stored on Typeform, a secure site accessible

14 This line is taken from a prayer for this process offered by Nathan Foster for the Leadership Team.
only by the leadership team. A variety of questions designed to help in the discernment process were part of the application.

The application asked each applicant to name the faith community where the applicant attended regular corporate worship. The intent of the inquiry was to gain a sense of the applicant’s background, not to disqualify anyone. People outside Renovaré shared a concern that the order might be attractive to disgruntled former church attenders and lead to creating a church for this population. Renovaré’s stated purpose is to support and resource the Church; its intention is to never replace the local church. Of the seventy-one people who applied for the pilot, 96 percent—all but three people—self-reported regular attendance at a local church. The concern seems unfounded in the pilot.

Additional questions on the application aimed to gather information regarding group readiness, motivation and commitment. These included: “Describe why you want to be a part of the Fellowship Burning Heart pilot; what attracts you to this kind of community?” “Are you able to commit to the two retreats and the monthly [in person for the local pilot or video for the leadership] gatherings; do you have any concerns about this commitment?” “What are the skills that make a person a healthy group participant and what qualities do you bring to a listening community?” “What do you envision gaining from this experience and what might you give to it?”

Each applicant was asked to write a short biography with the prompt: “What do you want us to know about you?” Applicants also requested character references from someone who knew them well. This person directly submitted the reference to the link provided. The leadership pilot application added an additional question; “Are you open to
entering into discernment with us at the end of the pilot regarding starting a chapter in your city?”

The application cost was set at twenty-five dollars, non-refundable. Adding a cost to apply was intended to sort out the curious from more committed people. The cost of participation in the pilot, including the initial and the closing Gathering Retreats and associated administrative expenses was two payments of six hundred dollars. All people who were accepted made the first payment upon accepting the offer to be a part of the pilot. People who would not meet for over a year also paid the fee. This fact indicates that the commitment and hunger for what was proposed in the formation of the order was significant.

Prayer and team discernment was utilized in the selection of each pilot participant. The team reviewed the application documents and the interview notes. The criteria for accepting a person included the person’s readiness for a group, ability to communicate a passion regarding the order and flexibility regarding involvement in a startup pilot.

Each applicant was interviewed to discern his or her gifting, organizational skills, pastoral gifts and available time to give to the work. The listening process with each person included discernment regarding God’s leading to determine whether the pilot would be helpful for her or him. Looking for the right hearts was more important than looking for credentials. Some applicants went through a second interview with another team member when there were questions regarding a suitable fit.

Sixty-one people were accepted into pilots from the initial group of applicants. Seventeen people were accepted into the Colorado pilot. Twenty-two people were
accepted into each of the leadership pilots—one planned for Cincinnati, Ohio, in November 2018 and 2019 and in Malibu, California, in June 2019 and 2020. Letters were sent to inform people of their acceptance or non-acceptance into the pilots. Participants submitted financial deposits for the first half of the pilot year. The leadership team took the goals and finalized core documents for the order and developed the strategy for the implementation of the stated goals.

**Colorado Local Pilot Development**

The strategies to meet the cognitive, affective and behavioral goals stated earlier in this chapter include the creation of an initial pilot retreat organized around three elements. The first element is life with God. Each person participating is on an interactive journey with God with self-identified longing to live more fully the life offered in the Kingdom with God. The second element is community via interaction in intentional Listening Groups focused on listening to God. The third element is a unifying personal rule of life built around the shared Renovaré Covenant. The Gathering Retreat facilitates all three elements.

**The Gathering Retreat**

The Gathering Retreat is an annual touch-point for local members of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. By design, the retreat is to be set in the same location and same time of year for all of the chapter’s Listening Groups to gather. These four days are set apart for companionship and community around the core purposes and values of the order. The retreat is time set aside from daily life, responsibilities and battles with the intent to strengthen, rest and nourish the soul with quality time with God. The design
allows for meaningful encounters with companions within the order and a refocus of each person’s participation in the chapter. The Gathering Retreat begins late afternoon on a Thursday and ends after lunch on that Sunday.

The design for the local pilot includes a beginning and ending Gathering Retreat. At the beginning Gathering Retreat, individuals come together and experience all three elements of the pilot program for the first time. At the ending Gathering Retreat, each person will evaluate her or his desire for future involvement and may be invited to take a leadership role. Together with the leadership team, the participants will discern whether the group should continue as a chapter after the pilot’s concluding Gathering Retreat.

Future local chapters will have opportunity at annual Gathering Retreats to celebrate on several levels: welcoming new people into the chapter, affirming current members who are renewing their commitments to the chapter, and celebrating and saying goodbye to those who might elect to not renew a future commitment to the chapter. The leadership team envisions people making two-year minimum commitments while anticipating that some people might desire to make a lifetime commitment to the community, as is common in many Christian orders.

A Relationally- and Liturgically-orientated Schedule

The design for the Gathering Retreat time is built around a relationally- and liturgically-orientated retreat schedule. The design engages participants in spiritual practices that encourage participation in and access to the with-God life. The introduction of participants to circles of trust and a modified spiritual direction group format is meant to foster relationship building. The design of the retreat additionally encourages each
participant to create a unique rule of life around the shared Renovaré Covenant. Each of these elements is discussed in this section.

A liturgically-orientated schedule for the retreat allows the use of liturgy to keep the reason for the gathering before the participants. A relational orientation means the schedule of the retreat is designed to focus on relationships with God and with others rather than a speaker who imparts content to passive recipients. The core documents are the basis of the design for the liturgy used at the beginning of the Gathering Retreat and in the Listening Groups.\footnote{See participant handbook in Appendix D.}

The initial Gathering Retreat is built around a four-day, three-night schedule with an intentional and unhurried pace.\footnote{Dallas Willard, in conversation with the author said, “Cultivate unhurriedness. You can’t love in a hurry,” Sierra Madre, CA, January 2008.} Generous time is fashioned in each element of the schedule to allow for relationship-building at meal times and for being with God within Listening Groups with others and individually. Generous time is left in the schedule for play,\footnote{“It is a serious thing to remove the element of relaxation and play from any life. We cannot be normal physically, mentally or spiritually if we neglect this vital factor in human life. God has provided that our joy shall be full.” Willard, \textit{Spirit of the Disciplines}, 79.} to enjoy nature, and to rest.

During the Gathering Retreat, four blocks of time—Thursday evening, and Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings—are dedicated to exploring three foundational elements of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.\footnote{Individual reflections from the weekend can be found in Appendix E.} The first evening, on Thursday, invites participants to explore the first of the three retreat elements: the with-God life of intimacy. Each individual is on an interactive journey with God, with self-identified...
longings to live more fully life in the Kingdom with God. The opening evening gathers people together with a welcome session followed by dinner. The evening continues with an exercise Renovaré Institute uses called “Laying the Altar.”

The Laying of the Altar exercise uses an object selected and brought by the participant that is symbolic of the person’s current life with God. The exercise brings to everyone’s attention God’s ever-present love and engagement in their lives by allowing participants to share the ways they have encountered or noticed God—or not—in their lives. Each person’s story is precious and worth attention. The objects remain on the table throughout the retreat as a gentle reminder of God’s work in each person’s story. At the end of the gathering, each person collects the objects she or he brought in the closing session described later in this section. Intimacy with God is the topic of a short introductory presentation that also presents the nature and flow of the retreat.

Companionship and community with others can only be healthy as extensions of companionship and community with the Trinity. All good things, even people are to be used for the sake of enjoying God. If love of people or other good things is for one’s own sake it deadens a sense of intimacy and connection with God and defies the holy.

The second and third blocks of time are given to the element of intentional community and spiritual companionship in a Listening Group. It is the focus topic of both Friday and Saturday morning sessions. This element, like the first one, is also woven throughout the retreat design and in scheduled events and Listening Groups. The method

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19 See Laying of the Altar instructions in Appendix F.


21 Ibid.
for the Listening Group is described in the next section. Saturday also addresses the intertwining ideas of a Rule of Life, intention and spiritual formation.

The third foundational element, the rule of life, is also addressed in two personal praxis times on Friday and Saturday and processed in two Listening Groups. This element connects participants together around the Renovaré Covenant as the basis of each person’s individual rule of life. The presentation on Saturday morning and the personal exercises are designed to help individuals discover tangible ways to adopt the rule of life throughout the year by developing a word of intention for the year with one-to-three practical ways the person senses God is calling them to live it out.

The final morning block on Sunday includes a process for each person, if desired, to name an intention she or he plans to take away from the retreat time or to share a short lectio regarding where she or he experienced God during the Gathering Retreat. In this sharing time, the person removes his or her altar object. The celebratory ending of the final morning together includes worship with music, a reflection with a charge for the coming year and communion.

Retreat Spiritual Practices

For a disciple of Jesus, engagement in spiritual practices is an important aspect of the with-God life, the “all-out engagement with and in Jesus’ kingdom among us.”\(^{22}\) At the retreat, participants engage in spiritual practices to access and encourage participation in the with-God life. The spiritual practice design for the Gathering Retreat includes

\(^{22}\) Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 310.
times of worship with music, corporate prayer, silent prayer, healing prayer, journaling, a form of lectio divina, a form of Examen prayer, silence, solitude and celebration.

Listening Groups

Listening Groups are designed as a vehicle for participants to build relational intimacy with God and with each other. Listening Groups use elements of a worship book from Iona,\(^{23}\) Parker Palmer’s circles of trust,\(^{24}\) elements from group spiritual direction, and elements from JourneyMates.\(^{25}\) The process employs the values of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Speaking with others about one’s experience in Christ “sharpens our attentiveness to the voice and will of the Father,” helping us to clarify the intentions of our hearts and surrender ourselves to the fulfillment of God’s will.\(^{26}\)

The Listening Groups are a place to engage with God and others in deep, loving listening with authenticity, with honesty, with non-judgmental rapport, with respect and with acceptance. When Listening Groups put these values into practice, they create a place where individuals feel safe and free to share their hearts and minds. This is intended to take place in an atmosphere of trust where the Holy Spirit is free to speak and may help articulate what a person may not yet have words to express.

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\(^{23}\) Some elements of the pattern (silence, listening for a phrase or word, sharing) were influenced by the Iona Abbey Worship Book, from a page given to the author some time ago, unable to trace the original source.

\(^{24}\) See Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*.

\(^{25}\) JourneyMates, founded in 2006 in Raleigh, NC, is a Christian ministry of soul care and spiritual formation “designed to open time and space for Christians to simply be with God and to notice and respond to God’s presence and invitation within and around them.” See https://www.journeymates.org/.

Participants receive an orientation to the Listening Group goals and methods on the first morning of the Gathering Retreat. After reviewing the process, the leadership team uses themselves as a teaching strategy called fishbowl to demonstrate the method. The following day, participants from different groups gather to practice in another fishbowl session before all participants. Both sessions are followed by debriefing, questions and answers, and further clarifications with the large group.

The Listening Groups meet two times while still in the retreat setting to build understanding of the process before they launch into their monthly meetings. Listening Groups are organized by geography to allow people to meet in person once a month between Gathering Retreats. In the final Listening Group at the Gathering Retreat, participants plan out the location, dates and time and assign the facilitator role for each month of the year. The groups are either single-gender groups or, if the group is mixed-gender, contain at least two people of each gender.

The Listening Group Process

The Listening Group process follows an order of meeting. The spiritual practice of silence is generously employed in this process. Silence anticipates God’s willingness and ability to speak and allows one’s faculties to settle and focus. This practice can make space to hear God, other people and one’s own soul. Rowan Williams, the former

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27 See participant booklet in Appendix D for instructions to LG for participants and facilitators.

28 A fishbowl, as a teaching strategy, in this case, is used to demonstrate a new idea and allows for a rich discussion of technique, allows for questions, further clarifying instruction and can help build community by focusing attention on the ways the group might work together.

29 Renovaré has successfully used the vehicle of an order of meeting in their spiritual formation small groups that date prior to 1999.
Archbishop of Canterbury, asserts, “Words help strengthen the illusions with which we surround, protect and comfort ourselves: without silence we will not get any closer to knowing who we are before God.”\textsuperscript{30} The silence desired here is affirming and attentive, with focus on listening carefully to the other, one’s own self and the Spirit of God in one’s midst; it comes out of peace and fullness.\textsuperscript{31}

Silence can have an important function to help one allow reality to be noticed and help one to simply be who one really is before God. A learning process is involved. Not natural initially, silence can be learned over time to the point that it becomes quite natural. Nouwen notes, “The careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community forms the basis of the Christian life and should therefore be the subject of our most personal attention.”\textsuperscript{32}

Many Christians feel words are needed to affirm or comfort, perhaps even fix or heal, and words can be helpful at times. But in the Listening Groups, confidence that God is present and willing and able to speak invites God to be God in the silence and in each life and frees participants in the group to be companions, not fixers, in their journey with each other. Willard proclaims that silence, along with solitude, is a cure for loneliness, “for there you discover in how many ways you are never alone.” It is also a cure for too-
much-to-do, “for there you find you are safely more than what you do.”\textsuperscript{33} In the Listening Groups, silence can be powerful on many levels.

Finally, an additional function of silence in Listening Groups is the role it has in discernment. At the heart of discernment is listening deeply to the Holy Spirit, which requires self-awareness and attention to increase, and distractions, self-deception and attachments to decrease.\textsuperscript{34} Silence is necessary for these with the goal always being love—for God and neighbor—loving well. Silence can help produce people who are safe to be around.

The designated facilitator starts the time by inviting the group to a period of silence. This is followed by an invitation to “Silently express your willingness to hear from God,” and then in unison praying Psalm 27:4.\textsuperscript{35} The order contains opening words and a call and response of the core documents “Who We Are,” “The Renovaré Covenant,” “Core Ideas and Beliefs,” and “Core Values.” An Examen question, silence and prayer follow each element. This pattern of opening is used for each monthly Listening Group meeting. Following the opening, the facilitator transitions to the monthly focus and then invites members to times of sharing, listening, silence and reflection.

A Scripture and focus question of awareness and noticing are provided in the meeting booklet for each month during the year between Gathering Retreats. The Listening Groups use the rhythm of focus provided in the booklet, with Scripture and a question based on one of the six streams of historic Christian spirituality followed by

\textsuperscript{33} Willard, \textit{Divine Conspiracy}, 359.

\textsuperscript{34} Chris Hall, comments at Renovaré ministry team and board retreat June 18, 2018.

\textsuperscript{35} “One thing I have asked of the Lord and this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, and to seek him in his temple” (Ps 27:4).
silent reflection. The booklet contains resources for further study to understand and participate in the six streams. In twelve months, the Listening Groups touch on each stream twice. During the retreat, however, the Listening Groups are offered a focus Scripture and reflection question (based on the afternoon personal praxis) to use in their group sharing around the rule of life discussed in the next section.

The sharing process is carefully constructed to help participants focus on listening to God and to one another. The facilitator opens the sharing time with an invitation for a person to share without interruption. This period of sharing may last for ten minutes or more, depending on the number of participants in the group. When the speaker finishes, the facilitator invites silence for the group members to hold the speaker and her words in prayer before God. The facilitator breaks the silence by asking the member who shared if a word or phrase captures or summarizes what the person shared with the group.

The facilitator invites group members to respond if they feel prompted by the Spirit to do so and to briefly share what they noticed when the person was sharing. The group is reminded to avoid comments that might seem aimed to fix the person or circumstances shared—that is, to avoid offering opinions or advice.

A prayer, silent or spoken—chosen by the person who shared—closes each person’s sharing time. The process is repeated until everyone has had a chance to share. The closing for the Listening Group offers participants the opportunity to silently reflect on who they are becoming, a word of intention, and their rule of life. Praying the Lord’s Prayer in unison officially closes the Listening Group.

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36 For more information on the six streams see Foster, *Streams of Living Water*. 

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The process of the order of meeting is designed to help the Listening Group be a meaningful contemplative spiritual community and guard against becoming simply a social or task small group. The participants’ understanding of the contrasts between a spiritual community and a social or task small group helps them fulfill the intention of the contemplative spiritual community. The Listening Groups practice being present to each other and God during sharing and reflection time, with a focus on experiencing Scripture rather than studying it. In contrast, a task community shares the details of individual lives, resources and information and focuses on the content of Scripture. A Listening Group emphasizes God’s presence in the moment, commits to contemplative practices and waits together as a community to discover questions through listening and responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit. A task group seeks solutions to issues, searches for answers and initiates movement. Listening Groups are accountable to God, not a program, and receive from God before giving out. A task group gives out, and then takes in. Lastly, the Listening Group in its orientation embraces mystery while the task group tends to look for well-defined answers. These intentional focuses of Listening Groups help maintain their integrity to function uniquely as a contemplative spiritual community and gives value for one’s participation.

A Personal Rule of Life Around the Shared Renovaré Covenant

The third pillar of the strategy for Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a personal rule of life built around the shared Renovaré Covenant. It is presented and discussed in

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37 The following contrasted qualities were seen on a handout obtained August 14, 2018, from JourneyMates: A Spiritual Community that was adapted from “Community” by Marilyn Harding, JourneyMates 2006-2007.
the morning group section on Saturday at the Gathering Retreat. The root of a rule of life is relationships, and the context for living out the rule of life is community. In the ancient monastic traditions, prayer and community life were integral parts of a rule. Rules set up intentional boundaries on space and time, intending to foster qualities that the demands of life would otherwise crowd out. Today, a rule of life helps to clarify deep desire, values, important relationships, hopes, dreams and one’s highest priorities.

A rule of life frees one from living randomly by encouraging one to intentionally express the deepest values in one’s daily living. As the old saying goes, if the big rocks (one’s intended priorities) go into the container (of life) first, they fit. Otherwise the demands of life crowd in, the big rocks do not fit, and intentions do not become realized. A rule of life can help one live with intention and purpose in the present moment with God. Forming an individual rule of life around a common covenant helps increase connection points for companionship and community with the people sharing the journey of life with God in the order of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

As noted earlier, personal praxis time is scheduled after lunch during the two afternoons at the retreat. Participants have a reflection exercise with Scripture and reflection questions to use in preparation for the midafternoon Listening Group sessions. The Renovaré Covenant is the basis for the personal praxis on both days to help guide the participants’ creation of a personal rule of life around the shared covenant.

The first day’s personal reflection time with the Renovaré Covenant reviews utter dependence on Jesus Christ in four relational roles and the ways the covenant lists to

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38 Macchia, An Invitation to the Well-Order Way, 23, 150.

39 Nathan Foster wrote the personal praxis handouts for the pilot retreat.
pursue renewal. Second Corinthians 4:16–17 and Ephesians 2:19–21 are used for reflection. The exercise invites participants to reflect on the covenant and the personal experiences that have been life giving in their journeying with God. Lastly, the exercise suggests reflection on pieces of the covenant in which the person desires to grow. The result of this exercise is the focus of the Listening Group sharing later in the afternoon.

The second time for personal reflection with God is offered as a time to reflect on one’s own intentionality with God regarding a personal rule of life. Each participant has the Renovaré Covenant and suggestions for reflection on Scripture and honest conversation with God. The instructions relate Willard’s statement regarding the two primary objectives for a rule of life that acts as a curriculum of Christlikeness.\footnote{Willard, \textit{Divine Conspiracy}, 311.} First, an apprentice of Jesus will dearly love and constantly delight in the “heavenly Father” who is made real to the earth in Jesus.\footnote{Ibid., 321.} Second, an apprentice of Jesus will remove the automatic responses against the Kingdom of God.\footnote{Ibid.} With these objectives in mind, the participants are asked to begin to consider what spiritual practices draw them into greater freedom and generosity, deeper love and faithfulness, unexpected joy and patience, guidance through peace, and self-control.

Romans 12:1–2 in \textit{The Message} offer a scriptural springboard with three reflection questions: First, “As you continue to work with the covenant, is there a single word or phrase that emerges as a helpful statement of intention for the coming year?” Second, “Are there 1–3 tangible and specific ways that would help you live out the
covenant this year that you would like to commit to?” Lastly, “Are you aware of any potential resistance points that might hinder your plan?” The exercise invites participants to explore any invitations they sense from God regarding their personal rules of life. The result of this exercise is the focus of the Listening Group sharing later in the afternoon.

Hospitality, Sharing Gifts and Laughter

Additional aspects important to the Gathering Retreat design include attention to hospitality, creation of a space of time for participants to share spiritual gifting and creation of a time for intentional laughter, joy and fun. Each aspect reflects important values of the order discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 4. And each contributes important good to the whole of the order.

Hospitality is a theme throughout Scripture and Church history. Most importantly, it is found in the nature of the Trinity and its community of prayerful love. “Hospitality is at the heart of Christian life, drawing from God’s grace and reflecting God’s graciousness.” Hospitality is vital to creating a safe environment where vulnerability can be free to flourish. And it is effective in building and sustaining relationships central to the purpose of the order being formed.

Hospitality is expressed in many forms throughout the retreat as well in the structure, form, goals and values of the order. Hospitality proceeds from the heart. It is

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44 Ibid., 160.

45 Ibid., 165.
vital that leadership give attention to entering the Gathering Retreat focused, well prepared with prayer and with an unhurried heart.

A few of the aspects of hospitality to exercise toward participants include clear communication of details and expectations, preparation of the meeting space, welcoming them upon arrival at the retreat center, connecting people with one another, intentional ordering of the meal and table times, and prayer over the rooms and meeting spaces of the retreat. Even little things like flowers, a gracious physical seating arrangement for group times or making snacks available, communicate to the participants that they are anticipated and that intentional preparation was made on their behalf.

Hospitality is also a value in how the gathering sessions are conducted and the design of the Listening Groups. Facilitators must invite people in, be aware of and sensitive to introverts and personality differences and offer freedom and space to just be. Hospitality can also tap into the deep human longing to belong and to find a place to contribute and be valued.\textsuperscript{46} It gives space for people to contribute who they are and what they bring in their own person to a group setting. This is one reason for the next aspect of the retreat: sharing one’s gifts.

Sharing in the appreciation and joy of one another’s gifting builds community and allows people to encourage one another.\textsuperscript{47} Christine Pohl writes, “Often, the best gift we can give another person is our time and attention. Human beings need a place in which they and their contributions are values, and a hospitable community finds ways to value the gifts people bring. Few experience are more lonely or isolating than finding oneself

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
unwanted, unneeded, or unable to contribute.” To plan such an evening provides a platform to experience the community’s willingness to receive from each other with recognition of one’s own vulnerabilities and incompleteness required to be open to what others can contribute.48

Friday night of the Gathering Retreat pilot is designated for this purpose. To model this at the pilot Gathering Retreat, a leadership team member is invited to share his gifts of music and worship and healing prayer. An intentional space of time for this element of sharing is planned to be a part of every Gathering Retreat. Local chapter leaders in the future can personalize and plan this element’s implementation, varying from year-to-year how it might be executed.

The third evening of the retreat is set aside and planned for the intentional purpose of providing activities for the engagement of laughter and fun. Genuine shared laughter, Willard notes, “is one of the surest ways for human being to come together and break the stalemates of life. It is essential to genuine community.”49 Laughter is also good for health and a symbol of redemption. It is a symbol of redemption, Willard continues, because there is no greater incongruity, of which laughter is the automatic human response, than redemption.50 Laughter is a reminder that God breaks through in our joy; Willard observes that Jesus was “a master of humor and often used it to drive home the truths he imparted.”51 Laughter and play are important to soul health.52

48 Ibid., 170.
49 Ibid., 238.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 239.
Conclusion

The subject of the ministry need this project addresses is a subset of Renovaré constituents. The constituents targeted are those who self-identify as “orphans,” who long for community with others who understand and encourage the desire to live a with-God life in the Kingdom of God here and now. The ministry project presented here—the creation of an order—is designed to address this ministry need. The intent of the order, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, is to fan into flames participants’ love for God, each other and the world through local or regional gatherings of a sustained community of Christocentric fellowship around a shared rule of life and experiences with God, both annually at a Gathering Retreat and in small Listening Groups monthly throughout the year. With the ministry need in mind, core documents that reflect the theology of Renovaré were created and pilot goals and strategy were designed.

The goals were set into motion through forming a leadership team, then creating and conducting an interest survey within a small segment of the Renovaré constituency. Once the immense interest was confirmed, an application process was designed and implemented to secure participants for the pilot. A Gathering Retreat was designed to launch three essential elements of the order: intimacy with God, companionship and community, and a process for participants to create a personal rule of life around the shared Renovaré Covenant. The design of the Listening Groups launched during the Gathering Retreat is intended to create a safe place to foster these three elements between annual Gathering Retreats.

52 See footnote 16 on the importance of play.
The goal for the pilot for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart was to provide an organizational opportunity for people in the Renovaré constituency to experience the community of the with-God life of the Trinity with each other. A pilot local chapter in Colorado was created to test the design strategy of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart in late September 2018. Chapter 6 highlights the implementation process for that pilot and an assessment of the results’ alignment with its goals.
CHAPTER SIX

FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART
INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Augustine said one loving heart sets another on fire.¹ This describes a vision for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Elton Trueblood quotes Quaker Robert Fowler’s observation of the fire left by the early followers of Christ when Jesus gathered “sticks, kindled a fire, and left it burning.”² Trueblood goes on to note that simple people in the early church were amazingly powerful when they loved one another with Christ as the central fire.³ Each person “kindled by contact with the central fires of Christ . . . in turn set others on fire.”⁴ Each follower of Christ, with Christ dwelling within her, represents Christ present in her home, work, school, office or church community. Christ followers receive Christ’s companionship and truth, then share joy, peace, love and restoration of hope and faith in their world. This is the glory of a sanctified people in Christ.

² Trueblood, The Incendiary Fellowship, 109.
³ Ibid., 107.
⁴ Ibid., 111.
Trueblood wryly notes, “The only adequate evidence that anything is on fire is the pragmatic evidence that other fires are started by it. A fire that does not spread must eventually go out!”\(^5\) He boldly concludes the Christ follower’s experience of “a genuine fellowship in the Living Christ ought to be the standard of expectation, rather than the exception.”\(^6\)

Fellowship of the Burning Heart and its local chapters are intended to be places where the “experience of genuine fellowship in the Living Christ” are authentic, present and available. To determine if this lofty ideal of genuine fellowship in the Living Christ is possible in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, it is necessary to implement, analyze, and assess the concepts and structures designed. Chapter 6 examines the implementation of this doctoral project in a local pilot. It presents analysis of the project and an assessment of its effectiveness in meeting perceived ministry needs and project goals.

**Implementation**

Project implementation began with identification of the ministry need and creation of a conceptual design to address and meet this need. The decision to start an order was followed by the creation of core documents detailing answers to who, what, how and why questions as well as an extensive FAQ document with answers to other anticipated questions. A Leadership Team was selected and launched with the vision and guided to bring the ideas to reality.

\(^{5}\) Ibid.

\(^{6}\) Ibid., 121.
Members of the Leadership Team created and evaluated a survey of interest and offered an applicant form with references to people who indicated interest. The team implemented an interview process, which was followed by team discernment to evaluate applications and interviews. Because of the large positive response to the ideas, two leadership pilots were designed. The leadership pilots follow the same design as the local pilot but are in the process of implementation and will not be evaluated for this project.

The design of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart local chapter pilot, described in Chapter 5 was implemented September 19 to 23, 2018. The Gathering Retreat was held near Woodland Park, Colorado, at the Episcopal Church in Colorado’s Cathedral Ridge retreat center. Seventeen people participated in the Colorado local chapter pilot. These individuals went through the application, interview and selection process and committed to self-fund two retreats and participate in the pilot for one year.

The pilot year launched at this regional Gathering Retreat was designed to meet the perceived ministry needs and the project goals stated in Chapter 5. At the Gathering Retreat, the Leadership Team created three Listening Groups that will meet face-to-face monthly between the opening and closing Gathering Retreats. The Leadership Team instructed, modeled and guided the Listening Groups at the retreat to train them in the method for these meetings.

At the conclusion of the year, a closing Gathering Retreat will take place with similar elements to the launching retreat. The Leadership Team will invite participants into leadership roles for the closing retreat. These participants will help the Leadership Team and the participants in the discernment process regarding the continuation of the Colorado group as a chapter at the end of the pilot year.
The Leadership Team arrived at the retreat center the evening before the participants in order to prepare the space and leaders for the event, and, at the advice of the retreat center director, to acclimate to the almost nine-thousand-foot altitude. Due to a family emergency one Leadership Team member canceled her trip on the day of arrival. The team absorbed her roles and prayed for her and her family throughout the retreat.

The Leadership Team implemented the hospitality elements of prayer and preparation described in Chapter 5 before and during participant arrivals. Hospitality, which reflects many of the values of the order, was an important element in the Gathering Retreat implementation and crucial to its effectiveness. One element of hospitality was that each participant received the gift of a keepsake leather book with the core documents, describing the purpose, vision and values of the order and providing a place to document experiences and ideas.

In addition to the role of hospitality coordinator, Leadership Team members fulfilled roles of retreat leader, worship leader and observer and overseer of the pilot process implementation. The implementation, as described in the design detailed in Chapter 5, was smoothly carried out as planned and without a problem. The Gathering Retreat schedule and a copy of all participant information can be found in Appendix E.

**Assessment**

Participants completed pre- and post-retreat surveys, which gathered data using different question response types: a one-to-five Likert scale, yes/no questions and open-ended long-answer questions. The online software application Typeform was used to electronically create the surveys and distribute them to participants. When the surveys
were completed, I was notified by email and Typeform generated a downloadable results spreadsheet. Survey results, calculations and analysis will be shared in this chapter.

To evaluate the ministry need for this project, each survey included questions to verify the premise of the project. Additional questions were intended to measure the three project goals (cognitive, affective and behavioral). Demographic information was gathered and evaluated anonymously.

The next section examines participants’ demographics and desire for participation first. Second, it evaluates the ministry need. It also assesses the Gathering Retreat’s accomplishments with respect to its goals. Finally it shares participants’ unsolicited comments and my own observations to complete the assessment.

Participant Intentions and Demographics

Each participant in the pilot signed a consent letter to anonymously participate in the research. Participants completed the pre-retreat survey before the Gathering Retreat convened. The results convey their motives for participation in the pilot and their perception of their pre-retreat status with respect to the perceived ministry needs and project goals. The pre-retreat survey also gathered participant demographic data.⁷

All seventeen participants responded to the survey promptly to describe why they chose to participate and what they hoped to experience through participation in the pilot. The answers were overwhelmingly positive and validated the existence of the perceived ministry need within the Renovaré constituency: longing to experience the with-God life with spiritual companions in community. The following are a few of the participants’

⁷ See Appendix G for the pre-Gathering Retreat survey.
comments: “Though I am in community with others . . . I’ve spent long seasons of life aching for more a vibrant, satisfying level of community within the Church [sic];” “I’ve struggled to find consistent relationships with like-hearted folks since moving to Colorado Springs four years ago;” “My spouse and I are in the pursuit of the with-God life, but we feel pretty alone in this. Our small group and friends are not at the same place we are. . . . We feel alone;” “I desire to be part of a group as authentic as I experienced in the Renovaré Institute. That heart connection and transparency was a blessing to experience. As I practice the with-God life, I would like to be able to share with someone else on the same path.”

The pre-retreat survey asked participants if they are currently a part of a small group that meets regularly. The purpose of this question was to see if people who applied to be a part of the pilot were perhaps self-isolating and not taking opportunities already available to them. Nine of the seventeen responded “Yes.” There was no follow-up question to determine why the remaining eight people responded “No.” One could surmise by their participation in the pilot that the individuals who said they were currently in a small group were not experiencing the depth of companionship in the with-God life they desired.

While there is no typical profile for the types of people drawn to Renovaré, as noted in Chapter 1, this pilot survey compiled demographics about pilot participants. The known demographics of the Renovaré constituency detailed in Chapter 1, reflecting the Renovaré board, ministry team, staff and Institute students, demonstrate a broad variety of ages, church affiliations and geographic locations with an even distribution of gender.
and a low percentage of people of color. This section, evaluates the demographics gathered from the pilot in light of what is known about the Renovaré constituency.

**Race**

In the Colorado pilot, participants were predominately White, non-Hispanic White, or Euro-American. One person self-identified as Latino or Hispanic American, which does not bring someone under the category of “person of color” since it is an ethnicity. The 0 percent representation of people of color in the pilot is far below the already low numbers in the other parts of Renovaré. The Renovaré board and ministry team membership contain 30 percent people of color. The Renovaré Institute began at 3 percent and has grown to 20 percent people of color.

The racial “whiteness” of this pilot group raises several questions: Are people of color in the Renovaré constituency not interested in the order? Is the percentage of Renovaré people of color lower in Colorado than among the Renovaré constituency in other states? Because of the racial whiteness of those participating in the pilot, it is unknown if the same processes developed and implemented in the pilot will translate helpfully into a non-white culture.

**Socioeconomic Status and Education**

The surveys did not gather socioeconomic and educational information from pilot participants. The question remains whether this pilot model would be useful to Renovaré constituents who do not have the expendable income to commit to the annual fee or who lack a higher education degree. From casual conversations with participants, the author is
aware that each person in the pilot had at least some higher education, including a JD, an MD, two PhDs and a number of individuals who held master’s degrees.

**Age**

The majority of participants were middle-aged, with no one under age thirty. Fifty-nine percent of the participants were between the ages of 45 and 64, 29 percent were over 65, and 12 percent were between 31 and 45. The only comparison available within Renovaré is the age range of Renovaré Institute students. I know from personal experience working with this population from the beginning of the program that students range in age from their twenties to their eighties. No hard data exists to quantify Institute student ages since that data is not a part of the Institute application.

![Age Distribution Chart](image)

**Figure 6.1: Participant Age Distribution**

**Gender**

Women made up the majority of the pilot participants—three-quarters, or 76 percent. The gender imbalance is a significant variance from the gender frequency in the Renovaré board and the Ministry Team (50 percent women) and the Renovaré Institute students (58 percent women over nine years). The Cincinnati leadership pilot, not analyzed in this study, has a fifty-fifty balance of gender among twenty-two participants.
There is no explanation for the gender imbalance in the Colorado pilot. The Leadership Team will pay more attention to this in future planning, especially as more local chapters launch. Since the percentage of men in the leadership pilot is higher than in the local pilot, it is possible to surmise that men may be more interested in leadership roles than in participant roles.

**Personality**

A personality question was included in the survey to discover if the ideas of an order appealed across personality types or weighed more heavily with one personality type. In a subjective self-identification of personality using the Jungian terms of introvert and extrovert, the majority of participants (53 percent) pre-retreat self-identified on the introvert two-fifths of the scale, with only one person at the far end of the scale toward the introvert side. Results showed 34 percent self-identified as extroverts, with only one person at the far end. This data indicates that introverts are more commonly represented in this pilot sample.

![Figure 6.2: Subjective Self-identification of Personality](image)

**Figure 6.2: Subjective Self-identification of Personality**
About a quarter (24 percent) located themselves in the middle of the spectrum. Taking the three middle numbers on the Likert scale, the mid-range represents 88 percent of the participants. On a humorous note, Jung, the inventor of these terms, said, “Anyone who was truly 100 percent extroverted or . . . introverted would be a lunatic.” No one in the pilot group fit Jung’s prediction.

Increasingly, social scientists’ views of these qualities suggest the existence of “ambiverts,” or people with a healthy balance of both introverted and extroverted traits. In a Wall Street Journal interview, psychologist Adam Grant estimated that ambiverts make up between half and two-thirds of the population. The results of the pilot surveys show 24 percent, if one only takes the scale’s midpoint to indicate an ambiverted personality, falling far below Grant’s prediction. The percentage rises to 88 percent when including the midpoint and one number on each side, in which case the pilot participant exceed Grant’s numbers.

If the idea of ambiverted personality is valid and the survey numbers interpreted as accurate, then the results do not show a predilection for one personality type over the other. Had the Likert scale been a ten-point spectrum, more information might have been gathered on this factor. A five-point scale did not give very useful information for future planning purposes. If the concept of an order is appealing to a broad spectrum of

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid. This source also indicates past studies estimate a range from 16 to 50 percent of the population are introverts and 50 to 76 percent are extroverts, however ambiverts are more likely the majority of the population.
personalities, the schedule developed for this pilot will be appropriate. If, over time, it becomes apparent that the order appeals more to introverts, the Gathering Retreat schedule may be modified to allow additional space for solitude.

**Local Church Attendance**

Pilot participants predominately rated their church attendance in the upper 60 percent of the Likert scale. This question was asked to discover if the order is more attractive to people who do not participate in a local church and to address the concerns that some pastors outside the Renovaré constituency raised to me.

![Self-reported Church Attendance](image)

**Figure 6.3: Self-reported Church Attendance**

Only one person indicated not attending church regularly, and two others marked the next number, indicating less than regular attendance. Together they make up 18 percent of the group. Four people were in church leadership. Four others indicated strong involvement, next to leadership. These two groups made up nearly half the pre-survey respondents (48 percent). About a third of the responders (35 percent) indicated they were mid-way between not regularly attending and church leadership. It is unclear if this
indicates regular attendance at church, but without serving in leadership roles, or if it indicates a person attending a local church half the time. These survey results are not definitive regarding frequency of attendance, but they do indicate that the order seems to have a broad appeal among the church-going population.

Ministry Involvement

The survey also revealed that about half the pilot participants (47 percent) were engaged in paid or unpaid full- or part-time ministry. This question was asked to determine if the order appealed more to people involved in ministry or to those uninvolved. Although ministry is a broad and ambiguous term, it appears that both, those who serve and those who do not serve in ministry are attracted to the idea of the order. Those who serve in ministry apparently still long for at least one of the main elements of the order: intimacy with the Trinity in the with-God life and with companions in community along the way. Potentially, the appeal of longevity in relationship with others around a central commitment in an order appeals to both populations. As with the other demographic questions (except the question about race), the survey results seemed to indicate the broad appeal of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Ministry Need Assessment

This section examines both the pre- and post-retreat surveys to evaluate the ministry need from the participants’ perspective. The post-retreat survey was completed within a week of the end of the Gathering Retreat. Additional open-ended, write-in questions were added to the post-retreat survey that were not part of the pre-retreat

11 See Appendix H for the post-Gathering Retreat survey.
survey. The perceived ministry need this project sought to meet was satisfy people in the Renovaré constituency who self-identify as longing for deeper intimacy with God in a community of people who are committed companions in the with-God life.

**Longings to Experience Intimacy with God in the With-God Life**

Participants were asked to rank their responses to this statement: “I have a sense of longing and desire to experience the with-God life with deeper intimacy with the triune God.” Response options ranged from currently satisfied (one) to very desirous (five).

![Figure 6.4: Self-reported Desire for Intimacy with the Triune God](image)

All the participants identified with this statement in both the pre- and post-surveys validating the need this pilot project was based upon. Curiously, one person fewer responded “very desirous” in the post-retreat survey. I have no explanation for this net change. However, the one person reporting in the middle on the pre-retreat survey moved toward “very desirous” after experiencing the Gathering Retreat.
Experience of Community with Other Christ Followers

The participants’ experiences and desires regarding community were surveyed by three questions. Responses to the first question demonstrate that about half of the participants experienced “life-giving, emotionally and spiritually safe community with other Christ followers” on a regular basis. The other half are scattered throughout the range, with nine-to-ten people not experiencing this safe community at present. The results affirm the ministry need for companionship and community with like-minded people this project sought to address.

![Chart showing self-reported experience of community with other Christ followers.](image)

**Figure 6.5: Self-reported Experience of Community with Other Christ Followers**

The second survey question to assess the ministry need for companionship was, “How often do you currently experience like-hearted companionship in the with-God life with other Christ followers?” The Likert scale ran from “rarely” (one) to “as much as I want” (five). This question revealed a significant post-retreat shift toward the “as much as I want” on the scale. Twelve people chose this response in the post-retreat survey, and
only six in the pre-retreat survey. The Gathering Retreat experience may have contributed to the positive shift for these participants.

**Figure 6.7: Self-reported Frequency of Companionship in the With-God Life**

In the post-retreat survey, only five people indicated a lack of like-hearted companionship (one-to-three on the Likert scale), whereas on the pre-retreat survey, eleven people were in this range. That is a significant reduction post-retreat. It appears the Gathering Retreat experience shifted this result, indicating the experience met a need for like-hearted companionship.

Participants were also asked to respond yes or no to, “I have a friendship with at least one other person where we regularly share deeply on a spiritual basis.” This third question was asked to determine if only people who experience loneliness and lack deep spiritual friendship were attracted to the idea of the order. The survey results do not support that hypothesis. In the pre-retreat survey, fourteen responded affirmatively and three responded negatively. The participants were asked to think of their experience at the retreat when answering the questions in the post-retreat survey. In the post-retreat survey,
the affirmative number shifted upward, with sixteen people responding affirmatively and only one responding negatively. It is unclear if the experience at the Gathering Retreat alone offered this type of relationship to the two people who changed their answers.

Gathering Retreat Project Goals Evaluation

The cognitive, affective and behavior goals for this pilot are subjective goals and difficult to quantitatively measure. Participants were asked to indicate their responses to goal-oriented questions using a Likert scale. Open-ended questions at the end of the post-retreat survey offer more clarity regarding the assessment of goal attainment.

Cognitive Goal

The cognitive goal for the pilot was that participants would emerge from the first pilot retreat with a cognitive understanding and biblical vision of the Trinitarian invitation into community with God and others. A question on both surveys measured this goal: “I have a confident, clear, Biblical vision for community with God and others.” The five-point Likert scale ranged from “not confident” (one) to “confident” (five).

Both pre- and post-retreat, almost half of the pilot participants felt they were confident in this vision. One person near the not-confident end in the pre-retreat survey became more confident after the retreat, and one person near the confident end of the range became less confident. Perhaps the experiences at the retreat gave some people more confidence in their vision and also led others to rethink what they thought they knew. In hindsight, one way to measure this more fully might have been personal ethnographic interviews with each participant regarding the goal questions.
Figure 6.8: Quantitative Measurement of Cognitive Goal

Affective Goal

The affective goal for the pilot project measures changes in how encouraged participants were in having their intentions and longings for companionship and community within the Body of Christ met. This question had curious results. Perhaps participants’ definitions of companionship and community prior to the retreat were changed by their experiences at the Gathering Retreat.

Eight people moved toward the “not encouraged” end of the Likert scale and no one moved toward the “very encouraged” end of the scale. This may indicate the Gathering Retreat failed in this goal, but this is unlikely considering the results of the open-ended long-answer questions at the end of the post-retreat survey. Another explanation is that the Gathering Retreat provided a vision for what is possible and gave participants a different understanding of community.
The open-ended question regarding this goal was, “Please describe your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat. In what way, if any, were your longings addressed for intimacy with God in companionship within a community of like-hearted people?” The write-in responses indicate the goal was met, with an obvious caveat that time is needed to determine if the fruit will flourish. One respondent summarized the general consensus:

The retreat was so special, so beautiful that I was just in awe. It was inspiring to be with other likeminded [sic] souls (“soul companions”) who desire more of God, more life, and who desire oneness with Him and with others. To me it felt like an eclectic group focused on loving God and living in and with his presence. I felt like the environment was provided for the community to really flourish in a short period of time; there was a lot of humility, love and acceptance. It felt like a lot of care and prayer was put into this; and yet looking back it’s almost like you all got out of the way for God to move. While I’m very aware of my longing for intimacy with God, more of him, more life, more healing, more of everything he has for me, I’m now so much more aware that there’s something special that occurs when you’re pursuing God with others, and not doing it all alone. That retreat really brought that to light for me.
**Behavioral Goal**

The behavioral goal for the ministry project was that participants in the Colorado local pilot would experience, participate in and facilitate the means for like-hearted companionship in the with-God life. The participants showing up and enthusiastically participating in the retreat, in one sense, fulfilled this goal. There is further evidence that this goal was fulfilled in the positive anonymous comments in the open-ended questions of the post-retreat survey.

The Likert scale survey question intended to evaluate this goal was: “I have a rule of life, which I find helpful in following and loving God; it serves me well.” The Likert scale ran from “no” (one) to “yes, but it could be better” (3) to an unqualified “yes” (5). This question was asked because a rule of life aids a person in experiencing the with-God life. In addition to attending and participating in the Gathering Retreat and Listening Groups, developing an individual rule of life around the shared Renovaré Covenant is meant to foster a behavior change for participants to experience, participate in and facilitate the means for like-hearted companionship in the with-God life.

For this question, the only changes between the pre- and post-retreat results reflected a downward shift. One person fewer answered with an unqualified yes, and one more person thought his or her personal rule of life could be better. Unfortunately, there is no way to measure whether particular participants answered a similar way pre- and post-retreat. For instance, it is unknown if the three people answering with a four on the Likert scale pre-retreat are the same three people who answered with a four in the post-retreat survey. There is no way to determine whether the one-person loss at point five is the same person represented in the gain at point three.
Figure 6.10: Quantitative Measurement of Behavioral Goal

Open-ended Feedback: Pilot Strengths

Open-ended question at the end of the post-retreat survey offered space for participants to give anonymous feedback regarding the retreat strengths and weaknesses. To aid the Leadership Team in future chapter planning, participants were asked to provide opinions regarding what to keep and what to alter or change regarding the content and the schedule of the Gathering Retreat. The open-ended questions included, “Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat do you suggest are kept and why?” “Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat do you suggest being altered; why, and how?” and “What, if anything, would you change about the Gathering Retreat schedule?” Lastly, participants were offered an opportunity to provide any additional anonymous feedback they desired to.
Participants were asked to identify strengths of the Gathering Retreat based on their experience. The responses overwhelmingly affirmed the intentions and goals of the project. Participants were asked to offer opinions regarding the retreat elements to be kept for future retreats. The results of the two questions were similar. The suggestions covered a wide variety of areas from structure to accommodations, worship, prayer, teaching, free time, the Listening Group process and the fun night.

Several people noted the importance of good accommodations. Having comfortable individual hotel-like rooms was important for several people. Others commended the quality of the food as a wonderful and non-distracting element important for future chapters. Another commented that the setting for this pilot was “very conducive for the experience.” Retreat settings can be helpful or distracting to the group’s goals. The right retreat setting should be a consideration in future chapters.

More than half of the participants mentioned three areas of the Gathering Retreat to keep for future chapters in their open-ended responses. They include the pace of the schedule, the Listening Groups and worship. Each of these areas were listed as strengths and commended for future chapters.

Over half of the participants recommended maintaining the unhurried pace of the schedule, saying it was important and conducive to the purposes of the Gathering Retreat. Participants considered the generous free time to process and reflect with God on all that was transpiring to be valuable. They thought the mix of large-group discussions and small-group times was balanced. Opportunities to ask questions, especially in the closing time, were also important. Participants saw the beginning altar exercise and closing
session as very conducive to the process. These comments affirmed the care given to the intention and design of the pilot.

Comments regarding the structure of the Gathering Retreat included opinions that it was helpful and “thoughtfully done.” Each session “felt important and the pacing good.” Keeping the structure, confidentiality and “the potential of true friendships in Christ” was important to one participant.

Participants considered the Listening Groups in future chapters to be very important. Half of the participants commended the value of the times of practice and the opportunities to process their experience with the Listening Group in the large group. People commented on catching the vision for the listening process. One person recommended retaining in future Gathering Retreats “the sense of a holy place; the openness of heart; the structure and suggestions for the Listening Groups; the focus on the Holy Spirit and not on personalities within the group.”

One participant applauded the methods used in the large-group gathering for teaching the Listening Group process. This person pointed out the importance of considering different learning styles and shared that he or she has to experience something first and that written instructions are not helpful until after the experience. Witnessing the demonstrations (the fishbowl) was very helpful, and having opportunity to ask questions and process the learning with the large group was helpful.

Another participant expressed the importance of the Listening Group process. This person added, “I would strongly suggest that people practice the discipline of listening where the Spirit is and speaking out of the silence [only] if God has spoken.”
Another expressed the value of the emphasis on maintaining the prescribed liturgy and order of meeting in the Listening Groups because it serves an important purpose.

The worship was the other most common element participants considered a strength and important to retain in future chapters’ Gathering Retreats. One person suggested that the worship session on Friday night was the perfect placement in the schedule. Other times of worship, including the opening altar exercise, the closing sharing exercise and Sunday morning worship with Eucharist and prayer for one another, were each seen as valuable to the process and purposes of the order. Each aspect was seen as bringing participants closer to one another and to the Triune God.

Several people commented on the importance of the game night. The time was “good as people need to let loose and relax and do something fun.” Placing it on the last night was seen as strategic. Participants expressed that keeping this element of the retreat would be helpful for group bonding.

Several people commented on the importance of creating vision. They expressed that this was well done in the pilot and that it would be important to future chapters. The teaching offered on the major aspects of the order was considered helpful and appropriate.

With regard to the schedule, all feedback was positive. Most said they would not change anything in the schedule. Several people offered encouragement regarding why they liked specific aspects of the schedule. One person commended the lack of a pre-retreat schedule, noting, “I think God does something when you show up not knowing it all and trusting in the process and what he will do.” Several people offered positive comments regarding the pace of the schedule, especially the periods of personal time.
throughout the day offering people the opportunity to process. One person said the schedule had a nice balance and rhythm, and another wrote it provided a “perfect mix of solitude and fellowship.”

One participant said, “The Leadership Team is very strong, and complemented each other well.” Another participant summarized many of the suggestions: “I loved the rhythm, the emphasis on silence, the evenings of fun and entertainment, the offer of personal prayer and blessing from the leadership. The communion service was powerful. The people were very special. I am not sure it would work without carefully choosing serious disciples to participate.” This comment recognizes that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart targets a population that is intentional about life with God.

Open-ended Feedback: Pilot Weaknesses

When asked what elements of the Gathering Retreat they saw as a weakness, most participants (82 percent) wrote that they found no weaknesses and would not suggest that anything be altered. One person added the affirmation that he or she sensed every part had an important purpose. Another wrote, “So much time and planning went into this, and it was apparent that much care [and] prayerful planning guided the retreat format, schedule, and experience.”

Three content suggestions were offered. One person suggested offering more alone time for personal reflection. This was the same person who was the self-identified full introvert.

Another wrote that the Listening Group size of four-to-five people seemed optimal, and the same person suggested more training and clarity regarding “when, how
and why to share needs in the Listening Group.” However, sharing needs in the Listening Group is not a part of the process. This will be clarified for the pilot groups in the monthly emails between the Gathering Retreats.

The third suggestion was to commit more time to exploring the idea of listening to God: “It is such a nuanced and individual experience, but [it] would help to have more conversation about how that happens for some folks.” This is a valid suggestion. Some elements that the Leadership Team intended to address in the sessions, such as this topic, may not have been addressed as clearly as planned due to time constraints created by answering questions and seeking to stay on schedule. The topics of silence, listening to God and how to respond to each other in the Listening Groups will receive more attention in subsequent Gathering Retreats and will also be addressed in monthly emails to this group from the Leadership Team.

The only change suggested for the schedule came from the person who self-identified as an extreme introvert. This person commented, “It was intense and hard in a way . . . but that is a weakness in me.” This person suggested the next year’s retreat schedule shorten the time of each session. The two morning sessions were two hours in length. Other sessions were thirty-to-ninety minutes. Given that only one person suggested shortening session lengths, more feedback is necessary before the Leadership Team considers changing the schedule. The Leadership Team was aware of the possibility of session fatigue and intentionally planned mid-session comfort breaks. This awareness will be maintained at future Gathering Retreats.
**Additional Feedback**

From the participants’ points of view, the Gathering Retreat was a success. In the anonymous survey, every participant expressed gratitude for the experience of the retreat. One person proclaimed, “The retreat was one of the most beautiful experiences I’ve ever had!” There were no negative comments. Another commented about the Leadership Team’s contribution to the work of the Holy Spirit: “Well done, team! Your preparation was evident, and your sensitivity to the [Holy] Spirit and the culture of the retreat was clear. One of the best retreats I have ever experienced. Thank you!”

One participant offered a comment about the personal value of the Listening Group: “I’ve come to see how important the practice of listening is to building community like this. It was certainly emphasized as paramount in the groups, and as I entered in, I can’t agree more! Thank you! This discipline will, I believe, change my whole life. It’s probably the greatest ‘thing’ I learned.”

Several people spoke about the value and future of the order. One commented, “Thank you!!! I am so privileged to be a part of what I suspect will be an important work of the Holy Spirit in community.” Another wrote, “It was so awesome, I just loved it! Again, I left just in awe. I loved being a part of this and [I am] excited for what lays ahead.” Enthusiasm and openness to the work of the Triune God was elevated and evident throughout the retreat and in the days after. Time will tell if this level of enthusiasm is sustainable or necessary.
Observations and Perceived Strategic Factors

This section shares unsolicited, non-anonymous comments to the author from the participants throughout the four days. These comments are regarding observations and evaluations of aspects of the participants’ experiences. I also offer personal observations in this section. These are helpful in discerning factors strategic to meeting the goals set for the Colorado pilot group and useful to consider in future chapter launches.

In unsolicited conversations during the Gathering Retreat, individuals commented on the generous sections of unhurried time in the schedule that allowed for more conversations or alone time as each person needed. This allowed for a relaxed and gentle atmosphere. Many people saw the liturgy of the core documents—why we are together, how are we together and what we seek to be and do together—as very helpful. Some commented that the repetition of the liturgy at the intentionally-placed moments was personally beneficial and inspiring.

Additional topics of unsolicited comments included the surprise and the value of the amount of laughter in the group and the sense of relational safety experienced in the group. Participants repeatedly expressed appreciation for the Listening Group format regarding the structure, intentionality and directive format of listening with the expectation that God shows up. Many people commented that the retreat space invited relaxation and beauty.

Comments regarding the retreat center proclaimed nothing was distracting. The accommodations, the food, the staff, were wonderful. Many people commented appreciation on the way the Leadership Team worked together and treated one another demonstrated the values of the order.
My own subjective observations made during the participants’ arrival and throughout the days spent together were very positive. Each person seemed eager to engage with others and in every aspect of the retreat. A group of three and another group of two knew each other prior to the Gathering Retreat through Renovaré book clubs, but the majority of the people came by faith to spend four days with strangers whom they apparently hoped shared the same desires and longings for intimacy with God and for companions in the with-God life.

The intentional spaces created for conversations and development of relationships were significant in meeting the behavioral goal of community. I base this conclusion on the engagement of participants in conversations at meal times and on participants’ lingering with one another after scheduled activities and extending invitations to share free time with one another. Play and laughter was a significant factor in this process of community development.

By Saturday evening, participants had spent forty-eight hours together forming relationships, learning listening processes together, taking steps of vulnerability in sharing and engaging in intentional practices in solitude with God and in community with one another. The positive surprise elements of the game night on Saturday brought out new aspects of each person’s personality. Joy and almost endless laughter permeated that evening. After sharing that experience, people seemed even more connected to one another the final morning. Many people commented on the Saturday evening time in the lectios they offered Sunday morning as they removed their items from the altar.

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12 Behavioral goal: Participants within Colorado will experience, participate in and facilitate the means for like-hearted companionship in the with-God life.
Based on participant comments and personal observations, several factors can be discerned as strategic to meeting the goals set for the Colorado pilot group. These include providing generous but balanced spaces of time in the schedule and the use of the core documents as a liturgy. Additionally, the structure and design of the Listening Groups, expectations that God is present and wants to communicate with his children, and Saturday evening’s intentional fun are strategic factors. Lastly, the importance of the Leadership Team living out the values of the order cannot be underestimated.

The Leadership Team’s post-project review celebrated the blessings experienced and developed a very short list of modifications. These chiefly regarded adding page numbers and clarifications in the Listening Group instructions in the participant booklets. These modifications turned out to be consistent with participant survey result suggestions. New booklets with these changes were sent to the Colorado local pilot participants and implemented for use in the leadership pilots in Cincinnati in November 2018 and in Malibu in June 2019.

**Conclusion**

The pilot Gathering Retreat for Fellowship of the Burning Heart, a community expression of Renovaré, was implemented smoothly and without concerns or problems. Open dialogue was maintained among and between the participants and the Leadership Team throughout the retreat to intentionally look for issues, and none were noted. Each participant appeared eager and willing to participate in all aspects of the retreat.

It is apparent from the spoken and the anonymously-written comments of the participants that their experiences at the pilot Gathering Retreat were significant and
valuable to them. Responses to survey questions also indicate that the ministry need was addressed. More time is needed to determine if the need will be adequately met and maintained into the future. Time will also demonstrate if viable longevity will be possible for the Listening Groups and ongoing Gathering Retreats.

Survey results indicate that the pilot goals were realized. As with many things, in the clarity of retrospect I realize the survey had areas of ambiguity, but it served its purpose of clarifying whether the goals were met. Regardless, analysis of the surveys, the written comments of the participants and the Leadership Team’s observations of the realized outcomes from the pilot experience demonstrate that the actual outcomes far exceeded the expected outcomes.

Ongoing assessment of this local chapter, the monthly Listening Groups and the closing retreat in 2019 will continue to inform the Leadership Team of the efficacy of the ideas, theology, values, elements and processes created for this order. Modifications will be inevitable. The leadership pilots will begin to meet with the potential for the eventual dissemination of more local chapters around the country. This paper’s conclusion will address some of the next steps and future implications for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This ministry project produced wonderful outcomes and helpful insights. The task undertaken was to design an order for the Renovaré community that would address a perceived longing for intimacy with God and companions in a community pursuing and living the with-God life. This project discovered the perceived need is valid—it does exist. The project also discovered that the participants in the pilot Gathering Retreat considered the framework of the order and the initial Gathering Retreat helpful and successful. Time is needed to determine if the formation of the order will be helpful and meaningful in the long term to the lives of the people who join.

The order’s charter includes the core documents described in Chapter 5. These include “Who We Are,” “What We Believe” and “Fellowship of the Burning Heart Values.” These foundational documents reflect both the ethos and theology of Renovaré and address the longings of its constituents.

A local chapter of the order was created and launched as a pilot in Colorado. The initial Gathering Retreat, whose design is detailed in Chapter 5 and whose implementation is described and evaluated in Chapter 6, was successful in meeting the perceived needs of the participants and achieving the three project goals.

Powerful elements of the Gathering Retreat included the intentional core elements of the order and an unhurried schedule. The Listening Group process was powerful in its ability to guide participants to listen carefully, to deepen their intimacy with God and to nurture companionship through listening to God together. The intentionality of the values and purpose of the order and the shared level of commitment to make these a reality gave
hope to the participants that what they longed for might, in time and with God’s grace and their effort, become a reality.

**Next Steps for the Fellowship of the Burning Heart**

Based on what the Leadership Team intuitively discerned following the pilot, and which the anonymous survey results confirmed, two minor modifications for the Gathering Retreat were immediately made. The two changes were the addition of page numbers to the booklet describing the Listening Group process and the clarification of the language in the same booklet. The version of the booklet in Appendix K reflects these two minor adjustments.

The Leadership Team is designing an ongoing monitoring plan for the monthly Listening Groups, including surveys and a planned rhythm of dates to send and gather information for this process. The team will request periodic evaluations from the participants throughout the pilot year and will make evaluations and design and implement modifications as needed.

Additional ongoing monthly communication with the Colorado local pilot is planned. The ongoing contact by the Leadership Team will provide pastoral care to the individuals and the group. Pastoral care is essential to maintaining the level of connection required for the pilot group to feel supported in this new endeavor. Additional research will help determine how to best implement this care and which members of the Leadership Team will be involved.

Following the pilot in Colorado, the Leadership Team began implementing the Gathering Retreats for the two leadership pilots. These yearlong commitments are similar
to the local pilot and additionally designed to train people who have expressed interest in starting chapters of the order in their localities. The leadership pilots currently underway with forty-four people are based in Cincinnati, Ohio, from November 2018 through November 2019 and in Malibu, California, from June 2019 through June 2020. As the leadership pilots enter the final quarter of their pilot years, participants will go through careful discernment regarding launching future local chapters. The Leadership Team will plan the discernment process and criteria and a shepherding process will guide and monitor the leaders who do go on to launch local pilots.

The Leadership Team will immediately begin work on a manual. The manual will include all of the roles and responsibilities required for a local leadership team. A “chapter in a box” idea is being developed with a “retreat in a box” component, as well as Listening Group instruction and additional oversight guidance “in a box.” The intent is to make launching new chapters of the order as hands-off as possible for the Leadership Team while providing as much guidance and shepherding as leaders need for their chapters to be successful.

The Leadership Team is also working on a scalable shepherding plan for the order as it potentially grows and other resources for the leaders of future local chapters. This will be based on the plan designed and used for the Colorado pilot. That plan will be modified and evaluated for transferability for multiple chapters. Selecting gifted people to carry out this oversight role will be important to the meeting of needs and the potential longevity of the order.

It will be necessary to discuss financial considerations with the president of Renovaré. As the Fellowship of the Burning Heart grows, and indications point to this
being a very real possibility, additional staff will be needed. The order will need people who are skilled in administration, shepherding and other roles. A source of funding for these roles needs to be determined. One consideration needing attention is the possibility of local chapters contributing an annual per member stipend to Renovaré. This would help offset the costs of launching local groups under the umbrella of Renovaré.

Additionally, Renovaré needs to investigate the financial and legal liability of an order. Plans are underway for developing a “disengagement” process with mutual discernment for chapters that in time may change no long fit well under the umbrella of the order.

Discernment is necessary to determine if and how this model of an order can be offered to a broad spectrum of the population within Renovaré. The accessibility of the order to all socio-economic levels is a value that needs particular attention. There is a cost involved for this model, and retreats particularly cost money, but not everyone has the necessary disposable income. Fellowship of the Burning Heart will consider how the order can be made more accessible to the people who desire it and meet the criteria yet do not have the funds to finance it. Accessibility to all levels of education and all races is also a concern for Fellowship of the Burning Heart.

Another issue that needs research is the transferability of Fellowship of the Burning Heart into multiple cultures. At least thirty people within the Renovaré constituency who live in countries other than the US have asked if they can have access to the order. These countries include Australia, Canada, Afghanistan, Belgium, South Africa, Finland, New Zealand, Germany, Egypt, and the United Kingdom, from which there have been more than a dozen inquiries. The Leadership Team will address the
question of Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s transferability to Renovaré constituents from outside the US after the three pilots have been completed and evaluated.

The Leadership Team is crafting a five- and a ten-year plan. These plans will be presented to the president, and possibly the board of directors, of Renovaré. Some of the ideas being developed include the creation of ongoing, possibly annual or biennial, twelve-month leadership training for future local chapter leaders. Implementation will use the application, interview and selection process designed for and used in this pilot.

The Leadership Team is considering future regional or national Gathering Events for all leaders and members of Fellowship of the Burning Heart on an annual or biennial basis. The team is also prayerfully considering entry points into the order in addition to the current design of a minimum two-year commitment beginning at a Gathering Retreat.

Implications for the Christian Community

The Renovaré constituency impacts a broad range of Christian denominations, as discussed in the opening chapter of this paper. Participants who long for and engage in intimacy with God among like-hearted companions in the Fellowship of the Burning Heart community will affect each of their local churches. The relationships of the order’s participants will be affected for good. People’s participation in this order will enable them to positively contribute to the spiritual health of their local churches.

As people’s longings for deeper connections with God and with others, for encouragement, and for renewed vision are satisfied, their ability to appreciate whatever gifts the local church has to offer increase.\(^1\) The resulting gratitude heightens their ability

\(^1\) Pohl, *Living into Community*, 21.
to discover the beauty and goodness that exists in the relationships in their local communities.²

**Conclusion**

The disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced burning hearts within them in the presence of Jesus (Lk 24:32). Jesus is present in his Church today—in each of his followers. Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers a context for individual burning hearts to come together within a covenant community apart from their ordinary contexts to fan their burning hearts into flames. Each person can carry that love back to the context of her home, relationships, local church congregations and communities. This is the with-God life each person is created for and invited to live out and enjoy in the intimacy of relationship, with the power of God’s grace at work in and through him as a member of Christ’s Body. Fellowship of the Burning Heart serves the local church, fanning the flame of the love of God and igniting love for the world.

The theology of Fellowship of the Burning Heart aligns with Renovaré and is informed by the theology of historic spiritualties. Together, these offer a strong and rich foundation and vision for the design of this ministry practice. Fellowship of the Burning Heart provides the organizational opportunity for people in the Renovaré constituency to experience the community of the with-God life of the Trinity with each other.

In Fellowship of the Burning Heart Gathering Retreats, the core documents that reflect the Fellowship of the Burning Heart theology are read as a liturgy—a reminder of who God is and who we are. The content design of annual Gathering Retreats, monthly

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² Ibid.
Listening Groups, resources and the eventual shepherding of chapter leaders each reflect Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s theological foundations. Each member living out an individual rule of life around the shared Renovaré Covenant in cooperation with God’s grace grows in spiritual vitality and breathes life into Listening Groups and annual Gathering Retreats.

As Willard observes, “The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God himself at the center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:10).” Longings for God, spiritual companionship and community are deep and intrinsic to the human heart. Fellowship of the Burning Heart offers a place of connection for Renovaré constituents who express this longing. My hope and prayer is that the Fellowship of the Burning Heart will be for each person’s everlasting good and for God’s everlasting glory.

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4 Dallas Willard used this phrase in conversation with the author, with variations, on multiple occasions, 2004-2013.
Who We Are

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a dispersed community of Jesus’ friends who long for deeper intimacy with the Triune God.

We are committed to Jesus, to one another, to our shared values and beliefs, and to the Renovaré covenant as a general rule of life. We share brief monthly connections, and an annual local gathering retreat.

We strive to be a listening community of diverse denominational expressions marked by love, availability and vulnerability to God and one another in friendship, mutual support, and encouragement in the with-God life.

Our primary purpose is to grow as disciples of Jesus—for our transformation, for the good of others, and for God’s everlasting glory.

The Renovaré Covenant

Individually and corporately we commit to gathering together and to the Renovaré Covenant as a rule of life. This helps us to dearly love and delight in the Trinity and to cooperate in the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God.

In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service.
Core Values

1. **We value a high** Christology regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

2. **We value worship and prayer** as central in our community.

3. **We value Scripture**, as a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness. We engage in the historical great conversation about the growth of the soul in classical Christian writings.

4. **We value community** as important in our transformation into Christlikeness. We offer availability and vulnerability as we honor the sacredness, mystery, and individual pace of each person’s unique experience with God.

5. **We value stability** as spiritually significant in a culture of isolating discontentment. We commit to one another, to brief monthly connections, and to an annual gathering retreat.

6. **We value listening.** As a community we seek to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and one another. This creates a welcoming and confidential culture where it is safe to know and be known.

7. **We value honesty and openness**, seeking to love with wise boundaries and discernment without judgment.

8. **We value people as God’s image bearers.** In our interactions we seek to forgo temptations of impression-management and leveraging relationships or fixing one another.

9. **We value humility** and the freedom it brings. We cherish gratitude, joy, laughter, creativity, and lightheartedness in our community life together.
10. **We value loving respect.** We are for one another.
   - We give encouragement as often as possible.
   - We share advice once in a great while.
   - We bring correction only when absolutely necessary.
   - We condemn never.

11. **We value each person’s unique gifting.** Our gatherings as relationally focused and member led, with each person serving as appropriate and helpful. Our time together is a blend of teaching, practice, and community.

12. **We value various local expressions of spiritual formation efforts - relationships, families, small group, and local churches.** Spiritual formation always has a local address.
Core Beliefs

We are Christian in commitment and ecumenical in breadth. We stand within historic Christian orthodoxy and affirm The Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds.

Life with God
The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with the Triune God himself at the center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant. We seek to be one expression of this “all inclusive community of loving persons.”

The Availability of God’s Kingdom
We can experience genuine, substantive life in God’s Kingdom through Jesus Christ, beginning now and continuing through all eternity.

The Necessity of Grace
We are utterly dependent upon Jesus Christ, our ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend for genuine spiritual transformation.

The Means of Grace
We recognize the crucial importance of intentional spiritual disciplines among the variety of ways God has given for us to be open to his transforming grace.

A Balanced Vision of Life in Christ
We seek to embrace the abundant life of Jesus in all its fullness: contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical, and incarnational.

A Practical Strategy for Spiritual Formation
We encourage spiritual friendships, small groups, and healthy community as important elements of mutual support and nurture in our transformation.

The Centrality of Scripture
We immerse ourselves in the Bible: it is the great revelation of God’s purposes in history, a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness, and a rich resource for our spiritual formation.
The Value of the Christian Tradition
We engage in the historical “Great Conversation” on spiritual formation developed from Scripture by the Church’s classical spiritual writings.
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Fellowship of the Burning Heart, its beliefs, and its values?
Please reference Who We Are, Core Beliefs, and Core Values.

What is Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s connection with the local church?
Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to meet an unmet need in Renovaré. We do not intend to be a substitute for the local church. People often express the depth of companionship and community they experience in Renovaré is not readily accessible in their current church context. The sense of support and encouragement which spiritual companions or a community offers may be absent for a number of reasons. In addressing the self-identified needs of the Renovaré constituency, Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to serve and renew the local church as the effects trickle down to the local church of each participant.

What is Fellowship of the Burning Heart’s relationship to Renovaré?
Fellowship of the Burning Heart is Renovaré. Fellowship of the Burning Heart provides the opportunity for people in Renovaré to experience the community of the with-God life of the Trinity and with each other in a long-term community expression.

Why is Renovaré creating the Fellowship of the Burning Heart?
As part of the Renovaré history, calling, and efforts to renew the church, Fellowship of the Burning Heart seeks to support people who long to experience the with-God life. A
growing number of people in Renovaré express a sense of longing and a desire for a
shared community of companions that encourages experience in the with-God life. They
seek other Christ followers who have a similar vision of life in the Kingdom of God. The
Fellowship of the Burning Heart will connect, guide, and encourage participants to
cooperate with, and experience the Kingdom of God, wherever they live out life within
their local context of relationships, local church and community. “God’s calls to caritas
[love] and communitas [community] exist interdependently.”¹ The potential impact when
this need for community is met can be powerfully transformational, reaching deep into
relationships and culture.

Is Fellowship of the Burning Heart an order?

Yes, in the sense that an order is a group of people who, with some level of commitment,
based on belief, devotion, and practice, join with one another to live these out in daily
life.

Who is Fellowship of the Burning Heart intended for?

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is for the people of Renovaré and their friends,
persons who have a longing for God, spiritual companions, and community in the
context of the with-God life.

Why are retreats central to Fellowship of the Burning Heart?

The word retreat—it’s a good word! Why a retreat? We need it—people need it. There is
time to decompress, space for reflection. It’s a place to bond with God and each other,
clarify one’s vision, and strengthening intentions. Retreats allow you to truly be present
to one another.

Coming together as a community once a year is valuable for relationships to develop, to
live through the ups and downs of life – it is a way to do the with-God life…together
with people. Same place, same people, same time of year. Building trust and connection
are more conducive to happening while disconnected from day-to-day life. One-day
gatherings lack this component.

¹ Susan Phillips, Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction (New York: Morehouse
What happens at the retreats?

The retreat begins with dinner on Thursday evening. In Fellowship of the Burning Heart Gathering Retreats, the founding core documents will be read. This practice will serve as a sort of liturgy, a reminder of who God is and who we are. Thursday evening will launch with the “laying of the altar” exercise (which will be explained), the liturgy of the core documents, signing of the Renovaré covenant, worship and fellowship.

Friday and Saturday include worship, prayer, communion, guided solitude, teaching/sharing on themes to be explored during the year, group spiritual practices, group companioning/spiritual direction, silence and solitude, and small group sessions. Enjoying nature, each other, play, and laughter are intentional retreat practices as well. On Sunday, the retreat ends with debriefing, a launch, and worship on Sunday morning; some locations (like the Leadership Pilot in Cincinnati) will include lunch on Sunday.

Why do we not use wine for communion or serve alcohol at the meals?

In the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for all, we are intent on being respectful of the history and brokenness of each person in our community (see value #4). Being alcohol free is one way we choose to live out this value.

What happens at the Fellowship of the Burning Heart small group online/in person?

The small group is a confidential, safe place, to know and be known, to pray for one another, to share life, encourage, and support one another. Small groups will form and meet at the retreat. These same groups will plan and commit to meet for 60-90 minutes monthly (depending on the size of the group), either in person (if practical), or online with video throughout the year. The format for the pilot small groups will be modeled and taught at the retreat; the Leadership Team will provide support and any needed resources.

What is my time commitment to be a part of Fellowship of the Burning Heart?

- Attend the annual retreat, held generally at the same time of year and in the same place. (The pilot is a one-year commitment including the beginning and ending retreat.)
- Participate in a monthly small group.
- Commit to live out a personal rule of life based on the Renovaré covenant.
- Seek to live the Core Beliefs and Values of Fellowship of the Burning Heart.
What is my role in the gathering?

Each individual brings a unique contribution of Christ’s indwelling presence that matters and makes a difference to the community’s good. You matter. You bring your heart and your gifting. Your role in community is reflected in the *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* values entailing an active and honest attention to your vulnerability and availability to the Holy Spirit in you.

- Bring yourself, and contribute to making the group a safe place, confident that we belong to Christ and so we belong to each other.
- Be present, attentive, and authentic, and seek to live in the values of the *Fellowship of the Burning Heart*.
- Nurture and pursue your relationship with God. Trust yourself and others in your community to God who is present and at work in us and around us.
- Honor the sacredness, mystery, individuality and pace of your own and each one’s unique experiences with God.
- Resist image management, fixing, resolving, or correcting of others.
- Celebrate uniqueness and differences in each other’s experience, prayer and understanding; these are gifts of God’s goodness.
- Avoid the temptation to compare, judge, or envy.
- Confidentially hold all that is shared within your fellowship.
- Commit to regular attendance and to the process of the fellowship, to pray for one another when together and when apart, and to timely resolutions of potential conflict.
- Trust the Holy Spirit to guide deepening intimacy with God through your fellowship.

Why a pilot?

A pilot provides participants an opportunity to offer feedback and speak into the development and quality of a new idea before the opportunity is launched to a broader audience.

What happens after a pilot?

Participants of each pilot will be released from their commitment to *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* at the close of the second retreat. At that time each person in the local Colorado pilot group will be given opportunity to recommit to an ongoing Colorado chapter of *Fellowship of the Burning Heart*. The leadership pilot participants will be invited into a mutual discernment process to launch a *Fellowship of the Burning Heart*
chapter in their city with the support of the Fellowship of the Burning Heart leadership team.

**What does the pilot cost cover?**

The total cost to participate in the pilot is $1200 for both retreats. The fee covers all room and board at a retreat center for three nights, programming costs, as well as monthly facilitation and support. The first $600 is due by June 30, 2018 to meet financial commitments with the retreat centers. The second $600 is due by June 30, 2019 or paid via monthly installments which begin at latest after first retreat.

**Will there be an ongoing cost after the pilot?**

After the one-year pilot, those who continue in a Fellowship of the Burning Heart local chapter will pay ongoing membership fees to their chapter, which cover each year’s retreat, support, and operating costs.

**May I bring my spouse?**

Spouses are welcome to apply and submit an application. If both spouses apply please indicate this on each of your applications. There may be a slight room discount for the annual retreat if you share a room.

**What is the application process?**

Complete and submit the online application with a $25 processing fee. The next step is a video meeting with someone from the leadership team. This is a relaxed and relational way to engage in dialogue and to assist the mutual discernment process.
Where did the name *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* come from?

The disciples on the road to Emmaus experienced a burning heart in the presence of Jesus (Luke 24:32). Jesus’ presence is in his Church today, in each of his followers.

The Renovaré *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* offers a context for individual burning hearts to come together within a covenant community apart from each person’s ordinary context to fan into flames their burning hearts and carry that love back to their context in each person’s home, relationships, local church congregation, and community. This is the with-God Life each person is created for and invited to live and enjoy in the intimacy of relationship, with the power of God’s grace at work in and through each person as members of the body of Christ. *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* serves the local church, fanning the flame of the love of God, igniting love for the world. After Dallas Willard’s death, correspondence was found between Dallas and Richard Foster signed with the salutation, “In the fellowship of the burning heart.”

What is a “Rule of Life”?

The idea of a rule of life dates back to antiquity. Communities and individuals who seek to live out a purpose in life make intentional decisions about how life is lived. Dallas Willard proposed that a rule of life for Christians serves to enthrall the mind with God and acquire habits for goodness. An apprentice of Jesus engages in intentional practices to “dearly love and constantly delight in the heavenly Father,” with additional practices undertaken to remove one’s “automatic responses against the Kingdom of God.” ² *Fellowship of the Burning Heart* participants build an individual rule of life with these goals in mind and centered on the shared Renovaré Covenant.

Comments or questions can be directed to Renovaré at Judy@renovare.org.

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APPENDIX C
INTEREST SURVEY

* 1  Do you sense Fellowship of the Burning Heart (FBH) may be a fit for you in this season?
   - YES: I'm local to Colorado and interested in more information for applying to Pilot I
   - YES: I'm in the USA and interested in more information for applying to Pilot II
   - NO: I am interested in FBH but not available right now or the criteria doesn't apply to me at this time; please keep me updated.
   - NO: I am currently not interested in FBH.

* 2  Cost-wise, which best describes you:
   - Cost is not a barrier
   - Cost is prohibitive and I could only attend with scholarship assistance

* 3  Are you interesting in giving toward scholarships?
   - Not at this time
   - Possibly, I'd like to know more

* 4  What is your zip code?

* 5  What is your full name?

* 6  And your email address?

* 7  Lastly, are there any comments or questions you have at this point?
   If none, press OK.
APPENDIX D

FELLOWSHIP OF THE BURNING HEART BOOKLET
(Printed in a 5.8 x 8.3 inch booklet for participants.; formatting is adjusted to print here.)

Core Documents &

Listening Group
“...did not our hearts burn within us...” Luke 24:32
Welcome

It is with long anticipation and great joy that I welcome you to the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Leadership Pilot group.

A few years back Renovaré began to notice among our larger dispersed community a significant longing for connection with local like-minded folks seeking to grow deeper in life with God. Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a response to this need.

Fellowship of the Burning Heart is an ecumenical order of sorts. Membership is not time intensive, but it is a serious commitment involving an annual retreat, a monthly small group, and an individually crafted rule of life. Our aim is to create a structure that is member-led and that can be replicated, with a balance of life-giving boundaries and space for each chapter to develop its own character. If this model is helpful and local chapters are launched, members will have the option to commit to a group for two years, five years, or even a lifetime. Our desire is simply to provide an offering of stability in our increasingly transient culture.

Along with your group, another dispersed leadership group and a local group are being piloted. At the end of these pilots we’ll discern with you if local chapters should be started. Our collective hindsight will help shape and guide the future of this model for a formal launch of Fellowship of the Burning Heart. Throughout the year we will be looking for your input and ask for your grace as we journey together. For now, our desire is for you to simply receive and engage without being burdened by planning for starting a chapter.

What follows is a carefully crafted guidebook for our pilot year. We have sought to make this simple and clear, and encourage you to give it a good, slow read... or two. It’s an honor to begin this adventure with you.

In the Fellowship of the Burning Heart,

Nathia Foster

Director of Community Life, Renovaré
Fall 2018
Who We Are

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart is a dispersed community of Jesus’ friends who long for deeper intimacy with the Triune God.

We are committed to Jesus, to one another, to our shared values and beliefs, and to the Renovaré covenant as a general rule of life. We share brief monthly connections, and an annual local gathering retreat.

We strive to be a listening community of diverse denominational expressions marked by love, availability and vulnerability to God and one another in friendship, mutual support, and encouragement in the with-God life.

Our primary purpose is to grow as disciples of Jesus—for our transformation, for the good of others, and for God’s everlasting glory.
The Renovaré Covenant

Longing to love and delight in the Trinity and cooperate in the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God, we commit to gathering together and to the Renovaré Covenant as a rule of life.

In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service.

Examen
As able, we choose to affirm and renew our intentions to live every aspect of our life with God. (Pause)

Is there an area of life you need in this moment to place under God’s care? (Pause)
Core Values

1. **We value a high Christology** regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

2. **We value worship and prayer** as central in our community.

3. **We value Scripture** as a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness. We engage in the historical great conversation about the growth of the soul in classical Christian writings.

4. **We value community** as important in our transformation into Christlikeness. We offer availability and vulnerability as we honor the sacredness, mystery, and individual pace of each person’s unique experience with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5. **We value stability** as spiritually significant in a culture of isolating discontentment. We commit to support one another through monthly Listening Groups and an annual Gathering Retreat.

6. **We value listening.** As a community we seek to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and one another. This creates a welcoming and confidential culture where it is safe to know and be known.

7. **We value honesty and openness**, seeking to love with wise boundaries and discern without judgment.

8. **We value people as God’s image bearers.** In our interactions we seek to forgo temptations of impression-management, leveraging relationships, and fixing one another.

9. **We value humility** and the freedom it brings. We cherish gratitude, joy, laughter, creativity, and lightheartedness in our community life together.

10. **We value loving respect.** We are for one another.
    We give encouragement as often as possible.
    We share advice once in a great while.
    We bring correction only when absolutely necessary.
    We condemn never.

11. **We value each person’s unique gifting.** Our gatherings are relationally focused and member-led, with each person serving as appropriate and helpful. Our retreats are a blend of teaching, practice, and community.

12. **We value various local expressions of spiritual formation efforts**—relationships, families, small groups, and local churches. Spiritual formation always has a local address.

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**Examen**

Following Jesus’ example, we long to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Pause)

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We bring to mind family... friends... coworkers... neighbors... and enemies. How have we loved well? Where do we need more grace? (Pause)

We thank God for mercy and ask for grace to love as Jesus loved. (Pause)
Core Ideas & Beliefs

We are Christian in commitment and ecumenical in breadth. We stand within historic Christian orthodoxy and affirm The Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds.

Life with God

The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with the Triune God himself at the center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant. We seek to be one expression of this “all-inclusive community of loving persons.”

The Availability of God’s Kingdom

We can experience genuine, substantive life in God’s Kingdom through Jesus Christ, beginning now and continuing through all eternity.

The Necessity of Grace

We are utterly dependent upon Jesus Christ, our ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend for genuine spiritual transformation.

The Means of Grace

We recognize the crucial importance of intentional spiritual disciplines among the variety of ways God has given for us to be open to his transforming grace.

A Balanced Vision of Life in Christ

We seek to embrace the abundant life of Jesus in all its fullness: contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical, and incarnational.

A Practical Strategy for Spiritual Formation

We encourage spiritual friendships, small groups, and healthy community as important elements of mutual support and nurture in our transformation.

The Centrality of Scripture

We immerse ourselves in the Bible: it is the great revelation of God’s purposes in history, a sure guide for growth into Christlikeness, and a rich resource for our spiritual formation.
The Value of the Christian Tradition

We engage in the historical “Great Conversation” on spiritual formation developed from Scripture by the Church’s classical spiritual writings.

Examen

We reflect now on the goodness and kindness of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. (Pause)

We thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to indwell us, equip us, and empower us to live our lives as Jesus would if he were us. Silently or aloud, let us take a moment to say, “thank you.” (Pause)
Listening Group Order of Meeting

After a few moments of collective silence, Facilitator begins:

One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.  

Psalm 27:4 NIV

Space is provided for each person who would like to offer the following prayer aloud:

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

After space for reflection, Facilitator reads the opening words.

Opening Words
Welcome to our Fellowship of the Burning Heart Listening Group. Remember we gather with one purpose in mind—to grow as disciples of Jesus. It is to this end that we seek to listen to God, each other, and our own hearts. Keep in mind that everything said here stays here. This affords us the freedom to share openly and honestly. All hopes and dreams, all fears and failures—even joys and successes—are to stay within these walls. We freely give this gift to one another and offer our best efforts to forgo fear of others’ judgment, impression management, and advice giving. Remember, we are for one another.

Who We Are and Covenant
Facilitator reads Who We Are and the introduction to the Renovaré Covenant (pages 1-2).

As a group, read the Covenant aloud in unison (page 2).

Facilitator offers the Covenant question of examen and allows space for silent reflection (page 2).

Core Values
Starting with the Facilitator, each person takes turns reading each of the Values aloud (page 3).

Facilitator offers the values question of examen and allows space for silent reflection (page 3).

Monthly Focus
Facilitator asks someone to read the Scripture reading from the Monthly Focus (pages 11-12), and gives space for reflection.

Facilitator offers the question from the Monthly Focus and invites the group into silent reflection. After a few moments, the facilitator rereads the question and opens the floor for sharing.
Sharing Process

*Facilitator:* The floor is now open for someone to share.

A volunteer starts the process and shares, uninterrupted.

*Group* thanks person.

*Facilitator:* Let us take a few moments of silence, holding the person and their words before God.

*Facilitator* breaks the silence by asking the person who shared:
Is there a word or phrase that captures or summarizes what you shared with the group?

After the person who shared responds, *Facilitator asks group:* While _____ was sharing, did anyone see or hear something from God that would be helpful for the person to know? For example: “I noticed ___” or “I saw a picture of __.” Be mindful this is not a time to fix, offer opinions, give advice, or ask questions.

*Group members* respond from their listening.

After one or two have responded or a moment of silence, *Facilitator asks participant:* We’d like to continue praying for you. Do you prefer a silent or verbal prayer?

If verbal, *Facilitator* asks for a volunteer to offer a brief prayer. If silent, a moment is observed.

This process is repeated until everyone has had a chance to share or the meeting time is nearing its end.

Reflection and Closing

*Facilitator:* Let us take a moment to reflect on who we are becoming, our word of Intention, and our Rule of Life. *(Pause)*

As you reflect on our time together, is there a spiritual practice you sense God inviting you to work with in the coming month? *(Pause)*

If it would be helpful, you’re invited to briefly tell the group your intentions.

Group in unison prays:

Dear Father always near us,
may your name be treasured and loved,
may your rule be completed in us
may your will be done here on earth
in just the way it is done in heaven.
Give us today the things we need today,
and forgive us our sins and impositions on you
as we are forgiving all who in any way offend us.
Please don’t put us through trials,
but deliver us from everything bad.
Because you are the one in charge,
and you have all the power,
and the glory too is all yours—forever—
which is just the way we want it!          (Dallas Willard)

***
Before departing, confirm time of next meeting and who
will facilitate.
Monthly Focus

January and July
Contemplative—The Prayer Filled Life
Verse: Mark 14:32-36
Question: In what ways have you been aware of God’s presence with you?

February and August
Holiness—The Virtuous Life
Verse: Matthew 4:1-11
Question: How are you growing in holiness of heart and life?

March and September
Charismatic—The Spirit-Empowered Life
Verse: John 14:15-17; 25-27
Question: How have you been experiencing and cooperating with the Holy Spirit?

April and October
Social Justice—The Compassionate Life
Verse: Matthew 25:31-46
Question: Has your heart been open to serving others recently and have there been opportunities to practice loving your neighbor?

May and November
Evangelical—The Word Centered Life
Verse: Luke 4:16-20; 42-44
Question: In what ways have you recently encountered God in Scripture?

June and December
Incarnational—The Sacramental Life
Verse: Luke 13:10-17
Question: How have you been sensing the presence of God in your work, family, and daily life?

Further Resources
Monthly focus themes are designed around the six streams outlined in Richard Foster’s book Streams of Living Water. For additional reading:
The Spiritual Formation Workbook

Devotional Classics
Listening Group

Participant Guide

Why a Listening Group?
Community is a significant tool God uses in our spiritual formation. We begin with the assumption that God is constantly interacting in our lives and we simply want to take time to tune in, notice, and cooperate. We are seeking to listen to God, each other, and our own hearts.

We approach listening as a spiritual practice. Keep in mind listening is a skill that takes time to develop. When we listen without judgment, advice, or correction, it frees us from the need to manage others and allows deep growth. We can trust that the Spirit is at work within each person and the group as a whole. Offering our attention is a way to love others and honor the sacredness of what God is doing.

How should I prepare for the Listening Group?
This process will be enriched if you are able to reflect on the monthly focus question and passage ahead of time. Before group, you may also take a few minutes to consider what you’ll share. This time of consideration with God can often be as helpful as the sharing itself. Think of the question as a prompt for sharing, rather than something you have to answer directly.

*The most important things to bring to the group are your presence, authenticity, and willingness to listen.* Come with the intention of sharing but hold this lightly. Be willing to yield your time to another member who needs extra space.

Grace
A hallmark of everything in the Fellowship is grace. We live by grace. And we freely give it to others and ourselves. Sometimes others may frustrate us. Sometimes we may be bored. Even these are opportunities to learn and grow.

Why have a monthly focus?
It connects us together and provides a starting place for conversation around the six streams. The structure of the group gives a balanced vision and a practical strategy for spiritual growth. Remember that this resource exists to serve us. The question is a starting place. It’s okay to give a long, loosely related answer. In essence, we are simply asking one another: “What are you learning in your spiritual life about God, yourself, or others?”

Why rotate facilitators?
Acting in the role of facilitator provides each person a different kind of learning experience. Rotating keeps the group from becoming personality dominated and allows everyone the opportunity to serve.

What if I can’t make the meeting?
The covenant nature of these groups is an important part of the process, so make group meetings a priority in your calendar. Emergencies do happen, and people will have to miss. Generally it’s best not to reschedule and simply trust that those present are the ones who need to be there.
Basic Logistics
If possible, meet in a circle in a quiet place free from interruptions. Prior to the meeting, remember to silence your phones. When reading feel free to go slow and soak in the words.

A Note on Silence
“Silence is praise to you, Zion-dwelling God, And also obedience. You hear the prayer in it all” (Psalm 65:12 MSG).

There is something special about silence together before God. This is holy ground. Don’t fear it—press in. For those of you new to extended spaces of silence with others, it will get easier. Yes, your mind will wander. Simply refocus as you are able.

Sharing
You are free in this environment to share as much or as little as you want, or not to share at all. Sharing vulnerably requires wisdom and trust, and trust takes time.

Sometimes what is best for the group is for only a few people to share. One meeting you might share extensively. In that case, consider in the next meeting sharing only if time allows.

When someone is sharing, resist the urge to interrupt. Be mindful not to use the response time to ask questions, give advice, or teach.

When the facilitator shares, someone else should act as facilitator for the sharing process.

Why a summary word after sharing?
In verbally telling our stories, we often hear them differently. The silence can help us hear God speak into what we have shared.

Why is there no space to give personal comment or ask questions about what a person shared?
This group is intended to be a unique setting listening to God is our first priority. We lay aside thoughtful questions, personal anecdotes, and general curiosity in favor of holding people in the light of Christ. Sometimes good intentions can be a distraction. Our desire is for people to hear from God, not us.

How should I respond when someone shares?
First, listen to God. It can be uncomfortable to simply “hold” someone in silence, especially when they are in pain. There may be a temptation to jump in, identify, help, or fix.

You might be surprised how often what is shared resonates with what God is currently doing in your life: a verse you’ve just heard, an experience you’re wrestling with, etc. Remember that the Spirit is at work in all of us, often on very similar things. Resist the urge to use their time to share your story—even if it’s closely related.

A good response doesn’t teach, empathize, guide, or encourage, but rather helps the person further reflect upon what he or she has shared. Examples:

“I noticed (something specific about your voice, tone, body language) as you shared ______.”
“When you said _____, this [image, word, Scripture] came to mind.”

“It sounds like you are aware of, noticing, processing, shifting, opening, responding to God when you said ____.”

Well-intended responses to avoid during Listening Group:

“That reminds me of when I went through ______.”

“Have you read _____ or practiced ______.”

“What I think would help you is ______.”

“Have you tried ______.”

**What about when a major life-altering event is occurring in a person’s life?**

There will be times when a single person is experiencing severe grief or trauma. We encourage you to maintain the structure of the meeting while offering all the time that person might need for sharing and silence. An extended prayer time for that person might be appropriate.

**Outside of the group time, can I follow up with a person about something shared in the group?**

We want to preserve the freedom this unique setting affords. A good question outside of the listening group might be, “Would it be helpful to talk more about [something shared]?” The person is completely free to say no, in which case we smile, say thanks, trusting their discernment and God’s provision.

**What if problems arise in the group?**

Relationships are complex and messy. Conflict, hurt, and frustration might arise. Remember, this is a learning space. In time each chapter will have a small group coordinator. In the meantime, if significant group issues arise we’re available to help: email fbh@renovare.org.
What is my role as the facilitator?
The facilitator’s primary role is to start the meeting, keep it going, and mind the clock. Meetings should last an hour and a half with a hard stop recommended. Of course, you’re free to continue to talk after, but providing a formal ending frees people for other commitments.

Who should be the facilitator?
The facilitator role rotates monthly with all members taking a turn.

What if I’m uncomfortable leading?
Be at ease. The “listening process” is in place to guide and serve the group much like a fence around a playground. Use the script as a guide and remain attentive to how things are going. Facilitating in this way can be a richly rewarding experience.

How long should we hold silence?
Try not to rush the process. Ask God to prompt you when to move on. Some find it helpful to use a stopwatch to ensure ample space is given. Remember God is at work in our silence.

How do I prepare?
It’s helpful to review the structure and familiarize yourself with the questions and verse ahead of time. Take a few minutes in prayer before coming to the meeting. Slowing down helps set an unhurried tone.

When should I share?
Come with a mindset to serve the group. Be willing to share last or not at all, depending on time. Sometimes the group needs help getting things going. In that case, share first.

What if time doesn’t allow for everyone to share?
Ten minutes prior to ending, invite anyone who hasn’t shared to do so without the normal process (silences, group notices, etc.). This way everyone who wants to share in some capacity will have the opportunity. Not everyone will share in every meeting, and that’s okay. This is a way we love one another.

How do we evaluate the group?
A group evaluation is recommended every six months (instructions to come).

Final Thoughts
This is a unique group with a learning curve. Help each other stick with the structure and trust the process.

This is serious work but have fun. Enjoy listening, learning, and being together.
Core documents and FAQ may be found at renovare.org/burningheart
Friday Afternoon

Individually and corporately we commit to gathering together and to the Renovaré Covenant as a rule of life. This helps us to dearly love and delight in the Trinity and to cooperate in the ongoing work of the Kingdom of God.

The Renovaré Covenant

In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service.

As you look at the above Covenant you’ll notice the following structure:

-We come with need and offer our lives:
  **In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ**

- Four relational roles:
  **As my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend**

- Three ways to pursue renewal:
  **Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service**
Below is the verse and questions for today’s Listening group

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NRSV)

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

Ephesians 2:19-21 (NRSV)

1. As you spend time reflecting on the Renovaré Covenant, what aspects have historically been a life-giving part of your journey with God?

2. Are there pieces of the Covenant that stand out to you as areas in which you would like to grow?
Saturday Afternoon

Dallas Willard stated that there are two primary objectives for a rule of life that acts as a Curriculum of Christlikeness. First, an apprentice of Jesus will dearly love and constantly delight in the “heavenly Father” who is made real to earth in Jesus. Second, to remove the automatic responses against the Kingdom of God.

With these objectives in mind, began to consider what spiritual practices draw you into greater freedom and generosity, deeper love and faithfulness, unexpected joy and patience, guidance through peace and self-control. Keep in mind that unrealistic, heroic spiritual formation regimens are about as helpful as a new gym membership on January 1st.

The Renovaré Covenant

In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my ever-living Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual Exercises, Spiritual Gifts, and Acts of Service.
Below is the verse and questions for today’s Listening group

So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12: 1-2

MSG

1. As you continue to work with the Covenant, is there a single word or phrase that emerges as a helpful statement of intention for the coming year?

2. Are there 1-3 tangible and specific ways that would help you live out the Covenant this year that you would like to commit to?

3. Are you aware of any potential resistance points that might hinder your plan?
Laying the Altar Exercise

On the night of our first gathering we will put together an altar of collected objects. Altars often mark what we are giving; ours will serve as a tangible way of noticing the reality of God's ever-present love and engagement in our lives.

Begin thinking about an object to bring that’s symbolic of your current life with God.

You might reflect on the following questions to help guide the process: Where have you recently been noticing God? How have you been connecting, or not connecting, with God?

Come prepared to briefly share with the group about your object. Of course the object needn’t be religious in nature, a common object is fine—a child’s toy or something from your backyard.

Our objects will remain on the table throughout the retreat as a gentle reminder of God’s work in our lives, and of each other’s stories. At the end of our gathering we’ll collect our objects and take them home.
Welcome to the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Pre-Retreat Survey.

Your answers are anonymous.

From question 7 onward, except for survey item 10, consider your recent experience at the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Gathering Retreat pilot and its effect, if any, on your responses to the question.

1. My Age is
   - Under 30
   - Between 31 and 45
   - Between 45-64
   - 65 or over

2. My gender is
   - Female
   - Male

3. I consider myself a
   - Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
   - Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
   - Latino or Hispanic American
4. Which best describes you?

1. Introvert
2. Extrovert

5. How would you describe your attendance within a local church?

1. Not regularly attending
2. Present

6. I regularly experience life-giving, emotionally and spiritually safe community with other Christ followers.

1. Never
2. In the past
3. Present

7. I have a confident, clear, Biblical vision for community with God and others.

1. Not confident
2. Confident

8. How encouraged are you that your intentions and longings are currently met for companionship and community within the body of Christ?

1. Not encouraged
2. Highly encouraged

9. How often do you currently experience like-hearted companionship in the God life with other people?

1. Rarely
2. As much as I want
10. I am in part time or full time Christian ministry (paid or unpaid).

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
No  Yes

11. I am currently a part of a small group that meets regularly.

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
No  Yes

12. I have a friendship with at least one other person where we regularly share deeply on a spiritual basis.

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
No  Yes

13. I have a sense of longing and desire to experience the with-God life with deeper intimacy with the triune God.

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
Currently satisfied Very desirous

14. I have a sense of unmet longing and desire to participate in a community of companions that encourages more experience in the with-God life

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
No  Yes

15. I have a rule of life, which I find helpful in following and loving God; it serves me well.

1. ………………… 2. ………………… 3. ………………… 4. ………………… 5. 
No  Yes

16. Please describe your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat. In what way, if any, were your longings addressed for intimacy with God in companionship within a community of like-hearted people?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.
In the pre-Gathering Retreat survey in September 2018, 17 out of 17 people anonymously answered the following question: Please describe why you are participating or what you hope to experience or receive from participation in this FBH pilot.

1. I desire to be part of a group as authentic as I experienced in the Renovaré Institute. That heart connection and transparency was a blessing to experience. As I practice the with-God life, I would like to be able to share with someone else on the same path.

2. I currently have many friendships, but they seem very superficial as far as a desire to be close to God and intimate with him. My life changed so much after attending the RI, but now it is hard to explain to other people what God did within me. I long to have those deeper relationships with other people who truly desire to grow deeply with God and other people!

3. Long for a community with other believers; learn from others and contribute; support each other

4. I have good spiritual friendships, but I am greatly spurred on in my own growth, and encouraged in my soul, by fellowship with folks actively pursuing and experiencing the 'with God life'.

5. Though I am in community with others through the Renovaré Institute and a small group of spiritual directors, I've spent long seasons of life aching for more a vibrant, satisfying level of community within the Church. I want to grow in my understanding of 3 things: how to foster depth of life with God in others, how to create the right conditions for others to go deeper with each other, and how I can grow in nurturing stronger bonds with others myself.

6. I’ve struggled to find consistent relationships with like-hearted folks since moving to Colorado Springs four years ago, as well as to find a good outlet for participating regularly in God’s kingdom work.

7. I'm looking for an expanded network of disciples of Jesus who share similar longings to experience a deep relationship with our Lord.

8. I am confident that the FBH will provide the right context for people to experience a deeper relationship with the Trinity and one another. I am glad to be a part.

9. Most of all, I want so much more of God but I want find Him more with others instead of my usual alone journey.
10. I try not to impose my expectations on a group. I hope that we (FBH) are to celebrate and support the “with-God” life—or as I would say, living in the Light/Presence of Christ.
11. I long for intimate connection with others where I can be myself and not fear being misunderstood or judged. I want to know God more intimately through my human relationships.
12. I want to know and be known by more Christ followers on a deeper level, for encouragement, accountability and companionship.
13. I desire to grow in faith with a local group of like-minded believers.
14. My spouse and I are 100% eye-to-eye in the pursuit of the with-God life, but we feel pretty alone in this. Our small group and friends are not at the same place we are, but show signs of getting it sometimes, which is really cool. But we feel alone.
15. The desire to have community with those who are serious about spiritual formation and transformation into Christ likeness.
16. Find a with-God community experience where I can give and receive, and feel safe, that helps my walk with God.
17. I would hope to experience safety in confidentiality with people who truly love God—something I've never experienced before.
APPENDIX H
POST-GATHERING RETREAT SURVEY

Pre-retreat Survey for Renovaré Fellowship of the Burning Heart Pilot

Welcome to the Fellowship of the Burning Heart Pre-Retreat Survey.

Your answers are anonymous.

1. My Age is
   - Under 30
   - Between 31 and 45
   - Between 45-64
   - 65 or over

2. My gender is
   - Female
   - Male

3. I consider myself a
   - Non-Hispanic White or Euro-American
   - Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
   - Latino or Hispanic American
   - East Asian or Asian American
   - South Asian or Indian American
4. Which best describes you?
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
Introvert  Extrovert

5. How would you describe your attendance within a local church?
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
1=Not regularly attending  5=In church leadership

6. I regularly experience life-giving, emotionally and spiritually safe community with other Christ followers.
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
Never  In the past  Present

7. I have a confident, clear, Biblical vision for community with God and others.
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
Not confident  Confident

8. How encouraged are you that your intentions and longings are currently met for companionship and community within the body of Christ?
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
Not encouraged  Highly encouraged

9. How often do you currently experience like-hearted companionship in the with God life with other people?
1……………………2……………………3……………………4…………………………5
Rarely  As much as I want
10. I am in part time or full time Christian ministry (paid or unpaid).
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
No Yes

11. I am currently a part of a small group that meets regularly.
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
No Yes

12. I have a friendship with at least one other person where we regularly share deeply on a spiritual basis.
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
No Yes

13. I have a sense of longing and desire to experience the with-God life with deeper intimacy with the triune God.
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
Currently satisfied Very desirous

14. I have a sense of unmet longing and desire to participate in a community of companions that encourages more experience in the with-God life.
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
No Yes

15. I have a rule of life, which I find helpful in following and loving God; it serves me well.
1………………2………………3………………4…………………5
No Yes

16. Please describe why you are participating or what do you hope to experience or receive from participation in this FBH pilot.

17. From your perspective, what were the strengths of your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat?
18. From your perspective, what were the weaknesses of your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat?

19. Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat would you definitely suggest being kept and why?

20. Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat would you definitely suggest being altered; why, and how?

21. What, if anything, would you change about the Gathering Retreat schedule?

22. Please offer here any other anonymous comments you would like to share.

Thank you for participating in this survey.
Question 16

Please describe your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat. In what way, if any, were your longings addressed for intimacy with God in companionship within a community of like-hearted people?

17 out of 17 people answered this question

14 Positive results described

1. I experienced a great deal of encouragement. Meeting and being with other like-minded individuals who are seeking the Lord in their daily lives was enriching.

2. The retreat was so special, so beautiful that I was just in awe. It was inspiring to be with other likeminded souls (“soul companions”) who desire more of God, more life, and who desire oneness with Him and with others. To me it felt like an eclectic group focused on loving God and living in and with his presence. - I felt like the environment was provided for the community to really flourish in a short period of time; there was a lot of humility, love and acceptance. It felt like a lot of care and prayer was put into this; and yet looking back it’s almost like you all got out of the way for God to move. - While I’m very aware of my longing for intimacy with God, more of him, more life, more healing, more of everything he has for me, I’m now so much more aware that there’s something special that occurs when you’re pursuing God with others, and not doing it all alone. That retreat really brought that to light for me.

3. I need/want the structure for fostering intimacy with God AND companionship along the way with guardrails to keep our time together from devolving into a therapy group or general discussion group.

4. My experience at the gathering was excellent!! I have a few dear soul friends that I journey and share everyday life with. We connect well individually. But I do not have a small group or community that presses deeply into the with-God life and intimacy with God, and practices listening to the Spirit together. My listening group did that on our retreat last weekend. I'm hopeful that can continue through our monthly meetings.

5. It is a good beginning. I am hopeful that over time we will become an unusual community for one another.

6. During the retreat I was blessed by the vulnerability and honesty of most everyone present. I sensed a strong connection with others in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

7. I thoroughly enjoyed being among a group of like-minded companions at the Colorado pilot gathering of the FBH. The conversations were honest, intimate, and expressed hunger for a deeper experience of the Trinity in community.

8. I felt a real connection with the other retreat participants, and feel as though the coming year will allow me to "turn the corner" on my relationship with God and desires for community with like-hearted people. I didn't really know what to
expect at the retreat and it was far more wonderful and amazing than I could have imagined.

9. My longings for intimacy were experienced in the large group times. Both instruction and worship with music, prayer and conversation. I felt it was to soon to have much intimacy with the small group. I felt a struggle with the "social" conversation needed rather than the silent time needed to learn to hear what God would be communicating. It was better the second time.

10. It was wonderful. All of the people there were open-hearted and giving. I felt great trust in them and wish we could meet as a large group before next September. As it is, I truly look forward to the monthly small group "listening" times--because I have never been in a spiritual small group before, it will be a true growing time in Christian friendship and relationship with God.

11. It was wonderful. Better than expected. An incredible beginning to building a community based on what the Trinity is like between Them. That's really bold to say - but I mean it. I believe my longing for companionship in this pursuit will be addressed between my family and this group. We are like minded and as Mimi said, we are monks in the city now! I think the structure (the order of meeting & the general flow and practice) of the listening group will be paramount in this. The practice of learning to listen to God and each other is key, to me.

12. The retreat was a very good start to the process of an intimate community but it will take time before the relationships and trust are established and it becomes a source of fulfillment of those desires.

13. The relationships felt very open, it was a non-competitive environment, I loved all the people, it was very intentional about the wire with God life. So thankful to be a part of the pilot group!

14. I benefitted from the reflective times in sessions, alone and with my small group

3 reported no change:

1. I loved the people at the retreat, but felt a bit like it was a pressure cooker spiritually....no pressure from other people, just from myself.
2. Because I felt my longings are already being addressed, I had no change.
3. Because I don’t feel that I have an “unmet” need, this is a difficult question. I did feel that we were in a warm, like-hearted people centered around God. I am grateful for that.
Question 17

From your perspective, what were the strengths of your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat?

16 out of 17 people answered this question

1. Meeting lovely, Christian-centered people who were open to sharing our faith.
2. Having people who are clearly at a place in their walk with the Lord that they are seeking him and wanting to surrender their lives fully to him. Being in a quiet space. Having time to share but also time to be in solitude.
3. It was good to be with intentional people that are not a part of my regular circle.
4. Honestly the whole weekend was so special and meaningful to me that it’s hard to pinpoint things over others - Meeting new people and making new relationships. Having a framework established for us to continue together in community. Being prayed for, and praying for others; sharing with others; noticing right away that people really seemed to open up on their own and were free to be themselves. Worshipping with everyone and the vulnerability which was present during that time - Kindness and love which was poured out by the leadership team. - I really liked the loose structure. I know that much planning and laboring had occurred prior to the weekend, but it also felt that there was room to modify based on what was happening, and I really liked that and appreciated that. - The time went by fast – and that’s a good thing. I never once felt like I was sitting for a lecture or thought to myself, “...why don’t we hurry this up”.
5. Both leaders and attendees were intentional as to why we were there. We were able to practice owner ability and honesty. We heard from God.
6. Nathan's sharing, vulnerability, and teaching. The structure of the listening groups. Mimi's participation as encourager and exhorter. Good balance of large group gathering, time alone, free time, and listening group time. Facility was very conducive for retreat.
7. There were many strengths. The rhythm of the retreat with a mix of time for informal conversation, instruction, time alone, and time with God was excellent. The carefully planned structure of the small group time was excellent too.
8. Community was very real, throughout the retreat, sharing meals, laughter, listening for the Holy Spirit, learning a new way to meet in a listening group. I also appreciated that there was so much free time.
9. The planning team provided ample time for personal reflection, small group interaction, and large group discussion. It was paced very well. I was so glad to be present.
10. Clearly God's hand was in the planning and in deciding who attended. It was also clear that God was at the head of the planning team as I didn't get any sense of egos in the way. (I plan a lot of meetings and events for work, and I could see that this was very different and truly Spirit-led.)
11. The discussions in the large group, the pace of the time, the opportunity for blessing and prayer with the staff. Mimi's Sunday service.
12. I was able to openly express my true heart for God and experiences, and there was NO condemnation or judgement. The times of listening together were singularly helpful in calming my mind and coming to understand my current relationship with the Lord....and to see where I want to go, going forward.

13. 99% of my experience was beyond my expectations. For example, just hearing the core values, beliefs and intentions read aloud was peace-generating. To know that THIS was what was bringing us together and what will hold us together?? This is life giving.

14. Learning the new, interesting process of communication and order of the small group meetings, meeting wonderful like-minded brothers and sisters, and an intentional focus on spiritual goals/purposes.

15. Everything flowed so well, the schedule was great, Nathan’s teaching was powerful, worship was exceptional, food was outstanding, The training for the listening groups was wonderful, and meeting in the groups was one of the best spiritual experiences I’ve ever had!

16. Quality of the people who were there and a thorough process of good group spiritual direction.
Question 18

From your perspective, what were the weaknesses of your experience at the pilot Gathering Retreat?

17 out of 17 people answered this question

1. As I said, it felt a bit pressured to me---because I'm an introvert who acts like an extrovert.
2. It's not really a weakness, but it took some time for people to engage with the vision of our listening groups. So being as clear as possible about what the structure and intent is would be helpful.
3. I think the size of the group may be too big (I'm in the group of seven). I also am concerned that the idea of gathered, waiting silence and hearing/speaking from Spirit is not well grasped.
4. There weren't any for me.
5. I think some have a very difficult time with silence.
6. I experienced a little bit of FOMO--fear of missing out--in that I can't be in a small group with everyone.
7. Assignments to small groups felt little bumpy. Shifting around seemed to mostly work, but wondering how a group of 7 will allow enough time for sharing.
8. The only one that comes to mind was a facility issue, the trouble some of us had sleeping because of being unable to cool the room at night.
9. I wouldn't call this a weakness but my Listening Group will be a challenge at first, however, I am hopeful as I trust in God's sovereignty.
10. The team was intentional in gathering feedback from the group and implementing changes on the spot. It was so well done!
11. Nothing comes to mind as far as a weakness.
12. Having only one gender in the small group. My suggestion is to make it possible by not creating the groups by location. If the choice is given to drive a distance perhaps that would have allowed this to take place. Or to have a portion of the small group meetings accomplished on line. It worked well in the RI.
13. Often, I felt the almost-4 days were like a hothouse, where growth was so rapid and intense, I wanted to escape it. But since escape has always been my "way" before now....it isn't an option going forward. Still, the panic was occasionally there.
14. For me, there were no weaknesses. None.
15. I don't know. It was done well. Maybe more insight shared on the concepts that are integral to the goals and focus of this project.
17. No weaknesses.
Question 19

Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat would you definitely suggest be kept and why?

17 out of 17 people answered this question

1. I like the structure, the confidentiality, the potential of true friendships in Christ.
2. The large and small group times, practicing the intended structure, creating a vision.
3. I valued all aspects of the retreat. For a person like me, it is important to keep the free time/God time so that I can have some time alone to reflect.
4. The Sunday Morning just blew me away, truly. Mimi’s talk to us, the worship, Nathan’s listening and giving of the words from God, it was so amazing. - Definitely keep the Altar experience at the beginning and the end. That was so awesome and it’s hard to describe, but I felt like it brought us closer together as a group and to God. Not just going through our own altar exercise (I hate calling it that but don’t know how else to describe it), but also to hear from others - Having a worship night; any night which works but 2nd night seemed right - Having a game on the last night; this was good as people need to let loose and relax and do something fun - I learn primarily through doing. So learning the Order of Meeting, actually practicing it made the difference. Once you’ve practiced it, and then also watching people do it front of the whole group was really helpful. The handouts and any notes really don’t really crystalize until I’ve experienced it.
5. I really like the process that you have. I would strongly suggest that people practice the discipline of listening where the spirit and speaking out of the silence if God has spoken.
6. I'm not sure I would change anything. The pace, worship opportunities, teaching, private rooms, everything, were thoughtfully done.
7. Balance of distribution of time. Leadership team is very strong, and complemented each other well. Sunday morning sharing and worship time.
8. I loved the rhythm, the emphasis on silence, the evenings of fun and entertainment, the offer of personal prayer and blessing from the leadership. The communion service was powerful. The people were very special. I am not sure it would work without carefully choosing serious disciples to participate.
9. I really cannot think of anything I would change.
10. I cannot think of anything I would change.
11. Nothing comes to mind. The pacing was good, and every group session we had felt important. It was really helpful that we could "practice" in our small groups to get the feel and cadence of the listening groups and then ask questions afterwards.
12. The large group conversation. The fun night. Communion. The Sunday service
13. The sense of a holy place; the openness of heart; the structure and suggestions for the 90 minutes; the focus on the Holy Spirit and not on personalities within the group.
14. Communion on the last day. Fly Mimi in to read and teach. j/k - but seriously, the Intention that she had us write down will be mine forever. Also, the emphasis on holding to the order of meeting in our listening groups. I see the importance of it.

15. The structure of the small group process is very good, time with one's small group is essential, keep individual hotel rooms and free time to process, keep worship time, keep Sunday worship/communion together.

16. Listening group training and practice, worship, teaching, food, free time, eucharist, laying on the altar, prayer, Game night. Closing questions and sharing.

17. The schedule was great and the setting was very conducive for the experience.
Question 20

Thinking of future chapters of Fellowship of the Burning Heart, what elements of the retreat would you definitely suggest being altered; why, and how?

16 out of 17 people answered this question

1. Perhaps a little more time for quiet reflection alone. I just get started into prayer or reflection when it seems another session is starting.
2. None
3. Small group size (4-5 seems right to me if I'm comprehending what your aim is). I think the training in when, how, and why to share needs more clarity.
4. You know, I really don't have any suggestions for this. So much time and planning went into this and it was apparent that much care, prayerful planning guided the retreat format, schedule and experience.
5. No changes to offer
6. I think more time 'teaching' about listening to God might be helpful. It is such a nuanced and individual experience, but would help to have more conversation about how that happens for some folks.
7. I can't think of any.
8. I really cannot think of anything I would change.
9. Again, I have no suggestions!
10. Again, nothing specific comes to mind. Everything felt to have an important purpose.
11. The small groups formed with both genders. Practice with receiving language. Not sure how to label the kind of language. We touched on it, but it could be more specific.
12. I can't think of anything I would change. I think we ought to give what has been so prayerfully created in this fellowship a chance, and allow the Spirit to do its work.
13. none
14. Again, I do not really know yet. I think the proof is in the pudding....we will see how this approach works after implementing it over time. Even though we may all desire God, it does not guarantee that the personalities in the groups will gel and develop trusting intimacy. That will take time to see. It appeared that some groups immediately bonded but others are undetermined. I do not know how the program could be altered to assure a natural compatibility among group members but that may end up being a variable that effects the outcome. In theory, perhaps that shouldn't matter, but in reality, it does effect groups.
15. None
16. It could be helpful to invite some others to share about their experiences in group spiritual direction to encourage folks. In the process. Nate did a great job but having an interview or panel of some of the participants would be a nice addition.
Question 21

What, if anything, would you change about the Gathering Retreat schedule?

17 out of 17 people answered this question

1. See my answer to #20.
2. None
3. Nothing
4. Would be good to give advance notice of the retreat photo, prior to the retreat. Like, "we plan on taking a photo Saturday afternoon..." - Meal times worked well; too early or too late wouldn’t work; plus it’s nice to have your own time in the morning - I would resist any request to provide a day-by-day schedule in advance. “We will start with breakfast at 8 am” should be sufficient. While some personalities may find comfort in knowing ahead of time what will occur moment-by-moment, I think God does something when you show up not knowing it all and trusting in the process and what he will do.
5. None come to mind.
6. See # 20
7. nothing in particular
8. I can't think of any.
9. I really cannot think of anything I would change. The schedule was a perfect mix of solitude and fellowship.
10. The schedule was very well paced. It was good to arrive on Thursday to provide two full days of retreat.
11. Nothing. The pacing seemed good, and it was VERY helpful to have the periods of personal time (speaking from an introverted point of view). It was good to have that time sprinkled throughout the day to stop and process what had just been covered.
12. If by schedule you are asking about "times" not content I wouldn't change anything.
13. As I said before, it was intense and hard in a way....but that is a weakness in me. Perhaps in the next year's retreat, I wouldn't have quite so long a time in each session.
14. nothing in the schedule bothered me.
15. Would not change anything. Nice balance and rhythm to it.
16. None
17. The schedule framework was great. Adding some variety of presentation in the morning sessions ala answer to previous question could be good.
Question 22

Please offer here any other anonymous comments you would like to share.

12 out of 17 people answered this question

1. None
2. It was so awesome, I just loved it! Again, I left just in awe. I loved being a part of this and excited for what lays ahead. - When one person said that it will be sad not to see everyone for a year, I felt the same way. I think one of the only things I’m struggling with is a feeling of disconnection with the rest of the other groups around Colorado. And I know that the focus is not to create events where we all drive hours to visit one another... I don't have an answer and it's up to us locally to figure it out.
3. Thank you for your time, prayer, meticulous planning and preparation.
4. Thank you!!! I am so privileged to be a part of what I suspect will be an important work of the Holy Spirit in community.
5. Well done, team! Your preparation was evident, and your sensitivity to the spirit and culture of the retreat was clear. One of the best retreats I have ever experienced. Thank you!
6. Need softer tissues! (I'll bring some.) And from an "I really missed my dogs" perspective, would love to have a shared retreat dog to love up on. They do personify the unconditional love of God, after all! Probably not practical, but you did ask...
7. Would it be possible for there to be purposeful placing of staff members at meal tables apart from each other in order for all participants to have the opportunity to hear from them?
8. I grew to love everyone there; Mimi's Sunday morning service was beautiful. She is a powerful woman of God. I loved Nate's openness, giving us all a sense of freedom. I admired Helen's and Judy's wonderful organization and planning.
9. If possible, please add page numbers to the booklet. We're flipping back and forth a lot and I personally needed help navigating to where certain things were. I've come to see how important the practice of listening is to building community like this. It was certainly emphasized as paramount in the groups, and as I entered in, I can't agree more! Thank you! This discipline will, I believe, change my whole life. It's probably the greatest "thing" I learned and will be adding to my everyday life from the entire weekend. Blessings to you!
10. I am thankful to be a part of this experience.
11. The retreat was one of the most beautiful experiences I’ve ever had! So thankful for the leadership team, and their wisdom in developing the pilot group.
12. It was good to have folks who went through the Renovare Institute as well as others new to Renovaré. The Renovare fellowship is very rich but sometimes it can be a bit too much self-referencing and create the feeling of an in and an out group. So it is good to keep inviting new people in.
What You Are Applying For

The Fellowship of the Burning Heart (FBH) is a community expression of Renovaré. Before beginning, please download and read our core documents and FAQ which describes FBH and its core values.

Download Core Documents (PDF)
Download FAQ (PDF)

One-Year Pilot Groups

Three one-year pilots launch this year for the purpose of careful evaluation. Our intention is to build a solid framework and develop broadening local capacity over time.

Each pilot is 18 people. This makes the gatherings intimate. We are starting small, trusting God will provide timing for the growth and inclusion of all who desire to be a part of the fellowship.

Pilot I is for those living in Colorado. Pilots II and III are dispersed, and are for those who, at the end of the pilot, want to discern with us launching a local chapter.

Pilot I: Local to Colorado

- An opening retreat and closing retreat held September 20-24, 2018 & September 27-30, 2019 at Cathedral Ridge in Woodland Park, Colorado
- Monthly connection with small group, virtual or in person where possible
Pilots II & III: Dispersed, Leadership Development

- An opening and closing retreat. Because of interest, two leadership pilots are available:
  - Cincinnati, OH (Nov 15-18, 2018 & Oct 17-21, 2019 at Transfiguration Spirituality Center)
  - Malibu, CA (June 6-9, 2019 & TBD, 2020 at Serra Retreat Center)
- Monthly connection with small group, virtual or in person where possible
- A desire to launch a FBH chapter in your home area at the end of the pilot (Renovaré and you would mutually discern if that is a good fit)

After the pilot you will be invited to share your thoughts and experiences to help us shape what FBH will become.

Cost

The total cost to participate in the pilot is $1200 for both retreats. The fee covers all room and board at a retreat center for three nights, programing costs, as well as monthly facilitation and support. The first $600 is due by June 30, 2018 to meet financial commitments with the retreat centers. The second $600 is due by June 30, 2019 or paid via monthly installments which begin at latest after first retreat.

There is a non-refundable application fee of $25 that will be applied to your balance upon acceptance.

Applying

You will hear back from us by June 1.

Before applying, please read the core documents and FAQ have a credit card available for the $25 application fee.

Also be prepared to answer the following questions (you may find it easier to type these out ahead of time in a Word doc and paste in the answers):

1. Describe why you want to be a part of the Fellowship Burning Heart Pilot; what attracts you to this kind of community?
2. What are the skills that make a person a healthy group participant and what qualities do you bring to a listening community?
3. What do you envision gaining from this experience and what might you give to it?
4. Short bio—what do you want us to know about you?

Note for leadership pilot applicants: in addition to completing your application by clicking the button below, a character reference is also needed. Please send your reference the following link: renovare.org/fbh-reference

Questions? Email judy@renovare.org
APPENDIX J
CONSENT FORM

Hello,

My name is Helen Edwards and I am a doctoral student at Fuller Seminary. I am working with Renovaré and Nathan Foster, Renovaré’s Director of Community Life to launch a community expression of Renovaré called the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. I am doing a study to try to find out more about how Renovaré can address its constituency’s self-identified longings for the with-God life with spiritual companions in community. I will explain the project to you in more detail.

You are being asked to be in this study because you have indicated your willingness to participate in a local pilot project for an order, the Fellowship of the Burning Heart. As a participant in a local pilot project in the state of Colorado you are asked to commit for one year to live by a personally designed rule of life based on the shared Renovaré Covenant, attend two scheduled retreats, and participate in a monthly video or in person small group. In addition to the application and the pilot, if you agree to be in this study you will be asked to participate in three surveys taken pre-initial gathering retreat, post-initial retreat and after three sessions of a monthly meeting with a small group.

You can ask questions about the study at any time. Also, if you decide you don’t want to finish, you can stop whenever you want. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

There should be no risks or discomforts expected from participation in this study.

Apart from what I hope is a wonderful experience for you in this pilot community there is no foreseeable direct benefit to you for agreeing to participate in this study. Even though there will be no direct gain to you for taking part in this study, we may learn more about how to address people’s longing for more of the with-God life, spiritual companions, and community.

As a study participant your confidentiality will be maintained. No one else will know if you were in this study unless you disclose it and no one else can find out what answers you gave to the surveys. We will keep all the records for this study in password-protected programs. If you or your comments are referred to in the dissertation project paper for Fuller Seminary, it will be anonymously or with a pseudonym.

Remember, you can ask any questions you may have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can call me at 480-326-6102 or ask me in person at the retreats.

Signing your name at the bottom of this form means that you have read or listened to what it says and you understand it. Signing this form also means that you agree to participate in this study and your questions have been answered. You will be given a copy of this form after you have signed it.

_________________________________________  __________________________________________
Signature of Participant                  Signature of Doctoral Student Project Leader

_________________________________________
Typed/printed Name                       Helen M. Edwards

_________________________________________
Typed/printed Name                       Typed/printed Name

_________________________________________
Date                                     Date

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