

Doctoral Project Approval Sheet

This doctoral project entitled

A LISTENING PEOPLE: HEARING GOD'S VOICE AT THE TURNPIKE ROAD
CHURCH OF CHRIST

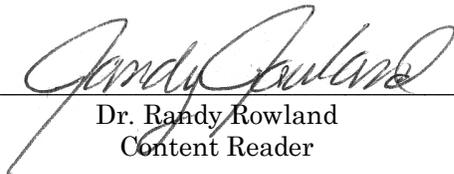
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A LISTENING PEOPLE: HEARING GOD'S VOICE AT THE TURNPIKE ROAD
CHURCH OF CHRIST

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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ABSTRACT

A Listening People: Hearing God's Voice at the Turnpike Road

Church of Christ

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Doctor of Ministry

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The goal of this study is to equip a group of eight-to-twelve women and men from the Turnpike Road Church of Christ in Ignatian spiritual discernment so that they may confidently and assertively hear and respond to God's voice.

The Church of Christ has a limited history and practice of engaging in a conversational relationship with God. The dominant founding figure of the Church of Christ, Alexander Campbell, was essentially a Lockean empiricist who regarded the Bible as the only reliable and trustworthy guide. The Holy Spirit was relegated to the Bible meaning one encountered God and his guidance through the Bible only. This view dominated the theology and practices of most Churches of Christ until the early-twentieth century. Slowly congregations began questioning this theology and started adopting a theology open to a greater role of the Spirit directly at work in the lives of Christians.

This project will address this need by teaching and equipping a small group of men and women in a life with God theology, and spiritual discernment from an Ignatian perspective. For three months they will practice the Prayer of Examen to awaken their hearts, minds and souls to the movements of the Spirit in their daily lives as well as their responses to these divine interactions. They will learn the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits to prepare them to test the movements in their hearts. They will meet with me for spiritual direction monthly to help them learn to see, name and hear God in their daily life. Through the teaching and practices they will learn the theology and spiritual practices that will open them to a confident and joyful life with God.

Content Reader: Randy Rowland, DMin

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To Kristi, Thank you

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I would like to thank everyone at the Turnpike Road Church of Christ for their support and encouragement in this project and in ministry. This would not have happened without you and without your desire to walk this journey together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
PART ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT	
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1. COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT	11
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION	
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	25
CHAPTER 3. A THEOLOGY FOR HEARING AND DISCERNING GOD'S VOICE	41
PART THREE: MINISTRY STRATEGY	
CHAPTER 4. MINISTRY OUTCOMES	66
CHAPTER 5. IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS	80
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	97
APPENDICES	105
BIBLIOGRAPHY	128

PART ONE
MINISTRY CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

The Turnpike Road Church of Christ (TCoC) needs to learn how to listen for the Spirit of God as well as to be led by the Spirit of God. It is a small, aging congregation that has struggled for many years to determine what God's will is for the church. It lives in a state of nostalgia remembering the time when seats were full, all ages were represented and lives were being changed. The church is eager to find a compelling vision from God, but they do not know how. The specific ministry addressed in this project is found in a leadership and theological tradition that lacks the discernment practices and confidence to assertively step out into God's will for the congregation. This project will implement, train and equip the core leaders to live an interactive walk with God and to be able to discern the will of God in their lives so that they will be equipped to do this for the congregation as well.

The TCoC is in desperate need of leaders who are personally energized and enlivened by God and who are able to confidently discern God's will for themselves and for the congregation. The congregation is small and made up of mostly retired people. Left untouched, in its current state of decline, the doors will have to be closed this decade. The congregation is financially stable, but this can change. There is a need for a vision that can pull together the members, unify their efforts and help the church become the salt and light it is called to be.

Leadership has engaged in multiple strategies and attempts to discern what God wants to do with the congregation, but this has typically resulted in confusion and frustration as they do not hear God calling them in any specific direction. Leadership has

tried many times to determine God's vision for the church, but in the end, no one seems to know what God would have them do. It has been said on multiple occasions that the congregation does not struggle with obedience, but rather with discernment. This project is the first step in addressing that struggle.

This congregation is filled with women and men who love God and want to draw closer to him individually and congregationally, but they do not have a sense of his presence or guidance. They are mature, educated, intelligent women and men who are very given to studying the Bible, but struggle to notice or to discern the Spirit of God and his guidance in their own lives. There is a hope and joy and intentionality that comes from doing life with God and most of the members of this church do not find these things in their relationship with God. There is a need on an individual level and a congregational level to learn to listen to God.

This need is not surprising given the theological history of the Church of Christ, which has included the belief that the Spirit of God is alive and active but only through the words of the Bible. This has historically created disciples and church members who are adept and capable of telling someone what the Bible says, but not the Spirit. It has also created members who know a significant amount of information about God and the Bible, but who may or may not exhibit the Christ-like character they read and hear about being available to his followers. This lack and longing has sent some congregations, like the TCoC into the study and pursuit of spiritual formation.

Within the Church of Christ denomination there is a growing interest in spiritual formation and spiritual direction. In the last decade I have been a student at the

International Renovare Institute of Christian Spiritual Formation and then the Spiritual Direction Doctor of Ministry cohort at Fuller Theological Seminary. The student bodies of both of these programs are made up of students from around the world as well as across denominational lines. On multiple occasions, Gary Moon, the director of both programs asked me why I thought there were so many students from the Church of Christ. In both programs Moon noticed that the denomination with the largest number of students was the Church of Christ. This observation is especially surprising since the Church of Christ is not even among the top ten largest church denominations in the US. There is no doubt that there is a hunger for a spiritual connection and relationship with God in the Churches of Christ, as there is in most other denominations. A 2017 Pew Research Center study discovered that the overwhelming reason why people attend church is “to become closer to God.”¹ That is not a surprise, but the Church of Christ has its own unique journey to this end.

In the late-1960s a division began to emerge among the Churches of Christ. One side of the division maintained the old tradition and theology rooted in the idea that the church and the saved were established and confirmed by professing and practicing a specific set of theological beliefs that only the Churches of Christ has correctly exegeted from the Bible. This tradition, while very given to the study of the Bible, had an extremely limited theology of the Spirit and an even more limited practice of interacting and being guided by the Spirit. The other side of the division began reevaluating the role of the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Rather than viewing the Bible as simply a set of rules

¹ Christianity Today, “Pew: Why Americans Go to Church or Stay Home,” *Christianity Today*, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/july/church-attendance-top-reasons-go-or-stay-home-pew.html>.

and propositions to govern a congregation and to authorize proper church practices, the Bible was seen more as a guide leading to a more transformational relationship with God where dependency on God and guidance from the Holy Spirit are possible. The TCoC is among the second group of Churches of Christ. This is a move in the right direction and more in harmony with the nature of God and his witness in the Bible, simply allowing for something or even believing in something does not make a person or church competent or capable at living out of this belief or being led by the Spirit.

The roots of the Church of Christ, the Restoration Movement, involve a very rational faith that relies heavily on the Bible. The Church of Christ believed that its role was to restore and reproduce the first century church. In order to do this, the Church of Christ believed that it is essential to objectively study the Bible to know what the first church did and how they did it. Consequently, members of the Church of Christ were taught to question and doubt their hearts, feelings and intuition. Concluding that the Spirit of God is alive and active yet unsure of how or even if the Spirit might work in ways other than the Bible, is a wearisome challenge.

Many of the books and studies on being led by the Spirit encourage practicing silence, solitude and stillness to create space where one can simply listen to the Spirit in one's heart. While this works for many and can be an effective way to nurture a relationship with God and to discern his will for one's life, it does open a definite possibility of being misled too easily. While God does move in people's hearts, it is important to consider how does one know or discern if one is listening to God's voice or someone else's. It is not hard to imagine someone claiming God's voice told them to do

something when it was merely a personal desire. There must be a means by which one can determine if a voice is from God or not, as John writes in 1 John 4:1, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”²

Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian discernment provide such a means.

Ignatian spirituality is deeply rooted in the belief that God is living and active in this world. It is rooted in the belief that God can be found in all things, that he is always engaging and interacting with people inviting them to move with him and closer to him at all times. Ignatian spirituality recognizes that Christians are all fully capable of learning to discern in their moments of consolation and desolation what he is inviting them to do, in fact, Ignatius even offers rules for discernment. While certainly not foolproof, the guidelines and principles Ignatian spirituality offers can be extremely helpful. For some people, Ignatian discernment rules can be too rigid, structured or utilitarian, however it is significant to note that Ignatius himself was a man of great passion and desire, yet he surrendered himself and his desires to the Spirit of God. It was through much reflection and introspection of his interior experience combined with great periods of prayer, that he wrote his rules which aided him and countless women and men for the last five hundred years in learning to listen to God and to be able to trust and follow him more closely throughout his life.

As stated above, there are practices of discernment that rely heavily on one’s intuition, but without any structure or guidance. While these methods can be effective for some, they do have the potential to lead to selfish or limited insights and understandings. Surely there is a place and the space to understand and incorporate Ignatian discernment

² All Scripture cited comes the *New International Version*.

practices into one's way of life so that they may provide some beneficial direction and guidelines. For those members of the Church of Christ who are eager to step more fully into life with God and a life lead by the Spirit, yet who are tentative of being misled by their hearts and egos, Ignatius' rules for discernment provide the framework necessary to help them more easily step into a fuller life with God.

Thesis

The TCoC is a small congregation but it still has members eager to serve. It consists of members who desire to step more deeply into life with God and into God's purposes for themselves, the congregation and the community. This doctoral project will equip eight-to-twelve core leaders, women and men, from the Turnpike Road Church of Christ in Ignatian spiritual discernment so that they may confidently and assertively hear and respond to God's voice.

The Project

Currently there is a need and readiness within the TCoC to make significant steps in developing a theology that opens it up to the reality of life with God beyond just Bible study. There is also a desire for concrete accessible practices that will cultivate a more vibrant relationship with God. To address this need, this project has taught and equipped eight women and men from among the core leadership in spiritual discernment from an Ignatian perspective. The teaching and equipping of the participants took place in two phases.

Phase one was exclusively a time of teaching. It was a sixteen-week sermon series on life with God. This sermon series was a survey of the entire Bible. It demonstrated that throughout all of history God has been eager to do life with people and has been creating opportunities for people to respond to his invitation to do life together with him. This has always been his plan from the Garden of Eden to the new heavens and new earth. If one is not careful, one can conclude that God's purpose throughout history has been the cross and saving people from their sins. This limited perspective is part of what causes congregations and denominations to lose sight of life with God. In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard refers to this as "the Gospel of Sin Management" and it results in untransformed lives that might be forgiven but are neither abundant nor experience the power and joy of life with God. They are merely waiting to die with the proper bar code attached.³ What God has always offered has been more, much more. He has been offering himself.

Phase two was a three-month time of both teaching and equipping. For three months the participants attended a weekly class series on Ignatian discernment, especially the rules for discerning the spirits. This provided them the tools and interpretive lens they needed to become aware, understand and take the appropriate actions to the movements in their hearts and the voices they hear. They also received weekly articles to add to the learning and to encourage them.

The equipping element of the project had two parts. First, the participants committed to praying the prayer of Examen three times a week during the same three months. The practice of the prayer of Examen demanded of them to take the time to slow

³ Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 41, 42.

down, reflect and notice the various movements in their hearts so they might notice God has been with them and also that have some experiences with which they can use the rules of discernment. Second, the participants met with me for spiritual direction once a month for the same three months. This provided them with a reflective partner to listen and notice and ask where they were seeing God at work in their lives and where they are yet to notice him. I was also able to help them consider their experiences in light of the rules of discernment.

The written project is broken up into three sections. The first section includes a discussion of the ministry context including the area where the church is located – the Santa Barbara and Goleta areas. It also looks at the Turnpike Road Church of Christ – who the congregation is, how its history has shaped it and the need the members have for learning to listen to and discern the voice and will of God.

The second section has two chapters related to the theology of the project. The first chapter is an examination of pertinent literature to understand Ignatius, Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian discernment. These books will include books written by Ignatius himself as well as works by Ignatian scholars. The second chapter includes a theological section that explores both the TCoC's theology of discernment as well as the theology of Ignatian discernment. This section includes Ignatian thought that God is discoverable in all things and that through an interactive relationship with him one becomes his friends - friends who "know his master's business" (Jn 15:15) and an examination of the theology behind discerning God's voice from other voices as well as discernment as a way of life beyond merely seeking guidance.

The third section also consists of two chapters. These two chapters address the actual ministry project. The first chapter discusses the ministry outcomes of the project. These outcomes include a more open and robust theology that allows for a God who can be found in more places than just the Bible and who can engage in an interactive relationship with his people who can hear and respond to him. This chapter also includes a specific ministry plan that provided the participants with the necessary knowledge, practices, and experiences to live this more relational life that God offers and to discern his will in their lives. This plan includes the two phases of education and training described above. This section also includes a detailed timeline for the implementation of the various parts and phases of the project. Phase one began in September of 2019 and went through December. Phase two began in mid-January and went through mid-April. There were two meetings to explain and clarify the process and expectations of the project and of the participants prior to the start of each phase. There were also pre- and post-ministry project questionnaires. These were the primary means of evaluating and assessing the ministry project.

The final section of the written project includes a summary and conclusion. This section discusses the progress made in developing a new theology, new practices and new ability to listen to God and to discern his voice. It also considers future implications and next steps to further this growth with the participants and the rest of the congregation. There are also appendices with material from the sermon series, the class series and the weekly articles.

CHAPTER ONE

COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY CONTEXT

The ministry project will be conducted with the Turnpike Road Church of Christ in Santa Barbara, CA. To effectively plan and administer this project it is necessary to understand the context of the congregation. This section of Chapter 1 will be an examination of the Santa Barbara and Goleta area.

Community Context of Santa Barbara and Goleta

The Turnpike Road Church of Christ is located in Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara area is an idyllic location sometimes called the American Riviera. The cities of Santa Barbara and Goleta are located on the Central Coast of California about one hundred miles north of Los Angeles and more than three hundred miles south of San Francisco. Topographically they are wedged in between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez Mountains. This unique position and location create a climate that is very temperate and mild. Because of its very agreeable climate, Santa Barbara was regarded and even marketed as a tuberculosis sanitarium many years ago. The climate continues to be very

mild and the city has become a desirable location for anyone, not only for the sick but also for the homeless.

Santa Barbara is also home to world class education institutions. The University of California at Santa Barbara has an enrollment of roughly 22,000 students and is ranked as the fifth best public university in the United States.¹ Santa Barbara City College is ranked as the top two year college in the nation.² Westmont College is a top notch private liberal arts school. Santa Barbara is also home to the Fielding Graduate University, Music Academy of the West, Antioch University, Santa Barbara College of Law and Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Santa Barbara is also a city with a rich and proud art and cultural history. Year round they celebrate this cultural diversity with many festivals such as the Old Spanish Days Fiesta, *I Madonnari* Italian Street Painting Festival, the French Festival and the Greek Festival. Because of the Mediterranean climate, Santa Barbara is home of the International Orchid Show. Santa Barbara is also home of the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and the Santa Barbara Jewish Film Festival.

Located in between the ocean and the mountains and with such an aggregable climate, Santa Barbara enjoys a near perfect setting for year-round outdoor activities. Bike and running trails traverse the city. Likewise there are miles and miles of dirt roads and single-track trails for hiking, trail running and mountain biking. The Amgen Tour of California typically makes its way through Santa Barbara. Surfing, sunbathing and beach

¹ “University of California—Santa Barbara Overall Rankings,” *U.S. News and World Report*, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/university-of-california-santa-barbara-1320/overall-rankings>.

² “Top 50 Best Value Community Colleges 2019,” *Value Colleges*, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.valuecolleges.com/ranking/best-community-colleges>.

combing are big draws to the city. The city and the beaches also draw beach volleyball players and tournaments to Santa Barbara.

Because of the rich, varied and pleasant atmosphere and environment along with the limited space to build, life in Santa Barbara is expensive. According to bestplaces.net, Santa Barbara's cost of living scores a 254 with one hundred being the national average and the median home costs \$1.14 million.³ As a result, the Santa Barbara area has many affluent and many impoverished people. From the homeless on State Street to the celebrity mansions in Montecito and Hope Ranch, the area is a challenging place to live economically. The residents of the area tend to fall in one of three categories: they have lived in the area for a long time, they have sacrificed to live there or they are soon to be moving to a more favorable economic situation. This creates a context where people work hard and relax with equal vigor enjoying the outdoors or many local attractions and activities.

The area also has a rich entrepreneurial history that speaks of the vanguard spirit found there. The first Motel 6 opened in Santa Barbara. Kinkos started in Santa Barbara. The hamburger chain The Habit as well as the restaurant chain Freebirds both began in Santa Barbara. The Egg McMuffin was invented in Santa Barbara. More recently technology has been coming out of Santa Barbara. Lynda.com, Citrix Online, Raytheon, Sonos and many others are all from the Santa Barbara area.

All of those factors—the wealth, the climate, the natural beauty, the creative and self-starting way of life—come together to create a religious context that is not

³ “Cost of Living in Santa Barbara, California,” *Sperling's Best Places*, accessed December 10, 2018, https://www.bestplaces.net/cost_of_living/city/california/santa_barbara.

surprising. According to the Barna Group, the Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, San Luis Obispo area rank as the twenty-first top churchless cities in the US. It is also the second highest ranked city for residents who are considered never churched.⁴ The area also has an abundance of Nones and SBNR (Spiritual But Not Religious) residents. Fortunately, there is a well-established Christian presence in the area. This presence is largely due to Westmont College and the influence of Westmont's alumni as both clergy and laity.

Ministry Context – The Turnpike Road Church of Christ

The TCoC's heritage is from the Stone Campbell Movement otherwise known as the Restoration Movement. The Restoration Movement, which began in the early-1800s, resulted in the Disciples of Christ, the Christian Church and the Church of Christ. The Stone Campbell Movement, in its beginning, was able to agree to disagree on many doctrinal differences for the sake of unity within the church.⁵ Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell differed on their understandings of fundamental theological issues such as the

⁴ "Churchless Cities: Where Does Your City Rank?," *Barna*, accessed December 10, 2018, <https://www.barna.com/research/churchless-cities-where-does-your-city-rank/>.

⁵ Stone and Campbell were both Presbyterian ministers; Barton Stone lived in Kentucky while Thomas Campbell lived in Pennsylvania. Both Stone and Campbell left the Presbyterian Church to start new churches that allowed for a broader fellowship of Christians. In 1804, Stone wrote *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* ending his connection with the Presbyterian Church and beginning his pursuit of a wider, simpler fellowship. In 1809, after being removed from his post in the Presbyterian Church, Thomas Campbell launched a new movement, the Christian Association of Washington Pennsylvania, with the founding document entitled, *The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association*. After Thomas Campbell wrote the document and started a new movement, his son, Alexander Campbell took over his father's work. Stone's move was inspired by his observations at the *Cane Ridge Revival* of 1801, in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. At the revival, Stone saw so many people responding to God in such a free and broad way that it challenged his Calvinistic theology of the predestination of certain people and he wanted to be a part of a more unifying and embracing fellowship. Campbell's move was precipitated by his administering of the Lord's Supper to members of an unapproved Presbyterian Church, which resulted in him losing his job. Campbell, like Stone, was compelled to move beyond the confines of a theology that was too small for him and his experiences and so he became a church planter.

Trinity,⁶ Christology⁷ and the Holy Spirit⁸ as well as more practical issues such as the name of the church.⁹ In spite of these differences, big or little, theological or practical, they regarded the oneness of the church as more important.¹⁰

As the movement continued and grew, debates over doctrine continued and differences grew too. As a product of his time, home and education,¹¹ Alexander Campbell was greatly influenced by John Locke's empiricism. He had a high view of humanity and humanity's intellectual potential and little use for emotions and subjectivity. He believed the Holy Spirit was only at work through the Bible. He regarded the Bible as a book of facts to be mastered and advocated a hermeneutic based on direct

⁶ In *An Address to the Churches*, Stone argued that God is one not three and that the word Trinity is not found in the Bible. Campbell, on the other hand, argued for a more traditional orthodox view of the Trinity, "Elementary Views," *Millennial Harbinger* (July 1854): 367.

⁷ In *An Address to the Christian Churches in Kentucky, Tennessee and Ohio*, Stone argues for a subordinationist view of Christ where the Son is subordinate to the Father in nature and being. Again, Campbell held an orthodox view of Christ in the Trinity.

⁸ In an article entitled, "On Prayer," *The Christian Messenger 1* (August 25, 1827): 236, Stone argues that the denial of the direct operation of the Spirit in this world cuts at the heart of prayer, stands opposed to all of Christian belief, experience purpose. In *The Christian Baptist* (Vol 1): 65, Thomas Campbell argued that the Spirit is primarily and essentially exclusively at work through the Bible, a view Alexander held.

⁹ Both Stone and Campbell preferred a simple basic name. Stone preferred "Christian" and the "Christian Church" while Campbell, in his pursuit of unity favored "one Church of Christ upon the earth." Both favored individuals being referred to as "Disciples" rather than a more denominationally rooted term.

¹⁰ January 1, 1832, in Lexington, Kentucky, following a multiday series of lectures and conversations, two congregations, one connected to Barton Stone and one connected to Alexander Campbell decided to put aside their differences and become one unified church.

¹¹ Alexander Campbell grew up in Ireland during the Enlightenment. He attended the University of Glasgow.

commands, necessary inferences and apostolic example. The unity of the church was found in right practices, order and beliefs.¹²

Barton Stone's understandings were much different. Stone regarded the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God at work in this world as well as in the Bible. Stone believed the purpose of Scripture was, when encountered with the Holy Spirit, meant to transform people into the image of Christ – the Bible masters the reader rather than the reader mastering the Bible. Stone also believed that the unity of the Church was found in a shared salvation.¹³

Not long after Stone's death and just before Campbell's death, the nation as well as the movement was devastated by the Civil War. As a result, the differences that were once overlooked became justification to move towards splitting the movement in two. It was not for another twenty years, but the rift had begun until eventually in 1906 the movement was official recorded as split into the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ.¹⁴

At that time, the Church of Christ was primarily aligned with Campbell. Over the course of the next sixty years the Church of Christ went through a process of discovering its own identity digging deeper and deeper into the theological path Campbell had started. Eventually, after World War II, the Church of Christ became one of the top ten largest denominations in the US. Then in the late-1960s, festering questions began to solidify

¹² C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1988), 85-86.

¹³ Douglas A. Foster, *The Story of the Churches of Christ*, DVD, Directed by Philip Dosa, Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2015.

¹⁴ This division became official by way of the US Census of 1906. In the 1906 census the Church of Christ was listed as a separate and independent denomination.

and resulted in a new identity crisis for the Church of Christ. Some congregations doubled down on Campbell and his influence and theology while other congregations, for lack of a better descriptor, beginning to exhibit more of the fruit of Stone's influence and lean into his perspective and theology. The TCoC has been moving more and more into Stone's broader more Spirit-led perspective. That being said, the elders and the more senior members were born and raised in Churches of Christ that espoused a theology, hermeneutic and ecclesiology with ties to Campbell's theology. For all their desire to be open to the Spirit's leading and guiding, their default theology and formative experience with the Church were not.¹⁵

The history of the TCoC goes back to 1936. It began as a small group meeting in the home Mr. and Mrs. E.F. Day. There were three Christians in the original meeting. From this very modest beginning the congregation grew until it purchased its first building in 1939. Eventually the congregation outgrew the building and ended up moving from auditorium to auditorium. A significant event occurred in TCoC's history in the Spring of 1966, the death of Peggy Donaubaer, the manager of the UCSB swim team. This prompted Rick Rowland, member of the TCoC and coach of the swim team to conceive of the idea for a Christian ministry at the university. In the Fall of 1966 Campus Advance for Christ was launched at UCSB. In 1972, the TCoC purchased the land that would become the site of the congregation today. In March of 1975, the TCoC held its first service and thus began the golden age of the congregation. The worship was alive and vibrant and well attended. The children's ministry was large and lively. Multiple ministries were a thriving part of the church – juvenile hall, convalescent homes,

¹⁵ Foster, *The Story of the Churches of Christ*.

visitation, World Bible School, children's homes, radio and of course the campus ministries. At an open house community day for the church in 1975, the elders stated that "The beautiful structure itself will be a colossal waste unless the spiritual lives of individual members of the church are truly renewed and energized."¹⁶ They believed that unless this vital inward challenge was met, "it does not matter what the church professes outwardly. [Our] conviction is that it takes more than a scriptural name or claim to make a body of believers into Christ's church."¹⁷ In that statement one can hear the slow transition that began even in the 1970s to move towards a more transformationally-oriented, Spirit-led congregation.

Over the next couple of decades the congregation maintained its numbers, ministry as well as its pursuit of letting God out of the box of traditional Church of Christ theology. Devotional songs and praise songs not found in the hymnals were an important part of this evolution in the 1980s. The size of the congregation remained about the same, but this was largely due to Church of Christ members moving into the area. The campus ministry continued and was eventually taken over by Ron Smith, a man who saw well beyond the traditional Church of Christ theology and helped a great number of students discover life with Christ. After twelve years of work as the campus pastor, Smith became the church pastor and his influence and encouragement began to touch the lives of the entire congregation. He took hold of the work of the Spirit that started in the 1970s and continued to slowly turn and orient the congregation more into a church that was more

¹⁶ Jerry Rushford, *Turnpike Road Church of Christ Community Day Newspaper* (Santa Barbara, CA: Turnpike Road Church of Christ, April 20, 1975).

¹⁷ Ibid.

about becoming Christ-like than becoming experts of the Bible. Somewhere during Smith's tenure Santa Barbara ceased being a sleepy little beach town and started to become the world-renowned tourist destination it is today and with it the cost of living started to become what it is today as well. As a result, fewer people were moving into Santa Barbara which meant fewer Church of Christ members moved to town. In fact, little-by-little more members ended up moving out of town, drastically depleting the membership of the church.

Turnpike today consists of fifty-four members. Twenty-eight of those members are retired, thirteen employed, seven unemployed, six students and five with severe mental disabilities. Eight of the members are under forty years of age and twenty-eight of the members are new to the church since I started pastoring, with sixteen of them being new converts or rediscovering church. The official leadership of the church is made up of two elders and me. There is a group of ten-to-fifteen members who are very willing and able to involve themselves in the life and growth of the church. We are financially stable. We recently paid off the mortgage on the parsonage. There is one caveat to our financial stability, as is the case with many smaller congregations; we are dependent on a few very generous families.

TCoC's Leadership – Vision and Mission

The TCoC is a wonderful small church. The people are loving and welcoming to any and all. In fact, as can be seen in the demographics above, the congregation is able to care for and embrace people that are not always welcomed in some churches. Nonetheless, big needs for the Turnpike Church are a vision and a mission.

Over the course of my work at TCoC, the congregation has undertaken a number of strategic development processes to find both vision and mission. It has carefully considered and deliberated its values and crafted inspiring statements about each of them. It has gone through Aubrey Malphur's Strategic Planning, Natural Church Development Assessment, Spiritual Gifts Inventory and an eighteen-month church growth cohort with five other Southern California Churches of Christ. In the end, whether the processes have included the whole congregation, the ten-to-fifteen core members or just the elders and minister, the result is an inability to discern God's will, where he is calling the congregation to go and how he is inviting it to serve.

As much as this is a congregational and church leadership need, it is also a need of the individual members. With the large number of retired and unemployed people at TCoC (65 percent), there is a listlessness about many of the members. This is due partially to age, but also due to a lack of purpose and vocation. The more recently retired people especially are looking for a way to meaningfully contribute to the church and the community. They find themselves with an abundance of time on their hands but are unsure of what to do and unsure about how they can discern God's will for themselves.

TCoC's Underlying Need – Discernment

The "stuckness" of the congregation has many causes and calls for many responses. The specific ministry need being addressed in this project is found in a leadership, a membership and a theological tradition that lacks the discernment practices and confidence to step out into God's will. This project's aim is to equip and train a group from the leaders and core members to live an interactive walk with God so that

they will be able to discern the will of God in their lives and eventually that of the congregation.

The TCoC is still emerging from a tradition that valued “rightness” with God not only above relationship with God but to the neglect of relationship with God. To live in an interactive relationship with God was not a point of discussion. Obedience was important—obedience to the Bible—the direct commands, the necessary inferences and the apostolic examples – not obedience to God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The history of the TCoC is one that struggles to know where God is leading the congregation. The theology of the Church of Christ, while differing from congregation to congregation, ranges from a belief that restricts and limits the work and movement of the Spirit to the work of the Bible itself to acknowledging and theorizing about passages such as Romans 8 on the Spirit aiding prayers or the gifts of the Spirit. Practically speaking however, little is actually done to learn how to listen, to rely on and to follow the guidance of the Spirit. This has resulted in a hesitancy and reticence to discern the work of the Spirit beyond issues, beliefs and doctrinal positions. The congregation and leadership recognize this reluctance and absolutely acknowledge the Spirit is at work in many ways, but they do not have the vocabulary, the experiences or the practice in hearing God or discerning his leading in other ways and areas.

Developing an interactive relationship with God where his presence and his acts of grace are noticed, engaged and heard has the power to create a Spirit empowered group of leaders and members that can discern and step into a grand vision for the TCoC. Learning to step more deeply into the spiritual side of a spiritual life has a powerful

potential to resonate and connect with many people who acknowledge a spiritual side of life and of reality but who do not find it in churches and religious institutions.

TCoC's Readiness to Listen

As noted above, there seems to be a new identity crisis going on within the Churches of Christ with one side holding tightly to the ideas and beliefs which Campbell taught and the other side loosening their grip on being right and trying to step deeper into a more interactive and transformative relationship with God. In the late-1960s the TCoC started slowly shifting and leaning into relationship with God. Some of the older members speak about the TCoC “finding grace” in the 1970s and 1980s. Since the 1980s the pastors at Turnpike have done the hard work of introducing and emphasizing spiritual transformation to the congregation. This shift has resulted in changes of positions on different issues and practices, such as an egalitarian stance on the roles of men and women. This shift away from a posture and identity built on the correct beliefs has also resulted in a sense of drifting and a lack of self-assurance. While this consequence has been difficult and unsettling it has brought about a desire to be more God dependent and Spirit led.

For the last six years an intentional focus among the leadership has been to invite, lead and educate the church about a life with God and it seems to be a welcome invitation. This invitation, while challenging, has been moving and motivating people to want to step more deeply into an interactive life with Christ. Through the education and experience received from the Renovare Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation the congregation has been introduced and considered works by tremendous authors such as

Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, James Bryan Smith, Trevor Hudson, John Ortberg and Gary Moon. The books and DVD studies the congregation has studied have been very well received and have nurtured and encouraged a theology and an expectation that is open to the work of the Spirit. Again, due to the influence, education and resources from the Renovare Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation, many practices and disciplines have been shared with the congregation as well as compelling personal experiences of transformation and a life more Spirit led and the congregation has responded with an eagerness to walk this journey themselves. This project is another part of the plan to provide the TCoC with the theology and spiritual practices to continue its growth into Christlikeness and life with God.

PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of resources and literature relevant to understanding this project. This project is about Ignatian spirituality and Ignatian discernment. Due to the fact that Ignatian spirituality is born out of the reflective process of Ignatius of Loyola, it is essential to be acquainted with his life. Therefore, the resources being reviewed include books by Ignatius of Loyola as well as books about Ignatian spirituality and discernment.

***Eyes to See, Ears to Hear – An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality* by David Lonsdale**

In the introduction to *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear*, editor Philip Sheldrake notes that, “There is a widespread hunger for spirituality in all its forms;” however, he continues, “Christianity is not always associated in people’s minds with ‘spirituality.’”¹ David Lonsdale, therefore, reaches back to sixteenth century Spain to introduce the reader to the spirituality and life of the great saint and mystic Ignatius of Loyola.

¹ David Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 9.

Summary of Main Argument

Lonsdale begins by introducing the reader to some of the more popular images and stages of Ignatius' life: a would-be hero, a soldier, a career cleric, a pilgrim and evangelizer. It is not easy to understand Ignatian spirituality without some awareness of his life story. His spirituality emerged and developed as a result of his careful attention and reflection on his lived experiences. As Lonsdale writes, "It is clear from Ignatius' biography that experience was the main catalyst of change in his life."² It was through Ignatius' reflection on his life that he "saw in them the signs of God's presence and action."³ Ignatian spirituality invites Christians to reflect on their own lives with a belief and awareness that God was and is there. For Ignatius and his followers, it was essential to reflect and learn to see God in one's own life, to be filled with gratitude for his grace and presence as well as learn to use those divine interactions as pointers and guides into the direction God was leading.

Next Lonsdale considers Ignatius and Jesus. Spiritually speaking, people are all formed by their ideas and images they have of the divine. For Ignatius, one of the formative events in his life and significant catalysts in his full conversion was reading a book on the life of Christ. Ignatius was deeply touched and impacted by the image of Jesus as the eternal kind, a traveling preacher on a mission, a man of embraced humility and poverty, a friend and consoler and as an intermediary with the Divine Majesty. As

² Ibid., 56.

³ Ibid.

Lonsdale writes, “In a very real and practical sense Jesus was the way to God for Ignatius.”⁴

As Lonsdale continues in discussing the various images of the Trinity and their impact on Ignatius, he notes a significant aspect of Ignatius’ practice and his spirituality. Ignatius gravitated to the images that appealed to him. In Ignatian spirituality Christians find a freedom and liberty to seek for images that speak to them and that help address the needs of their experiences. Lonsdale notes that, “For that to happen we have to return constantly as Ignatius did, to the sources of our images in scripture and the traditions of those Christians who have known, loved and served God well.”⁵ It is through this freedom, Christians are invited to engage and bring together their lived experiences and practical life with images from Scripture to breathe life and insight into their walk with God.

Another important aspect of Ignatian spirituality is discernment. Discernment lies at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. Ignatian spirituality is not merely about quiet times, prayer and contemplation. Ignatian spirituality is about learning how to live out the two great commandments to love God and neighbor, and that is a result of discernment. Lonsdale writes, “Very briefly discernment is the art of appreciating the gifts that God has given us and discovering how we might best respond to that love in daily life.”⁶ For Ignatius, discernment “is a process of finding one’s own way of discipleship in a particular set of circumstances; a means of responding to the call of Christian love and

⁴ Ibid., 61.

⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁶ Ibid., 91.

truth in a situation where there are often conflicting interests.”⁷ This was first discovered and made most clear to Ignatius during his convalescence after his battle in Pamplona. Once again for Ignatius, his spirituality involves reflection and learning to “sift through our daily experience by noting and reflecting regularly on our affective responses to God and to life and its events.”⁸ It is by learning to observe and consider patterns of responses to God’s presence or absence in one’s life that she is able to learn where Jesus is leading her.

It is this process of stopping to note any significant events and to notice one’s responses to those events – movements towards God and his invitation to life with him or movements away from God and into life apart from him. It is this process of discernment that occurs over and over again in various forms throughout Ignatian spirituality. This is at the heart of Ignatian prayer or the “Examen,” and it is at the heart of spiritual direction. The “Examen” is typically done alone in a private moment and spiritual direction is done in the company of a spiritual director who can help one clarify and sort through these moments and movements.

Next Lonsdale discusses Ignatius development of the Jesuits and their particular embodiment of Ignatian spirituality. He also discusses the Church and the implications of Ignatius’ approach within the Catholic Church for clergy and laity. Finally Lonsdale notes some of the contemporary issues in Ignatian studies.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 95.

Contribution to Topic

Since the heart of this project is a specific aspect of Ignatian spirituality – Ignatian discernment, this book provides concise historical and contemporary interpretation and insight. It places the practice of discernment into a larger broader theological and practical framework rather than simply trying to “do” Ignatian discernment. Ignatius’ process of discernment is not something one just starts doing. Ignatian discernment is a result of a way of life. For Ignatius, life is meant to be lived in friendship with Jesus, getting to know him and to know one’s self in relationship to him and his will. Ignatian discernment is “done” in the context of being aware of God’s presence and invitation to move closer to him in all things; it is “done” through a transformative relationship with Jesus and it is “done” as a way of practically living out the two great commands which are the fulfillment of the Law – to love. This book discusses the fullness and interconnected nature of Ignatian spirituality with discernment as a result and by-product of living life with Jesus.

Limitation of the Resource in Light of the Ministry Challenge

This book is quite helpful and insightful. It opens up and illuminates one’s understanding of Ignatius’ spirituality; however it is not the clearest or most systematic introduction to Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality. It does bring out and put together pieces and insights that are a bit more nuanced than some other introductions. This is not a book to recommend to newcomers to the topic, but it is a rich book useful for further learning and growth in Ignatian spirituality.

A Pilgrim's Journey by Ignatius of Loyola

In 1552, two Jesuits asked Ignatius to write his story of how God had worked in his life resulting in his conversion and eventually to the founding of the Jesuits. Initially Ignatius thought it would be a work of vanity on his part. Two years later, he was convinced and convicted that God wanted him to write his story, and rather than a work of vanity, he saw it as an exercise of humility.⁹ Throughout his story it becomes clear that Ignatius was convinced by positive and negative experiences that if he listened to the work of the Spirit around him and within him he could find God everywhere, live as a friend of God and become transformed into a follower who knows God's will for a given day as well as for his own life's project.

Summary of Main Argument

In 1521, Ignatius and his fellow countrymen were under attack from the French in Pamplona, Spain. During the battle, Ignatius was struck in the leg by a cannon ball. He needed medical attention and was sent back home. Ignatius had been an avid reader, especially of chivalrous romance novels, and asked for a book to pass the time. The only books in the house happened to be *The Life of Christ* and a book about Spanish saints. After some time and some very insightful self-reflection Ignatius was able to see God at work in that place through his experiencing of various emotions in response to the books and his imagination. In his account of his convalescence and conversion he writes, "From experience he knew that some thoughts left him sad while others made him happy, and

⁹ Joseph N. Tylenda, *A Pilgrims Journey* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 30.

little by little he came to perceive the different spirits were moving him; one coming from the devil, the other coming from God.”¹⁰

Throughout the book Ignatius recounts story after story of his growing sensitivity to God at work inviting him into life through various situations, experiences and people. Some of the time he responded willing and whole-heartedly to God’s invitation to life together and at times Ignatius responded with great resistance and uncertainty. Ignatius experienced great highs and deep lows as he learned to journey together with Jesus and to surrender himself to the will of God. As a result of time spent reflecting on his life’s journey, especially his time and experience in Manresa, Ignatius wrote one of the great spiritual masterpieces, *The Spiritual Exercises*. This book guides a person into prayer, reflection and the life of Jesus in such a way that they too can learn to perceive the different spirits moving in them and to become a friend of Jesus.

Contribution to Topic

A Pilgrim’s Journey is the story of a man living out and struggling to incarnate friendship and life with God. While not absolutely necessary to understand the discernment of the spirits as an individual or as a small group, *A Pilgrim’s Journey* is the testimony of someone who did it with all his virtues and vices. The book contributes to the topic of discernment in that it shows a way to an interactive life with God where the “voice” of God is “heard” and recognized. From this book one can gain an understanding into the heart, mind and life of such a man. It provides a number of powerful stories and

¹⁰ Ibid., 48.

illustrations to encourage, challenge and illuminate the path to learning to discern God's voice.

Limitation of the Resource in Light of the Ministry Challenge

The limitation of *A Pilgrim's Journey* is that it is an autobiography and not a manual on how to do discernment. It is also a story nearly five hundred years old in a country and culture distinctly different to twenty-first century Santa Barbara. Therefore it is open to misinterpretation and misleading ideas – all of which Ignatius would call invitations to discern the work of the spirit in one's life. While this invitation to practice discernment would be good, this book was not recommended to the group members, as it has the potential to be distracting and discouraging until one has already begun the journey.

***Draw Me into Your Friendship: The Spiritual Exercises* by David L Fleming**

Draw Me Into Your Friendship is a translation and an updated modern translation of St Ignatius' *The Spiritual Exercises*. In the Preliminary Observations, Ignatius writes, "The structure of these exercises has the purpose of leading a person to a true spiritual freedom."¹¹ He continues, "We grow into this freedom by gradually bringing an order of values into our lives so that we find that at the moment of choice or decision we are not swayed by any disordered love."¹² Ignatius believed that people were made to be free to live and love like Christ; however, because of humanity's disordered attachments and

¹¹ David Fleming, *Draw Me Into Your Friendship* (St Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2013), 23.

¹² Ibid.

desires people are prone to live life out of self-love and selfishness. Ignatius believed that it is possible to grow and advance in one's spiritual life and friendship with Jesus by doing the series of meditations, prayers and reflections that make up the *Spiritual Exercises*, and so doing them one may become free to love and live like Christ.

Summary of Main Arguments

The beginning and end of Ignatius' argument is a God of love. People are not free because they do not trust God. People do not trust God because they are not aware and have not experienced the fullness of his love and their belovedness. As people are rooted and grounded in a relationship with Jesus in love, they will begin to hunger and yearn for a new life, a liberated life.

To become freed people, people must recognize their brokenness, but even more importantly, they need to experience the healing presence and love of Jesus. They must come to know themselves as totally, completely, unconditionally loved with all their virtues and vices. As they step into their belovedness, they are then able to hear the invitation to become converted from their misguided strategies of life, hear the call of the king and begin a life of discipleship.

At this point, once they have begun the process of surrendering themselves to Christ, they begin to know, to love and to submit to Jesus. This of course is in learning to follow Jesus. By meditating on his life, ministry and teaching they are brought to a point of decision to take his purpose, his practices and his path up as their own.

To find a life of freedom, freed from disordered attachments and selfishness, Ignatius next takes people to the cross. They are invited to watch and to experience the

Holy Week so that they might bear witness to the Paschal Mystery, to see Jesus' great suffering and his great love that enables him to endure on their behalf. They meditate on this so that they too might know and experience their own death, burial and ultimately their own rebirth as new creatures free to love.

Finally, after knowing their brokenness, choosing a better way of life and after following Christ to the cross, they are able to more fully grasp and contemplate God's love for them and to choose to live lives of joy responding to his love with love – for him and for all. To find freedom they must understand what they are being freed from, what they are being freed for and go through the life changing process of death to self to arrive at that freedom. This is the argument and the journey Ignatius' offers in *The Spiritual Exercises*.

Contribution to Topic

This project is deeply impacted by Ignatius' life and work. Much of this book is about learning to discern the call and voice of God from the calls of one's disordered attachments. People seem to be almost naturally inclined to move into their fear, anger and shame and farther away from the invitation to love and life from God. *The Spiritual Exercises* is about learning to recognize and surrender to the invitation of God.

Ignatius provides an extremely helpful part to this project in his two sets of rules of discernment. These rules are about learning to determine when one is being drawn to or away from God; when one is moving towards faith, hope and love and when one is retreating from them and into fear, despair and anger. These two sets of rules are found in

The Spiritual Exercises.¹³ These sets of rules are an integral part of this project and the main topic that was taught to the group about discerning what is going on within them.

Limitation of the Resource in Light of the Ministry Challenge

This book is a guide for spiritual directors who are guiding directees through Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. It is not intended to be read by the directees or the participants in this project. Therein lays the limitation of this book. As a future consideration, it was recommended that the participants in the project eventually find a spiritual director trained to give the spiritual exercises and do them, but not until after the project was completed.

***The Examen Prayer* by Timothy M. Gallagher**

The Examen Prayer argues that there is a way of praying or examining one's conscience with God that can put people on "a path toward what our hearts most deeply desire: a growing relationship with God."¹⁴ This path invites people to open their hearts and minds to the ever present reality and revelation of God as well as to how they receive or reject him. Through this reflection and examination they are able to learn to become more in tune with their own heart and desires and with God's invitation to friendship with him and therefore more freely step deeper into a relationship with God.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 246-267.

¹⁴ Timothy M Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 21.

¹⁵ Ibid., 20-21.

Summary of Main Argument

The book is a practical, accessible description of the prayer of Examen most frequently associated with St Ignatius. Gallagher divides his book into five parts: desire, practice, conditions, courage and fruit. Part one is a discussion of the fact that simply praying the five steps of the Examen is ineffective without a heartfelt desire and intention to make oneself available to God through the prayer. This part also describes Ignatius' discovery of this form of prayer and ways he was led closer and farther from God as he prayed it.

Part two is an explanation of the five steps of the prayer as well as a discussion of the interaction and movement through the steps. These steps include gratitude, petition, review, forgiveness and renewal. Part three is a discussion of the broader life conditions that create a more effective experience with the prayer of Examen. These conditions include spiritual accompaniment, an already existing prayer life and a developing contemplative capacity. Conditions also discusses some of the specific conditions and questions concerning the actual time of prayer – where, when, with whom, how to begin and how to end.

Part four is a warning and a reassurance. It is a warning in that anyone who prays this prayer with intent and endurance is bound to encounter struggle and suffering, whether it is from within or from the places God leads. It is a reassurance in that as one draws closer to God one encounters his love and presence that cannot bear for him to settle. God leads people into purifying paths that may involve momentary discomfort, but even in those moments he is with them leading onto surrender more to his love. Part five

is a description of the fruits that come from praying this prayer. Out of this friendship with God it is possible to become people who have an ability to choose rather than react, who live a life of clarity even in the midst of chaos and a who are so familiar with God that they can determine and discern God's will for their own lives.

Contribution to Topic

This project is about training and equipping a group of leaders at my church to be able to step out into God's will confidently and boldly for their own lives and for the life of the congregation. These leaders need to learn to be able to discern the will of God for the church, which I believe is an extension of their ability to do this in their own lives. The Prayer of Examen is an ideal training ground for them to discover a God who is present to them in all things and who invites and desires them to step into that relationship and will. The Prayer of Examen is a powerful reflective tool that opens one up and trains one to recognize God as well as to learn to do life with God.

It is the same for church leadership; that is why the participants in the project are required to practice the Examen. The book is a tremendously practical and comprehensible description of this practice – a key component of training, reflection and even accountability for the success of my project.

Limitation of the Resources in Light of the Ministry Challenge

There are no glaring limitations with this resource. The congregation was introduced to the Prayer of Examen in 2018 and it was received very well. A number of the members of the church "tried out" the Examen during the series and found it to be

helpful and a blessing to their awareness and life with God. Over the last ten years, the TCOC has been introduced and considered many Catholic resources and references without any push back or negative feedback. This resource will be immensely helpful.

***Spiritual Consolation* by Timothy M Gallagher**

The true freedom Jesus offers is not found in merely knowing how to discern and respond to moments of desolation and urges to step away from God; the true freedom Jesus offers requires the ability to understand and discern the moments of joy and consolation as well. People do not want to be tossed to and fro by their more base and destructive inclinations, but likewise, they must become wise enough to recognize when their moments of happiness and goodness may potentially drive a wedge between them and God as well. The author poses the following question early on in the book: “How many generous people who sincerely desire to love and serve God know when their spiritual joy is an authentic sign that God is calling them to the choice that inspires that joy?”¹⁶ This is the topic of *Spiritual Consolation*. Timothy Gallagher contends that, by understanding and implementing the second set of Ignatius’ rules for the discernment of spirits people can journey even deeper into the freedom Christ offers to them as his friends and disciples.

Summary of Main Argument

St Ignatius differentiates between two types of spirits – good spirits and bad spirits. These spirits are at work within everyone to move them toward the good (God) or

¹⁶ Timothy M Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), 4.

toward the bad/away from the good (God). These spirits incite feelings of “consolation” and “desolation.” A feeling of consolation is an experience of God which results in their loving and acting for the good of God and others. A feeling of desolation is an experience of anguish, despair or isolation which results in a movement toward self-preoccupation, anxiety and withdrawal. In *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius writes two sets of rules to help someone discern the spirits at work within them. This can be a straightforward discernment process; however it is not always as simple as it seems. A feeling of sadness may be from a good or bad spirit leading one toward or away from God. Likewise, a feeling of joy and goodness may be a leading in either direction. Discerning the spirit behind the feeling and where it is leading one is not as simple as discerning if one likes the feeling or not. Sometimes these spirits are straightforward and sometimes they work in subtle misdirection.

In *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius writes two sets of rules for discerning the spirits. The first set is primarily about discerning the spirits when one is experiencing desolation, which is a relatively direct clear-cut process and helpful as one must “learn the ropes” of following and discerning the will and voice of God. The second set is about a more nuanced discernment. This set of rules is about how to discern which type of spirit is at work when one is experiencing consolation and where is it leading them. Gallaher’s book is a discussion of this second set of rules.

Contribution to Topic

This project is all about teaching, equipping and training a group of people to listen to the work of God as well as the inner working of themselves. Ignatius’ rules for

discerning the spirits is a tremendous guide and aid to learn to process what one hears going on in one's interior world. This book is an essential resource for this project in that it is a great discussion of a significant part of the heart of it. This book illuminates some powerful "rules" that teach someone what to do after they have learned to slow down and to observe what is going on within them. Without adequate tools to evaluate what one is noticing in their interior world; they are still essentially living an unexamined life.

Limitation of the Resources in Light of the Ministry Challenge

There are no limitations with this resource for this project. Since this project is to train people in discernment, this book provides the insight and explanation needed.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGY OF THE NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVE

This chapter is an examination of the theology behind and guiding this project. It includes a critical examination of relevant historical texts and Scriptures. It will also include an examination of the Church of Christ's relevant history and theology. Finally it will compare and contrast the two.

A Critical Examination of the Core Elements of Ignatian Spirituality

There are at least five core elements to Ignatian spirituality: finding God in all things, a transforming friendship with Jesus, discernment, apostolic ministry and living the *magis*.¹ Of these five, the first three are particularly essential to this project. That being said, to understand Ignatian spirituality it is first necessary to understand the man Ignatius as well as the nature of his conversion.

Ignatius' early life was a passionate pursuit of fame and renown through the military. His military career was ended by a cannon ball that struck his leg in battle. During his convalescence Ignatius read two books, the only two in the house. One book

¹ Trevor Hudson, "Exploring the Ignatian Vision," Lecture," (Fuller DMin course, Malibu, CA, September 20, 2017).

was about the life of Christ and the other book was about the life of the saints. Through his own reflection he came to realize that his heart was pushed and pulled in two different directions. When he considered a life of faith and dedication to God, he noticed a sense of consolation that rested in him. When he considered a life of vain and worldly pursuits, he noticed a momentary sense of excitement that quickly faded and turn to what he called desolation.² It was this reflective process that was his entry point into his spirituality.

David Fleming writes, “The goal of the spiritual life, as Ignatius conceived it, is to “choose what better leads to God’s deepening life in me.” This is a dynamic goal. “We are to *choose*-to freely unite ourselves with God. Most of the time this means that we are to join with God in active work in the world.”³ Fleming continues, “This active life rests on a foundation of reflection. Ignatian spirituality teaches one to discern the footprints of God in one’s own experiences. It shows how to look back on one’s life, to sift through one’s memories in order to see the way God has been dealing with one over the years.”⁴ Ignatius’ life and spirituality were marked with heart sensitive reflection. It is this reflective sensitivity that led him into the core elements of his spirituality, three of which will be examined here.

Finding God in All Things

George Traub writes, “It [Ignatian spirituality] begins with and continually reverts to the awareness of the presence and power and care of God everywhere, for everyone,

² Tylanda, *A Pilgrim’s Journey*, 37-53.

³ David L. Fleming, *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 19.

⁴ Ibid.

and at all times.”⁵ The first exercise in Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* is to reflect and meditate on what he called the Principle and Foundation, which begin with the following, “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created.”⁶ On the Principle and Foundation, Jim Manney writes, “The message of the First Principle and Foundation is that we’re not on our own.”⁷ All things in the world are a connecting point to God. There are no divisions between God and life. God meets people in every experience they have.

John English states it with these words, “Ignatius takes it for granted that God’s grace is always operating.”⁸ God meets people wherever they are. For Ignatius, this is not a comforting quip in a time of trouble but a description of the nature of reality. The fact that God can be found in all things and that God is always graciously inviting people to find him starts Ignatian spirituality with a very affirming and positive view of all things. It is this belief, a belief based on his personal experiences that gives birth to the second element, as William Barry writes, “God creates this universe precisely in order to invite other persons into the relational life of the Trinity.”⁹

⁵ George W. Traub, *An Ignatian Reader* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 53.

⁶ Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 26.

⁷ Jim Manney, *God Finds Us* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013), 41.

⁸ John J. English, *Spiritual Freedom* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995), 19.

⁹ William Barry, *Finding God in All Things* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Marie Press, 1991), 14.

A Transforming Friendship with Christ

Saints seem to come from one of two beginnings, they are either born pious and holy and step deeper into a life of faith as they grow or they come from very worldly pasts and live as models of powerful conversion and transformation. Ignatius' beginning is the second. Ignatius' life models this transforming friendship with Christ. As Traub writes, "Nothing is more central in Ignatian spirituality than this sense of intimate companionship with Jesus."¹⁰

Through his friendship with Christ, Ignatius is transformed from a man of great arrogance and vanity to a man of childlike humility. He is transformed from a man obsessed with his ego and self-aggrandizement to a man obsessed with God and helping others. In Ignatian spirituality all the change and transformation take place within the context of friendship with Christ. According to Fleming, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, "we hear the call and invitation to be companions with Christ in the work of salvation. We are invited to labor, to serve, even to suffer, but always with Christ."¹¹ Fleming continues, "[A]ll the events of our life are to be in union with Christ."¹² Two specific practices of Ignatian spirituality help one to nurture this transforming friendship with Christ – colloquy and imagination.

Colloquy simply means a conversation, but for Ignatius it is an intimate conversational relationship with Christ. Kevin O'Brien, writes, "In the colloquy, we speak and listen as the Spirit moves us: expressing ourselves, for example, as a friend

¹⁰ Traub, *An Ignatian Reader*, 53.

¹¹ David L. Fleming, *Like the Lightning* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 24.

¹² Ibid.

speaks to a friend, or as a person speaks to one whom he or she has offended, or as a child speaks to a mentor, or as a lover speaks to his or her beloved.”¹³ It is through colloquy that intimacy is nurtured and friendship developed. Ignatius prescribes times of colloquy over and over throughout every day of the spiritual exercises: “Ignatian prayer cultivates a conscious, intimate, personal relationship with God. It’s a relationship of friendship.”¹⁴

Ignatian imagination or imaginative prayer is another facet or way of engaging in a transforming relationship with Christ. Daniel J. Harrington writes that “Imagination is the ability to form mental images of something not present to the senses. In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius encourages exercitants to apply the senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, etc.) and so enter the key meditations and become part of Gospel scenes.”¹⁵ Ignatian imaginative prayer allows a person to get to know Christ in the Gospels by creatively immersing oneself in the story. Through the imagination, prayer and conversation one is able to engage in this transforming friendship with Christ.

Discernment

Ignatian discernment is the practice of determining God’s will. For Ignatius, this takes place on multiple levels. It involves big questions about life such as what one should do with one’s life and who should one be. It involves making major decisions about life. It also involves simply deciding what is the right next step to take.

¹³ Kevin O’Brien, “The Colloquy,” Ignatian Spirituality, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/the-colloquy/>.

¹⁴ Manney, *God Finds Us*, 31.

¹⁵ Daniel J. Harrington, “Ignatian Imagination,” Ignatian Spirituality, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-imagination/>.

The big questions, for Ignatius, are questions of vocation. Concerning vocation, James Martin writes, “Each of us is called to a unique vocation in life, based on the desires that God plants within us, as well as our talents, skills, and personalities. . . . God knows that our deepest desires are those that will bring joy to us and to the world.”¹⁶ Martin continues by saying that “This is about more than just work, a job, or even a career. Vocation may have little to do with one’s actual work. For the deepest vocation is to become who you are, to become your ‘true self,’ the person whom God created and calls you to be.”¹⁷ For Ignatius, finding this vocation or calling is an essential part of life, if for no other reason than discerning the kind of person God has made you to be has a deep influence on the smaller decisions in life. That being said, the over-arching principle is the same – finding this in God and in pursuit of life with him and for him. As Anthony Mottola writes, “If the immediate end of the Exercises is to be the choice of a state of life, an ultimate end is certainly the greater glory of God according to the individual vocation of each retreatant.”¹⁸ Finding the answers to the biggest questions in life is rooted in God.

The major decisions in life, for Ignatius, are questions of election. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius mentions two specific elections – marriage and becoming clergy.¹⁹ Concerning elections or major life decisions Ignatius writes in the *Spiritual Exercises*, “In

¹⁶ James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 378.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Anthony Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1964), 27.

¹⁹ Fleming, *Draw Me into Your Friendship*, 132-135.

making a choice or in coming to a decision, only one thing is really important—to seek and to find how God is calling me at this time of my life.”²⁰

The small daily decisions, for Ignatius, are where life is really lived and where the foundation is laid for all other decisions. These are the practice ground and laboratory for learning to discern God’s will. The same rules and guidelines are recommended for discernment regardless of the gravity or significance of the decision. This is because the same principles apply and these principles are about becoming a certain kind of person. As Fleming writes, “For Ignatius, discernment is not just a retreat practice; it becomes a way of living.”²¹ Maureen Conroy explains that “As our fundamental orientation becomes more deeply rooted in God, we continue to experience interior movements. These movements touch deeper areas in our person, and they lead us to a greater understanding of God’s ways and clearer knowledge of self.”²² The more aware one becomes of what is going on in their heart and life, whether or not they are oriented toward God or to something else, the more clearly they will be able to know God’s ways and to discern his will. This observation is rooted in Ignatius’ discovery of his experiences of consolation and desolation while convalescing from the cannonball injury.

By the time he wrote the *Spiritual Exercises* his understanding had developed more fully.²³ In Ignatian spirituality “we experience consoling motions when our desires

²⁰ Ibid., 133.

²¹ Fleming, *Like the Lightning*, 133.

²² Maureen Conroy, *The Discerning Heart* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1993), 19.

²³ Jacques Guillet et al, *Discernment of Spirits*, trans Sister Innocentia Richards (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1970), 80.

and inner being are congruent with God.”²⁴ Likewise, “the way to discern true or false consolation is by the fruits that ultimately prevail in the soul, and whether or not they belong to the spirit of God.”²⁵ It is by learning to become aware and understanding of the experiences of consolation and desolation in one’s heart that one begins to learn how to know and respond to God’s will. As a result of his observations “Ignatius set out to teach people how to become a kind of person who, through a sort of learned intuition, could detect the sources of one’s thoughts, emotions, and actions. Through that discernment of the sources, which he called the discernment of spirits, a person can determine God’s will in any given situation.”²⁶

The discernment of the spirits is another element of Ignatian discernment. The discernment of the spirits is simply becoming aware of the spiritual movements in one’s heart, understanding them and where they come from as well as where they are leading and finally taking appropriate action. Ignatius noticed throughout his life that at times different “spirits” were at work within him. Sometimes these spirits led him to peace, joy and consolation and into God while at other times the spirits within him led him to sadness, depression and desolation. What Ignatius ultimately discovered was that he was able to discern which type of a spirit was at work within him and how to respond to the different spirits to keep him from spiraling deeper into desolation and harm or to be led into a greater awareness of God, of the person God was calling him to be and to consolation. By stopping to become aware of what was going on in his interior world, stopping to

²⁴ Conroy, *The Discerning Heart*, 19.

²⁵ Segundo Galilea, *Temptation and Discernment* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1996), 17.

²⁶ Mark E. Thibodeaux, *God’s Voice Within* (Chicago: Loyola Press 2010), 6.

understand what it was and where it was leading him he could then take the appropriate action to lead him more fully into the will of God. David Stanley describes it this way: “One of St. Ignatius’ most significant contributions to the science of spirituality is his formulation of ‘rules for discernment of spirits.’”²⁷ He continues by noting that the spiritual exercises and the practice of the rules for discernment are “intent upon bringing [one] to a reflexive, conscious awareness of his own spiritual reactions.” It is through this awareness that one is able to then recognize how and where God is leading. It is through this process that Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality intend to develop a whole person in such a way that one is in tune with God and the inner workings of the heart to such a degree that one knows and discerns God’s will.

An Examination of the Church of Christ’s History of Being Led by the Spirit

The Church of Christ is Congregationalist in polity without formal denominationally agreed upon beliefs and theology. There are obviously some beliefs that create this loosely held denominational loyalty; however, within the Churches of Christ it is possible to find a great variety of positions on any number of issues. What seems to be the cohesive element is the history and a high view of the Bible, therefore, this section will be an examination of the history of the Church of Christ with a special attention to the development of its view of the Holy Spirit. There will also be a brief look at some of the theological stances and interpretations of some relevant texts from the mid-1900s.

²⁷ David M. Stanley, *A Modern Scriptural Approach to the Spiritual Exercises* (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 16.

The Church of Christ is a part of the Restoration Movement. It was founded in the early-1800s, making it a product of men shaped and formed by eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Their hope in starting a new movement was to bring about unity among all the denominations through the essential beliefs and practices used to describe the first-century Church in the New Testament. It was founded on the Enlightenment inspired belief that “the surest way to Christian union was to reduce religion to a set of essentials upon which all reasonable persons could agree.”²⁸ The founding fathers were raised in a philosophical environment that led them to believe in “the importance of a rational faith, rationally formulated, rationally defended and predicated on the ‘facts’ of a rational Bible.”²⁹

With such a view of the Bible, “[Alexander] Campbell argued over and over again that the Bible is a book of facts, not of opinions, theories, abstract generalities, nor of definitions.”³⁰ It was a common sense book that any rational person could understand by using their rational mind. This purely rational approach eventually led to the belief that “the Holy Spirit now operates upon the minds of men only by the word.”³¹ Church of Christ historian, Douglas Foster, writing about Campbell and the Spirit, writes that Campbell taught that the Holy Spirit only works through the Bible. Campbell did at times speak of the Spirit being a gift received at baptism, but the Spirit still only worked

²⁸ Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, 85-86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

through the Bible.³² Two other Church of Christ historians writing about Campbell and the Spirit wrote, “What frightened Campbell the most in this regard was the supposition, so common in his time, that the Holy Spirit might work on the hearts of men and women apart from the Bible.”³³

This was the foundation laid for the Church of Christ. There were moments in history when this was questioned and challenged, but Campbell’s interpretation endured. In Foster’s walk through the history of the Church of Christ and its belief on the Spirit, he notes that in spite of various views being presented and considered, at the turn of the nineteenth century the “word-only” view still dominated the Church of Christ.³⁴

The Church of Christ continued to espouse this Word-only view until later into the 1960s. It had weathered the Holiness Movement of late-1800s, but the Neo-Pentecostal movement of the 1950s began to erode the position among some Church of Christ leaders and congregations until a major dispute erupted through Church of Christ publications in the 1960s. The traditional view persisted and continued to espouse and teach a Word-only doctrine. However, as Foster notes, “The leading voices in Churches of Christ who continued to assert that the Spirit acted only by helping one apprehend biblical fact seemed to provide little to a spiritually hungry generation.” He continues by

³² Douglas A. Foster, “Waves of the Spirit Against a Rational Rock: The Impact of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Third Wave Movements on American Churches of Christ,” *Restoration Quarterly* 45:1 (2003): 100.

³³ Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, 85.

³⁴ Foster, “Waves of the Spirit Against a Rational Rock,” 105.

noting that through the 1960s and 1970s the view that the Spirit works beyond simply the text became heard.³⁵

The dominant theology of the Holy Spirit for most of the history of the Church of Christ has been one in which the work of the Holy Spirit is confined to work in the minds of people through the Bible. As a result, there has always been a very high regard for the Bible, Bible study and passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” It is Scripture that is useful for what God is up to in one’s life. Second Peter 1:3 says, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him.” Once again, everything needed for all of life is available through knowledge obtained through the Bible.

One can also consider the traditional Church of Christ’s take on 1 Corinthians 13 and the cessation of spiritual gifts when the perfect comes – the mature and fully grown. Raymond C. Kelcy, who was a Church of Christ Bible professor wrote in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, “When connected with Ephesians 4:11-15 it is possible to understand. In that passage he looks forward to the day of coming to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of God and to the time of a perfect man and the cessation of childhood.”³⁶ He continues, “He (Paul) anticipates a time when all knowledge, which, over a period of years, was gradually being revealed through apostles and prophets, would be in a body

³⁵ Ibid., 108.

³⁶ Raymond D. Kelcy, *First Corinthians* (Hurst, TX: R.B. Sweet Company, 1967), 62.

and accessible to all.” The theology of the traditional Church of Christ was built on a complete dependence on the Bible and a limited need, if any, for the Holy Spirit.

As has been demonstrated above, this perspective has been changing and evolving. Foster concludes his article,

The rational rock of doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit created by Alexander Campbell and reinforced by his followers was assailed by repeated “waves” of the Spirit in the twentieth century. For better or worse, those who champion the so-called word-only theory no longer have a hold on the minds of the constituency of Churches of Christ. Though relatively few have adopted outright charismatic and third wave views and remained in the body, apparently the spiritual waves have begun to erode that rational rock.³⁷

Foster’s assessment of the Churches of Christ, including the TCoC, rings true. The members of the TCoC do not have a Word-only view of the Holy Spirit and its role; however, many members, elders and leaders were raised in churches with such a theology. Many have abandoned this traditional view of the Holy Spirit, but they have not replaced it with a viable robust theology of the Spirit, hearing the Spirit or the discernment of the spirits.

An Examination of Hearing God’s Voice and Discerning it as Seen in John 10 and 1 John 4

This section will consider two relevant passages to the project – John 10:1-6 and 1 John 4:1-6. The passage in John 10 speaks about sheep who know the shepherd’s voice. This passage speaks about the possibility and necessity of Jesus’ disciples learning to recognize his voice. The passage in 1 John speaks of the reality that Jesus’ disciples will hear voices besides that of Jesus and the Spirit and the necessity for the disciples to discern or test these spirits. John 10:1-6 says:

³⁷ Foster, “Waves of the Spirit Against a Rational Rock,” 110.

Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Verse 6 refers to Jesus' imagery as a figure of speech. Jesus employs this strategy or rhetorical device regularly. He refers to a well-known normal situation and uses it to make his point. In this instance, Jesus describes an everyday scene in the life of sheep and shepherds. Merrill C. Tenney describes a sheep pen by noting that first century ancient near eastern sheep pens were usually made of stone or some type of mud brick and sometimes were partially covered. They were also sometimes built into caves. These pens were constructed for protection from thieves and wild animals.³⁸ Tenney also notes that "thieves" and "robbers" were two different types of dangers; one was more subtle while the other more akin to bandits. Nonetheless he comments, "The purpose of both was exploitation; neither was concerned for the welfare of the sheep."³⁹

In verse 1, Jesus describes the possibility of a thief or robber scaling the wall and trying to lure the sheep away, however the sheep will not listen. Tenney also notes that the sheep pens were sometimes large enough to hold multiple flocks. This further demonstrates the closeness between the sheep and shepherd as well as the sheep's recognition of their specific shepherd's voice because the shepherds did not enter the pen

³⁸ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1981), 107.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

and drive the sheep out of it. The shepherds simply entered the gate and called to the sheep. Since the sheep knew their shepherd's voice, the sheep heard and followed their shepherd.⁴⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels notes that there are three factors that distinguish the true shepherd from the false dangerous shepherd – the true shepherd uses the gate (v. 2), the gatekeeper grants him entrance (v. 3) and the sheep know his voice. He concludes knowing his voice is “the most important of these features [and] is shown by its reiteration in verse 3, 4, and 5. The true shepherd, in contrast to a thief and robber (v.1), is the one whose voice the sheep recognize and to whom they listen.”⁴¹ He continues later by noting that Jesus is the true shepherd and the sheep are “those who hear and obey the true shepherd's voice.”⁴²

In *In Search of Guidance*, working with the imagery of recognizing the shepherd's voice, Dallas Willard writes that the beginning of John 10 is “not merely a record of words Jesus spoke,”⁴³ they are also “an expression of John's own experience with Christ, his Lord and friend.”⁴⁴ Reflecting on 1 John 1:1-3, Willard also writes that “it was in the presence of the visible, touchable Jesus that John learned to recognize when God was speaking.”⁴⁵ John, writing to his community, leaves it no doubt that Jesus has a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108.

⁴¹ J. Ramsey Michaels, *New International Biblical Commentary*, vol. 4, *John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 176.

⁴² Ibid., 177.

⁴³ Dallas Willard, *In Search of Guidance* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 180.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

voice, that it can be heard and that one can learn to distinguish it from other voices. John considers the question of how to do this in his first epistle. First John 4:1-6 reads,

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

In 1 John 4:1-6 John takes up again the theme of hearing and distinguishing God's voice. This is essential in discerning God's will. Before one can discern God's will, one must first hear his voice, but John wants to make sure that Christ followers have a confidence and certainty about the voice they are hearing. They must be able to know if it is from God or another source. John refers to this as the testing of the spirits.

Raymond Brown, in his commentary on 1 John notes that this passage is about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit versus the manifestation of the Evil Spirit.⁴⁶ Brown divides the passage into two units and writes that "the first subunit describes how to recognize the two spirits that manifest themselves in human behavior, while the second assures the author's adherents that they possess the Spirit of Truth, which is more powerful than the Spirit of Deceit."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Raymond Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 30, *The Epistles of John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 503.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 502.

Verse 1 begins with “Dear friends” or “Beloved.” It is the fourth time John addresses the recipients with this word. It is a term of affection and love,⁴⁸ but Brown considers an added dimension by connecting it to the previous passage: “At the end of the preceding unit the author spoke of the twofold commandment to believe and to love; and so while he concentrates on belief and its true confession here, he addresses those whom make that confession as ‘Beloved.’”⁴⁹ Brown connects their relationship with Jesus to both their belief and to their love. The rest of the passage, while only speaking of professions of belief, is under the context of their “belovedness,” their belief and love. This connection would appear to be an important addition and observation since Jesus’ promises of the Holy Spirit and guidance (see Jn 14:16-17; 14:25-26; 15:26; 16:7; 16:13) are written within the context of their love and belief demonstrated through obedience (see Jn 14:15; 14:23-24; 15:9-13). The ability to rightly test the spirits as well as their ability to possess the Spirit of Truth is connected to their loving relationship as well as their beliefs.

In verse 1, John tells them to “test” the spirits. Johnson notes that the word for test should be understood as to “be testing” *dokimazete*; a continuous examining is called for.⁵⁰ It is an ongoing process that would need to be repeated over and over as required. John continues by speaking of false prophets. This appears to demonstrate that John had

⁴⁸ Thomas F. Johnson, *New International Biblical Commentary*, vol. 17, 1, 2, and 3 *John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 93.

⁴⁹ Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, 503.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *New International Biblical Commentary*, 93.

in mind the practice of testing the prophets in the Old Testament.⁵¹ The testing John calls them to do, like that of Old Testament prophets, was done for the purpose of determining whether they were from God or not.⁵²

In 4:2-3 John gives them a test that will allow them to help recognize if the spirit is of God or the antichrist. Brown writes that “the author of 1 John sees his adversaries’ refusal to confess ‘Christ come in the flesh’ as annulling or negating the importance of Jesus, and thus accomplishing the work of the Antichrist which is to destroy Christ.”⁵³ Johnson writes that “Such a view, the Elder contends, is not from God, but is the antithetical opposite of from God.”⁵⁴ If one cannot grasp the fullness of Christ including his humanity, which would include the limitations and challenges his humanity played in living a life of sacrificial love for others then one cannot speak for God or know what God is calling one to in life.

Near the end of Johnson’s commentary on this passage he connects this passage with the passage in John 10. He writes that “in John 10 God’s people, the sheep of Jesus the good shepherd, listen to and know his voice (10:3-4, 16). They follow him and he gives them eternal life (10:27-28). So the Elder’s teaching, especially concerning Jesus, is heard by those who know God.”⁵⁵ Glenn Barker, in his conclusion to this passage writes that “The argument is parallel to that of Jesus in John 8:47: ‘He who belongs to God

⁵¹ Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, 488.

⁵² Johnson, *New International Biblical Commentary*, 94.

⁵³ Brown, *The Anchor Bible*, 505.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *New International Biblical Commentary*, 94.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God' (cf. John 10:4-5)."⁵⁶ Both of these conclusions harken back to Brown's comments on the beginning of the passage that the ability to test the spirits and discern the spirit of truth is for the "dear friends," the "beloved" of Jesus. Only those who know Jesus are capable of recognizing and responding to his voice.

The examples of men and women throughout Scripture, the example of Jesus himself and the writers of the epistles leave it in no doubt that the voice of the Spirit of God can be heard by those that know him and know how to hear him. The sources also demonstrate that it is essential to know how to discern these voices and to distinguish and recognize the master's voice from among those other voices who would do harm. Both of the passages seem to connect the intimacy of a shepherd with his sheep and a lover with his beloved to the ability of the disciples to hear, discern and respond well to God's voice.

The TCoC's Past, Present and Future Struggle to Become a Relational Listening People

The context of this project is the TCoC. The TCoC has its roots in a theology that has limited the work and interaction of the Holy Spirit to taking place solely through the Bible. To arrive at this conclusion, Alexander Campbell and those who came after him allowed the religious and philosophical culture of their day to greatly influence their approach to their hermeneutic, to their theology and to their ecclesiology. Rather than allowing their Christology to illuminate their missiology and then their ecclesiology, it

⁵⁶ Glenn W. Barker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, 1, 2, 3 *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1981), 341.

seems they started with their ecclesiology and missiology and wound up with a limited Christology, a limited understanding of discipleship and nearly abandoning the Holy Spirit.

Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15); in other words, people are invited to reconsider how and why they live life in light of the fact that through Jesus they “have the option of living within the surrounding movements of God’s eternal purposes.”⁵⁷ God’s desire has always been to invite people into life with him now and live with his presence, power and guidance today. Through Jesus he made this available to all of humanity. This concept of Jesus and his work creates a completely different understanding of Jesus’ mission and church than Alexander Campbell did.

Campbell wanted to unify all denominations through a specific set of beliefs, church polity and worship practices. He seemed to redirect one’s relationship to God to a relationship with the Bible. As a result the point became affirming and reaffirming those beliefs and positions, and God was lost in the pursuit of Church. The TCoC needs to reclaim the biblical message of God’s pursuit and invitation of life together with him. They need to experience shepherd-sheep closeness and lover-beloved intimacy. Such a relationship or friendship is more akin to the idea of what God has offered throughout history.

Since the 1970s the TCoC has been making steps away from the limited theology of Campbell. By the 1990s the congregation began stepping deeper into a theology and perspective that elevated a transformation relationship with Jesus above Campbell’s goal

⁵⁷ Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 16.

of finding the specific positions and practices that would lead to unity. Interestingly enough, the more the congregation pursues an interactive transformational relationship with Jesus the more the congregation is able to find unity in spite of differences of beliefs.

Another theological shift the TCoC has been making over the years has been to understand the result of God's work in their lives being about a relationship with God now rather than God's work being primarily about going to heaven. This has been a shift from what Willard describes as "The Atonement as the Whole Story" understanding of the Gospel⁵⁸ and into an understanding of the Gospel and God's intention that is deeply involved and connected to life today. This shift is resulting in a desire to find understandings and practices that inform and transform one about how to do life in such a way that one experiences the joy and goodness of God's presence here and now rather than only after one dies.

These theological shifts are part of what makes this project so relevant and significant now. The congregation is aware that life can be about something more than performing the right practices in an attempt to guarantee God's favor. They are also learning that a spiritual life can be lived with God now rather than waiting to be with him later. As a result of these shifts and desires they are open and interested in learning what a Spirit-led life looks like.

The TCoC is eager to find the kind of life that leads to the peace, love and joy that Jesus demonstrated and said was available to his followers. Willard's wisdom and work has been influential on this congregation for many years. One book that speaks very

⁵⁸ Ibid., 42.

directly to this project is *In Search of Guidance*. It has been challenging, helpful and frustrating.

It has been challenging as it continues to push people out of their old Word-only background of the work of the Spirit and to come to know God as a God eager to offer friendship and guidance. Willard speaks directly to the background of the TCoC in this book. He writes, “The second view of guidance that I believe is seriously misguided and very harmful is the it’s-all-in-the-Bible view. This view intends to honor the Bible but with a zeal that is not according to knowledge.”⁵⁹ Speaking of the limitation of such a view from a practical point of view, Willard continues, “Our reverence for and faith in the Bible must not be allowed to blind us to the need for personal divine guidance within the principles of but beyond the details explicitly stated in the Bible.”⁶⁰ Willard notes the shortfalls and limitations of this perspective which are summed up in his statement that “An exalted view of the Bible does not free us from the responsibility of learning to talk with God and learning to hear him in the many ways he speaks to humankind.”⁶¹

In Search of Guidance has been helpful in explaining more about the aspects of how to become a sheep that can recognize the voice of the good shepherd. Willard explains that, practically speaking, God’s voice can be recognized through the conditions of three characteristics; however, these characteristics do not provide a foolproof formula. There is no getting around the fact that someone has to decide. God has not designed life in such a way that one can plug in the relevant facts and out pops the

⁵⁹ Willard, *In Search of Guidance*, 53.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

divinely ordained answer. Rather, people are invited to partner with God and to discern with his guidance what God wants. This is done by observing the three characteristics of his voice.⁶²

First, God's voice has a quality or authority. Willard claims the authority or weight of God's voice can be learned through experience.⁶³ Second, God's voice has a spirit: "It is a spirit of exalted peacefulness and confidence, of joy, of sweet reasonableness, and of will for the good. It is, in short, 'the spirit of Jesus.'"⁶⁴ The third quality is the content of his voice. He explains that "an individualized word from God may not of itself be easily identifiable as being from God. But this much we can say: the content of a word that is truly from God, will always conform to, and be consistent with, the truths about God's nature and Kingdom made clear in the Bible."⁶⁵

Willard's body of work has been invaluable to the development and evolution of the TCoC's theology and understanding of who they are and what they are about, but in spite of the wisdom and help offered in *In Search of Guidance*, it does not offer the specific help that the TCoC needs. It offers a language and framework to try to understand and speak of hearing God's voice and discerning his will, but it does not offer the practical how-to guidance that the congregation needs. Willard's explanation is too general and too descriptive. What the congregation needs is a more prescriptive guide into discerning God's presence and spirit. They need more specific guidelines, principals

⁶² Ibid., 186.

⁶³ Ibid., 188-189.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 190.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 191.

and direction to step into the life God offers. Ignatian spirituality and the rules for discerning the spirits provide these things. This project offered both of these to the TCoC and guided them through disciplines and practices helpful to reveal that God's presence can be found everywhere and that his guidance is discernable.

PART THREE
MINISTRY PRACTICE

CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY OUTCOMES

In this section ministry outcomes will be discussed. These outcomes will consider the implications of Chapter 3's theological exploration. The chapter will consider the ministry project and its components. There will also be a description of the participants in the project.

God Speaks and His People Must Listen

Richard Foster writes, "The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons with God himself at the very center of this community as its prime Sustainer and most glorious inhabitant (Eph 2:19-22; 3:10). The Bible traces the formation of this community from the creation in the Garden of Eden all the way to the new heaven and the new earth."¹ This is how the *Life With God Bible* introduces the text of the Bible. Throughout history God has been working to invite, make available and lead humanity into life with him. Through all of the ups and downs of individuals, tribes and nations, the Bible tells the story of a God who claims that at any moment or in any place life with him can be found. His story, from start to finish is about

¹ Richard J. Foster, ed., *The Life With God Bible* (New York: HarperOne, 1989), 1.

learning to live in his transformative presence, under his rule and by his power and grace. God's people are, as Jesus describes in John 10, his sheep and he is the good shepherd and he has come to lead them into life, full life.

God's purpose and intention has never changed; it has always been about life together with him. While atonement and forgiveness are a part of this, they are a means to a much bigger and fuller end. By equating God's aim in history with the cross or having one's sins washed clean or even going to heaven after one dies reduces God's intention of life together with people to a transaction, a transaction that can be accomplished by strangers or silent partners. Such limited perspectives do not account for God's larger intention of an interactive relational life with people.

God reaches out to humanity all of the time and in innumerable ways. He reached out to Moses in a burning bush, to Balaam with a donkey and to Jonah with a big fish. He revealed his providing nature to the wandering Israelites with manna from above and to Elijah through food bearing ravens. Jesus consistently demonstrated that everyday items and experiences hold within them truths of the nature and character of God. God is a revealing God.

In John 10 Jesus speaks of the shepherd as one who has a voice and uses it to call and communicate with his sheep. In this story the shepherd's voice is not too distant, too quiet or too outlandish that the sheep cannot hear it. The shepherd reaches out to the sheep in ways that they are capable of noticing and understanding. When God wants to get his point across, he has proven to be an effective communicator.

In John 10 Jesus speaks of the sheep as being capable of hearing the shepherd. The sheep listen to his voice and they respond to it. They know his voice. The shepherd comes to them in such a way that they are capable of detecting and knowing that it is him. He does not approach them in some way that is beyond their ability or capacity and expect them to get to know him that way. They are fully competent to hear his voice.

Again in John 10 the sheep are even expected to learn the shepherd's voice. The ability to be led and cared for, to be a part of the flock and to avoid dangers is connected to the sheep's ability to hear and know the shepherd's voice. Not only are they expected to know the shepherd's voice, but they are to be so familiar with it that they can distinguish it from other voices. Other voices will call to the sheep, voices that are intent on harming them rather than on their well-being. The sheep need to learn to distinguish between the voice of the shepherd and other voices.

First John speaks directly about learning how to distinguish the shepherd's voice from other voices. John does not use shepherd imagery; instead, he makes a reference to the prophets needing to be tested to know if their message is from God or not. One sees in this passage that not all voices are from the shepherd or God; some are intent on deceiving. John assures, however, that even though not all voices can be trusted it is possible to discern which voices should be listened to and which ones rejected.

In summation, God's overarching narrative in history is creating a community of people who live life with him. Throughout history and even to this day God continues to actively call people into a transformative life with him. He does this by means that people are capable of perceiving; people have the faculties to hear this call. To be able to hear

God's specific call or voice; people need to become familiar with it and able to distinguish it from other voices.

The description of an interactive life with God where he engages his disciples and comforts and guides them is quite different from the traditional Church of Christ theology and its description of faithfulness and discipleship. Over the years the members of the TCoC have become aware theologically and experientially that the tradition they were raised in is not adequate to open their hearts and minds to the kind of life Jesus describes and God is offering. They are eager to find a theology and way of life that opens them up to a life with God and his Spirit, but they are not sure how to step into a more interactive Spirit led relationship with God.

Becoming Worthy Servants and Discerning Sheep

Willard, in the preface to *Hearing God*, comments on the parable of the unworthy servant found in Luke 17:7-10. In this passage a servant does what he is told, nothing more and nothing less. Jesus then says in verse 10, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Willard seems to wonder what is required then to be a worthy servant. If a servant dutifully obeys his master's orders, what more can be expected? Willard comments, "The watchword of the worthy servant is not mere obedience but love, from which appropriate obedience naturally flows."² Willard brings to the conversation the fact that simply doing what one is told to do is not what God has in mind. God has in mind "a

² Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 14.

life of free-hearted collaboration with Jesus and his friends in the kingdom of heaven.”³ God intends for his people to be more than obedient. God wants his people to know him and to love him. Willard continues to illuminate the limitation of obedience with the following: “knowing what God wants us to do is never enough by itself to allow us to understand and enter the radiant life before the shining face of God that is offered to us in the grace of the gospel.”⁴ God calls people into a deep relationship where he calls them friends and even beloved.

The theological conclusions that have been drawn directed this project to prepare and equip the participants for an interactive life with God in which they are now able to hear and recognize his voice as well as distinguish it from other voices. To accomplish this overall goal, it was essential that the participants grow in their awareness that God’s purpose and desire is for a relationship with them. He does not want people to simply know facts about him. He desires to know and be known. This is merely an idea and understanding, but people live at the mercy of their ideas. It was necessary for this theological shift to be made to open them up to the reality and experience of God in their lives.

There were three smaller goals or desires to accomplishing this larger goal. First, the members needed to become aware of God around them. They needed to learn that God can and does meet his people wherever they are, through the sacred and profane and he can be found in the extraordinary and the mundane. The goal was not to merely prove the theological potential of this, but to have them experience this through spiritual

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 15.

practices and disciplines. The desire was that they would be able to name for themselves when and how God engages and speaks to them personally.

Second, the members needed to develop an understanding of their interior world and the ways that God's voice and sometimes other voices, seek to move and guide them. The Spirit of God is not random and chaotic in its work within people. It works with intention and purpose trying to lead people into a greater awareness of God and his work within and around them. The members needed to become aware of the strategies of the Spirit and the strategies of false spirits so they could understand and discern what went on inside their own hearts. The desired outcome was that they would know the rules for discerning the spirits in their heads and in their lives so they could understand how both the voice of God and deceiving voices tended to speak and work in them.

Thirdly, the members needed to learn what the appropriate actions are in response to these movements or spirits at work in their hearts. They needed to confidently practice reacting in responsible life-giving ways to the voices. They needed to learn and practice resisting spirits and voices that intend to harm them in an effective way. They also needed to learn and practice a loving obedience to the Spirit at work within them.

The strategy of this project was three pronged as well – information, demonstration and participation. First, the project aimed to provide information. The members needed specific practical information for each of the three of the stated goals above. They needed to be taught concerning a relational life with God where God could be found in all things, about the discernment of the spirits and how to take appropriate actions.

This was facilitated through a sermon series and Bible class. The sermon series surveyed the Bible and God's history as a God eager to live in relationship with people. For sixteen weeks the participants examined all of Scripture noticing and seeing God trying to engage with his people in highs and lows, in obedience and disobedience, in plenty and in lack. A list of these sermons, as well as a more extensive outline of one of the sermons can be found in Appendix A. The three-month long Bible class was a detailed examination of Ignatius' rules for discerning the spirits. An outline of this study can be found in Appendix B.

An additional piece of instruction concerned the prayer of Examen. A description of the prayer, as well as a handout and worksheet for it is found in Appendix C. The prayer of Examen will be discussed below as a part of the project where members were able to experience and become aware of God and his voice in their life. It was an integral part of their work and the development of a listening discerning heart.

Second, the participants needed to have this interactive life with God demonstrated for them. To make this step the participants needed someone to demonstrate exactly and specifically what it meant to find God and hear his voice in real life situations, to discern the spirits in actual day-to-day circumstances and to hear the stories of real people responding to real interior voices and movements. The lessons and information presented to them examples of women and men who have heard and discerned God's voice were shared, as well as stories and examples from the project leader's life. It was crucial that the participants saw and heard real life examples of this demonstrated, otherwise it would have been too abstract or distant to envision it in their

own lives. The education and encouragement of the fact that many people have lived this listening interactive life with God before cannot be underestimated.

Trying to figure this out alone or without the guidance of another or unaware that someone has already walked this path would be too challenging. Therefore, along with the examples and stories shared in the actual study of the discernment of spirits, weekly articles were sent to group members to encourage them and to challenge them that such a way of life was possible. A list of these articles is available in Appendix C. It is worth noting that the articles were primarily written by Dallas Willard. The TCoC was well acquainted with Willard's work. By using the already known language and perspective of Willard the group was able to make quicker and easier connections from the vocabulary and ideas they already knew to Ignatian spirituality.

Third, the participants needed to participate in this life with God. They needed to have opportunities created for them to try to listen for the voice and presence of God in their own lives. They needed to walk through the rules for discernment using their own experiences, noticing when they were led deeper into desolation and harmful choices and when they were able to hear the voice of God move with him.

This was facilitated through the prayer of Examen and the spiritual direction sessions. By practicing the prayer of Examen participants were required to slow down three times a week to reflect and examine where they had encountered God and where they had avoided God. They were instructed to take no more than fifteen minutes each time working through the prayer to notice how God had shown up in their lives. A description and handout used for the prayer of Examen can be found in Appendix B.

Once a month the participants were also asked to sit in spiritual direction. These sessions were intended to give them someone to help them process and listen to their journey, a journey of learning to notice and listen to God. The spiritual director did this from an Ignatian perspective and helped the participants discern their experiences with the help of Ignatius' rules for discernment. This was done to give the participants further practice and practical understanding of the rules for discernment.

The Components and Practices Used to Become a Listening People

The specific components of this ministry project were broken into two phases. The first phase lasted sixteen weeks. It consisted of a sermon series on Life with God as seen throughout the entire Bible, the selection of the project members and a pre-project evaluation. The second phase lasted three months. It consisted of the project members practicing the prayer of Examen three times a week, attending a weekly class on the discernment of the spirits, reading a weekly article and spiritual direction once a month. There was also a post-project evaluation.

The Life with God sermon series was a survey of the Bible demonstrating that God's intention and plan for humanity has always been life with him. The hope was that the congregation and project members were made more fully aware of a better way to engage with the Bible than they were originally taught, a way of relationship to God and not to merely right practices. Foster writes that in spite of the fact that people value the Bible and even study it they are starving for a deeper spiritual life because they either read the Bible looking for information alone or for a formula that will resolve an

immediate problem.⁵ Both of these approaches stifle God's attempt to use the Scriptures to lead people into life with him.

The TCoC has been rethinking the limited theological narrative they were handed in the past. This series aimed at helping that rethinking process and to offer an alternative overview. It was intended to affirm and confirm God's enacted purpose of life with him as the lens through which the TCoC must approach God, the Bible and Church. (See Appendix A for an outline of the sermon series and a sample of one of the sermon outlines.)

The prayer of Examen, according to Fleming, "Remains the central exercise in an Ignatian spirituality of finding God in all things."⁶ This is precisely why it is being used in this project. The members at the TCoC, in order to learn to listen to the voice of God, need to learn that he speaks to them all of the time and in many ways. He speaks to them in a way that they are capable of hearing and recognizing, but for this to happen they have to learn to notice it.

According to Foster the prayer of Examen has two main aspects: "The first is an Examen of consciousness through which we discover how God has been present to us throughout the day and how we have responded to his loving presence."⁷ This first aspect of the prayer of Examen was paramount to the success of this project and the members learning to listen to God's voice. This is where one learns to recognize the voice of the shepherd. By stopping to look back on one's day to notice and be thankful for all the

⁵ Richard J. Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 4.

⁶ Fleming, *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, 29.

⁷ Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 27.

goodness received and to allow one's mind and heart to connect those blessings with a God who is drawing one into a life with him, opens one up to the reality that God is to be found everywhere, that she is not alone and that she is loved and even liked by God. The voice of the shepherd does not tend to have a thunderous booming voice. He tends to speak with a still small voice, a voice that can be heard if the time is taken to listen.

Instruction on the Rules for discernment of spirits was for the purpose of teaching the project members practical guidelines to distinguish and respond to the voices they hear in a way that would lead to life rather than harm and self-destruction. There are times when one's heart is moved or stirred to live life more fully, joyfully and lovingly, when one is filled with a desire to step more deeply into life with God. There are also times when darkness, frustration and apathy set in and one's concerns are selfishly oriented. At these moments inner voices tend to push and prod people one way or the other. Gallagher writes, "All faithful persons in all walks of life experience some form of these inner spiritual fluctuations."⁸ Without the proper knowledge and training, people tend to live at the whim and mercy of these voices unaware that they can be free to choose who they are and what they do. As Henri Nouwen writes, "This essential sorting, known as discernment of spirits, is intended for our protection."⁹ Through the observation of Ignatius' rules for discernment of spirits one can understand the movements and voices that speak into one's heart and take appropriate actions that will lead to life.

⁸ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 2.

⁹ Henri Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 23.

Each project member was expected to meet with a spiritual director once a month for spiritual direction. Spiritual direction is listening together with someone as to how God is at work in one's life and how he is or is not responding to his voice. Sue Pickering writes that it is about one person prayerfully encouraging another person to attend and respond to God.¹⁰ In *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, the authors write that spiritual direction is about helping a person with their relationship with God,¹¹ that it is concerned with their "actual experiences of the relationship with God"¹² and that it is "aimed ultimately at fostering union with God."¹³ Willard writes that "With assistance from those who understand the divine 'voice' from their own experience, and given an openness and will to learn on our part, we can come to know the voice of God without great difficulty."¹⁴

The purpose of the monthly meetings for spiritual direction, as can be understood by the above quotes, was so that the project members could sit with someone who could help them notice and name their experiences with God as experiences with God. Through these spiritual direction meetings they were be able to process and walk through the rules for discerning the spirits so that they grew in their awareness of the voices they hear, understand what was happening and to discern what appropriate steps to take. For a

¹⁰ Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2008), 3.

¹¹ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ Willard, *In Search of Guidance*, 181.

tradition that is not accustomed to naming God anywhere but in the Bible, this can be difficult, but with the help of a spiritual director, it is possible. Willard, speaking out of his experience and wisdom notes that “In any case it seems that at first we must be told that God is speaking to us and possibly even be helped to detect his voice. Only later do we come, without assistance, to confidently distinguish and recognize his voice as his voice.”¹⁵

The articles the project members received serve two purposes. First, they were intended to encourage, inspire and remind participants to keep going. A three-month project is a significant commitment and to simply start to pray the prayer of Examen three times a week for three months would be a challenge. The articles were to help keep them motivated to continue.

The articles also provided additional education on listening to God. Most of the articles were written by Willard or were inspired by his work. The project members were well acquainted with Willard, so hearing his approach was intended to be comforting and helpful. When one compares both Willard’s and Ignatius’ views on hearing God and discerning the spirits, there are a lot of similarities and overlap. The intention for pairing the Ignatius class and the Willard articles was so that they would complement and explain each other to the project members.

The Project Participants

The participants in this project were selected from the core leadership of the TCoC. The participants were both women and men. They were mature, experienced

¹⁵ Ibid.

Christians. All the members had made commitments to God over twenty years ago and had been active members of the Church. They had been a part of the TCoC for well over ten years and served and cared for the members in many ways. Some had served as elders, teachers, ministry committee members, ministry leaders, and short-term missionaries.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

For this project to succeed a well thought out process for implementation was necessary. To measure or understand the level of success there was also a need for an assessment or evaluation process. This chapter describes the practical processes that were used in the implementing of this project. It also describes the processes of developing and administering the evaluation of the project.

The Process of Becoming a Listening People

This project was an educational and experiential project aimed at leading people into a theology and practice of listening to God in their lives. For this project to take place, several different elements needed to be addressed from curriculum development to selecting participants to finding a room and more. Fortunately, the project leader is the pastor at the TCoC and the congregation is a small, flexible congregation. Many of the elements required for this project were able to be included or folded into the current schedule and practices.

This project was broken into two phases that required approximately seven months to complete. It required a minimal commitment from project members for phase one. Phase one took place exclusively at the TCoC building during the Sunday worship services and lasted through the first four months of the project. Phase two lasted three months and required a higher level of commitment from the project members in both time and energy. Phase two took place during the Sunday morning adult class, a private monthly meeting with a spiritual director, reading a short article once a week and practicing the prayer of Examen three times a week at home.

The responsibility for the development and implementation of the project fell solely on project leader. There were several elements that needed to be addressed for this project. Those elements include the selecting of project members, communicating expectations, developing the sermon series and class curriculum, selecting and sending articles, scheduling and leading spiritual direction meetings and creating and administering the pre- and post-project assessments.

Phase one of the project included the entire congregation. The project leader prepared and delivered a sermon series about God's aim of doing life with his people as seen throughout the entire Bible. An outline of this series is available in Appendix A. These sermons lasted twenty-five-to-thirty minutes. The outline for the sermon series came from the *Life with God Bible*. It went from Genesis to Revelation and considered how each book of the Bible discusses and demonstrates God being with his people in various situation, disposition and positions in life.

The congregation and the elders empowered the project leader to present sermons and series on topics and themes as he has seen fit. There have been times when specific topics have been given to him, but sermon topic selection is typically up to his discretion. Nonetheless, the project and the sermon series were presented to the elders for the blessing and approval especially in light of the fact that the sermon series was sixteen weeks. Their blessing was given.

Phase two of the project required the selecting of specific project members. For phase two a class series on the prayer of Examen, Ignatian spirituality and the rules for discerning the spirits was presented to the participants and others during the Sunday morning adult Bible class. Since the largest time commitment in phase two was to attend this class, the selection process began by asking current members of the adult Bible class to participate. This was done with multiple short presentations being made to the class with a description of the project prior to the beginning of phase two.

The class was made up of about twenty members, twelve of whom were among the core leadership and were the most involved and likely to volunteer. Next, those members from the class who were considered to be among the core leaders and the most likely to benefit and complete the project were asked directly by the project leader to consider participating in the project. Additional participants were welcome, but a specific group was shoulder tapped and invited.

Before getting a firm commitment from the invitees, they were asked to attend two short meetings. These meetings took place at the end of the adult Bible class, one in October and one in December. The first meeting was to welcome, introduce and provide

clarification of the specific expectations of the project members. The second meeting was for those invitees who were willing to commit to the project. At this meeting, the project was reviewed and the participants reminded of the project expectations as well as the scheduling for the first spiritual direction meetings.

All of the teaching in the project was available to the everyone. Phase one was a sermon series presented to the entire congregation. The teaching in phase two took place during the adult class time. Everyone was welcome and encouraged to attend the class. The class was already attended by more people than would be participating in the project. All the teaching was made available to the entire congregation rather than in a private setting for a few reasons – one, to make it possible for the participants to attend regularly, two, to introduce the material to a broader audience and three, to plant the seeds in another group to be able to repeat phase two with a new group in the future.

During phase two of the project the project leader taught the Sunday adult Bible class. This class studied the prayer of Examen, Ignatian spirituality and the discernment of the spirits. The project leader developed the material. In Appendix B the guide to practicing the prayer of Examen and an outline of the classes on the rules for discerning the spirit can be found.

The class began with the prayer of Examen. Since all of the participants were expected to practice the prayer of Examen three times a week during phase two it was essential to explain and describe what it was and how to do it. The congregation had gone through a longer series on the prayer of Examen two years earlier so this was a re-introduction and refresher on the prayer. A handout was distributed as a guide through

the five steps of the prayer. A copy of this handout can be found in Appendix B. The participants were all encouraged but not required to journal through the prayer of Examen. They were also instructed to take no more than fifteen minutes praying the prayer. They were encouraged to nonjudgmentally notice and reflect on their day and where they did or did not recognize and respond to God and his invitation.

The practice of the prayer of Examen was overall incredibly positive. There seems to be no better teacher than experience and that seems to be the case with the prayer of Examen. In spite of instruction and advice most of the participants took the prayer as a task to be accomplished or completed rather than a journey to be savored. People tried to push through to do all the steps of the prayer rather than allow it to be a sacred time of reflection. In the beginning people used it as a time to look for where they had met God in the past rather than letting it be a time where they could also meet him in the present. By the end though, most of the participants readily acknowledged the wisdom and goodness of praying this prayer. Their awareness of God in their life was heightened and the recognition of him coming to them in all things grew significantly.

After the class on the prayer of Examen the classes on Ignatian spirituality and the rules for discerning the spirits began. These classes took place in the adult Bible classroom at the regularly scheduled time – Sunday at 10:00 am. During most of the classes two rules were discussed. The information about the rules for discerning the spirits is not complicated, difficult or technical. In fact, the rules are very practical and most mature Christians are acquainted with these rules in practice not necessarily name. That being the case, the classes, which lasted forty-five minutes were a combination of

providing a description of the rules in a lecture format as well as having the class members reflect and dialogue on times in their lives when they experienced the success or failure of implementing the rules. An outline of the class schedule as well as the material for one of the classes is found in Appendix B.

The class was very well received. One of the most verbalized affirmations of the class was that it provided a space to realize that no one is alone in feeling distant from God at times. In Ignatian terms, “desolation” happens to everyone. Simply being able to hear that other mature members of the congregation experienced discouragement regularly was a relief, comfort and even encouragement to everyone. The rules for discernment themselves were also very well received by the participants and the class members. It was noted numerous times that these rules are not rocket science but they are powerful tools, nonetheless. Everyone in the class recognized the wisdom of the rules as well as having practiced the rules without knowing it in the past. Part of the power of the rules seems to be giving a name or label to specific experiences and guidelines to navigating the challenges of discerning God’s presence and voice.

Another part of this project included the selection and sending of weekly articles to the project members. The articles were selected primarily out of Willard’s work. As has already been discussed, using Willard’s material was done partially because the members were acquainted with his work and also because it communicated the idea of hearing God’s voice and discerning the spirits from a conservative protestant perspective. These articles were emailed on Wednesdays to the project members. These articles were to inform and encourage the participants in their practice of the prayer of Examen and

their learning to listen to God. To help motivate the participants to read these articles they were no longer than two pages in length. A list of the articles is found in Appendix C.

Of all the components of the project, the weekly articles received the most mixed reviews. Some participants found receiving weekly articles helpful. They specifically said that having an article gave them a chance to go back and reread the information. Some of the participants did not question the idea of receiving weekly articles, but they thought some of the articles were not as well-chosen or helpful as others. This does bring up a notion worth considering for the future. Going into the project the articles were primarily chosen to be encouraging and a reminder to not forget to practice the prayer of Examen. However, it would appear that an opportunity may have been missed, at least according to some of the participants, to provide a more well thought out selection of articles with a singular developing theme.

The participants were also asked to meet regularly with a spiritual director. The project leader was the spiritual director. These meetings were scheduled to take place once a month and last approximately forty-five minutes. The meetings were also scheduled to take place in the project leader's office. The January meetings were scheduled during the December orientation meeting. The additional spiritual direction meetings were to be scheduled individually each consecutive month. This part of the project was complicated and thrown off schedule by the outbreak of Covid-19. By the time everyone got life resituated and organized most people were only able to have two sessions of spiritual direction. One participant, a business owner only had one session. Likewise, some of the sessions were done online.

Of all the components implemented in the project, spiritual direction received the highest marks from all participants. Everyone was grateful to have a private personal time to be heard and to process their spiritual journey. The simple act of listening and asking appropriate questions encouraging participants to go deeper into their experiences and encounters with God was very well received.

The last part of the implementation was the pre- and post-project assessments. These assessments were created after consulting other assessments that have been used to assess the health and growth of people's spiritual well-being. These other assessments specifically assessed one's prayer life and confidence in one's ability to discern God's presence and will. The pre-project assessment was handed out to participants at the orientation meeting before phase two and was to be taken home, filled out and returned later. In retrospect, filling out the assessments should have been incorporated in the orientation meeting to make for a speedier and more efficient collection. The post-project assessment was provided at the end of the last class. Actually, the last two classes were done through the internet app – Zoom. Shelter in place orders had been issued due to Covid-19 and the congregation moved to Zoom worship. After the last class, the post-project was emailed to each of the participants. Fortunately, everyone was quick to return the assessments; everyone but one. One of the participants of the project was a small business owner. This person managed to make it to the last two Zoom classes but was too busy to finish the project or to complete the post-assessment.

The Instructor, Facilitator and Spiritual Director of the Project

The project leader provided the leadership and training for this project. His background includes a two-year training and missionary internship in Lisbon, Portugal. He worked for ten years training and mentoring missionary interns at the Adventures in Missions program in Lubbock, TX. He also worked as a short- and long-term missionary in Maputo, Mozambique, Benoni, South Africa, Kosice, Slovakia, Chihuahua, Mexico, Changsha, China, and Mexico City, Mexico. He has a B.S. in Bible, M.S. in Ministry, M.A. in Philosophy and soon to graduate with D Min in Spiritual Direction. He also completed the Renovare Institute for Spiritual Formation. He has been the minister at the TCoC for over ten years.

Identifying the Participants

This project was ultimately the beginning of a larger project for the TCoC. The larger project involves the development of a leadership team that is equipped and confident in their ability to hear, discern and determine God's will not only in their own lives, but also for the congregation. This project was about first learning to listen to God in one's own life. The process for identifying and training project members who would eventually be able to discern a vision and direction for the congregation involved finding mature women and men of faith who had already given themselves to God and his Church, specifically the TCoC. The participants were chosen out of a group of people whom the rest of the congregation would identify as having been involved in various works and ministries of the congregation for some time. They were already regarded as among the ministry leaders and leadership. Beyond that, it was important to find

members who could actually commit to the time and practices required for the project. The preference would have been to have had a few more participants, however, the schedules and obligations of some kept the group at eight participants.

Tools Necessary for the Project

This project, although requiring a number of tools and resources, because it was folded into the regular rhythm and scheduling of the congregation was not difficult logistically speaking. There were many essential resources for the implementation and success of the project, all of which were available or developed in house at the church. These resources included the time and space to teach a four-month series on life with God and three months on the Examen and discernment of the spirits. The resources also required curriculum, handouts and articles to teach and train project members. It was not an accident that the project was planned in such a way that most of the resources and times were readily available within the established life of the congregation. As the pastor, the project leader had the ability to set and adjust the sermon and class series as well the time in the pulpit and the classroom to do the teaching. There was also a need for printing out the class handouts and notes, all of which the congregation provided.

Project Assessment – Did the Members Become a Listening People?

A necessary and important part of this project includes the evaluation of the progress of the project members as well as an evaluation of the project itself. Ultimately what is most important in this project is the actual development and growth of the project

members. However, for future use and training at the TCoC it is important to assess the project plan and material to see if it can be enhanced too.

The Assessment

Evaluation of members was an important part of the project in building awareness and confidence. Personal spiritual growth and development seem to be difficult to notice by individuals. Usually an outsider must provide feedback for the individual to become aware of the changes that have taken place within them.

For this project, an assessment was created to evaluate the members' progress. It was self-administered by the members twice. The first time was before phase two to determine a base line of what level the individual considered themselves to be and then again at the end of the project to reveal any changes or growth. Different spiritual growth and spiritual maturity assessments were considered. In the end, to evaluate the specific areas targeted by this study as well as to receive feedback on the specific components used in this study a questionnaire was created.

The evaluation was not intended to assess one's overall spirituality or spiritual maturity. It was specifically written with questions about one's spiritual practices and experiences of God's presence as well as God's guidance. The design of the evaluation was specifically aimed at assessing the project members' ability to hear God and discern his voice and leading.

The evaluation was a combination of short answer descriptions and a self-assessment on a scale of zero to five. The short answers were descriptions of one's relationship with God as well as what spiritual disciplines and practices one uses to

engage with God. Practically speaking, the short answers prepared the minds and hearts of the members as they begin the second part.

The second part was the numerical self-assessment. The self-assessment was where a measurement of an actual baseline for reference was found. It consisted of eight questions that could be answered with responses ranging from zero – this is unimportant to me to five – I’m doing great. The statements were related to one’s personal relationship with God, to specific spiritual practices, to God’s felt presence and his guidance. This assessment addressed all of the goals and intentions of the project – one’s understanding and experience of a life with God, one’s attention and practices that lead to hearing God’s voice, one’s ability to discern God’s voice and one’s ability to discern God’s guidance. The participants filled out this assessment twice to note any change or growth. In the post-project evaluation there were also questions concerning the participants’ engagement with the expected practices as well as an opportunity for them to give feedback on each of the components.

How the Assessment Was Administered

The assessment was a self-administered evaluation taken twice by members. The first time the members took the assessment before phase two. As a part of the orientation meeting in December, the assessments were handed out to each one of the project members. Those participants that were unable to attend the meeting received the assessment via email. The project members were given the week to fill out the assessment at their leisure. They were asked to return the assessment the following

Sunday. As noted above, it would have been more effective and efficient to have the participant fill out the evaluation at the meeting.

The same assessment was taken a second time in April after the project was completed. Again, it was self-administered. Due to the shelter in place order in response to Covid-19 the assessment was emailed to the members following the last class. The assessment was filled out and emailed back that week.

Along with the evaluation a feedback questionnaire concerning the project plan and materials were emailed to each of the members along with the post-project assessment. This questionnaire gave the members an opportunity to self-report on how consistent they were with the practice of the prayer of Examen, the reading of the articles and their class attendance. It also provided them with an opportunity to give feedback concerning the material and presentation of the discernment of the spirits, the prayer of Examen, the articles and their time in spiritual direction.

The Research Questions and the Data

The primary stated goal of the project was that the participants develop a sense of confidence in their sense of God's presence and guidance. The assessment asked eight questions ranging from the participants' self-reported progress in their relationship with God to their confidence in discerning God's guidance in their life. Below are what the numbers report.

Question one stated, "I am making progress in my relationship with God." The participants self-reported an average of 2.85 before the project and 3.57 after the project.

Five people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the third highest amount - 0.72.

Question two stated, "I have a regular time to connect with God in one form or another." The participants self-reported an average of 3.28 before the project and 3.71 after the project. Three people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the sixth highest amount - 0.43.

Question three stated, "I take time to be still and quiet" The participants self-reported an average of 2.71 before the project and 3.14 after the project. Three people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the sixth highest amount - 0.43.

Question four stated, "I pray regularly." The participants self-reported an average of 2.85 before the project and 3.42 after the project. Four people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the fourth highest amount - .57.

Question five stated, "When I pray I have a sense of God's presence." The participants self-reported an average of 2.71 before the project and 3.28 after the project. Four people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the fourth highest amount - 0.57.

Question six stated, "I pray for God's guidance." The participants self-reported an average of 3.71 before the project and 3.85 after the project. One person self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the lowest amount - .14.

Question seven stated, "I feel confident in my ability to discern God's presence in my life." The participants self-reported an average of 2.28 before the project and 3.57

after the project. Six people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the highest amount – 1.29.

Question eight stated, “I feel confident in my ability to discern God’s guidance in my life.” The participants self-reported an average of 2.28 before the project and 3.28 after the project. Six people self-reported an increase to this question. On average, this question increased by the second highest amount – 1.0.

There are some interesting observations to be made from this data. First, the question that received the highest value before and after the project was question six indicating that the participants’ prayer life had a strong element of praying for God’s guidance before and after the project. Interestingly enough, even with a strong prayer life for God’s guidance, the two questions that scored the lowest pre-project were questions seven and eight. These questions were about the participant’s confidence in discerning God’s presence and his guidance. The participants were eager and prayerful for God and his guidance prior to the project, but it was the weakest element in this questionnaire. After the project, which was intended to develop the participant’s ability to sense God’s presence and to discern his movement within them, these same two questions, seven and eight, were markedly the two highest gainers on the questionnaire.

All of the participants noted an increase in at least three of the questions. The average increase was an increase in 4.5 of the questions. One participant self-reported an increase in seven of the questions. Not surprisingly, the third-highest increase came to question one, a question about a sense of general progress being made in their relationship with God.

The post-project questionnaire also asked for feedback concerning the specific components of the project. All of the components received favorable marks. Some were more helpful than others. Below is a description of the feedback on the class of the rules for discerning the spirit, the prayer of Examen, the weekly articles and spiritual direction.

Every Sunday, for approximately three months, the participants attended the adult Sunday Bible class. In this class the rules for discerning the spirits were discussed. These rules are aimed at helping a disciple to recognize the movements of their interior world, particularly how to identify when and how the Spirit of God is at work and when and how the Enemy is at work. Overall this was the second highest rated component with five out of seven participants noting it as immensely helpful. The most consistent remark was that the rules provided an orderly description and framework of the spiritual life and the ebbs and flows that are experienced. The idea that there are actual prescribed steps to be taken when one is in desolation was also helpful.

Three times a week for approximately three months the participants were expected to pray the prayer of Examen. The prayer of Examen is a short time of reflection and prayer that asks the person to reflect on the day and when she noticed God and when she stepped away from him. It helps a person to begin noticing that God is good, he can be found everywhere and that he is near. It is not intended to be difficult or complicated, but somehow newcomers to this prayer have to struggle along at it until they find their rhythm. Overall this was rated as the third most helpful of the four components. Everyone noted it was at least somewhat helpful. The consistent positive remarks about the prayer of Examen were primarily about the benefit of imposing a

specific spiritual practice on themselves that encouraged them to be intentional and reflective. The negative remarks had to do with the actual practice of the prayer. This may reflect on a lack of instruction as to how to do the prayer. The prayer is intended to be very flexible and adaptable. Those people that felt they had to adapt their life to the prescribed methodology of the prayer were frustrated by it. Additional instruction would have been beneficial.

The third component was the reading of weekly articles. This was the least helpful of the four components. Most people found the articles at least somewhat helpful but one person did mark the articles as not being helpful. Some people remarked that the articles, while being good articles, were at times tangential to the topic of learning to listen to God. As has already been said, more intentional thought should have gone into the selection of the articles.

The fourth component of the project was spiritual direction. This was rated as extremely helpful by six of the seven participants with the seventh rating it as somewhat helpful. The comments on spiritual direction noted the value in having someone with whom they could process their spiritual journey, the value of probing questions, the discovery of hidden challenges and weaknesses in their relationship with God, and coming to the realization that they are too hard on themselves and that they were guided by God more than they had realized.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the following section this paper will summarize and consider some concluding observations about the project. The project is valuable in and of itself, however by looking back and reflecting on what was taught one might gain insights for the future. This section will consider the knowledge gained from the project itself. It will also consider some possible future steps for the project and the TCoC. Finally, this section will consider some implications for the Church of Christ as a denomination and the larger Christian community.

The Benefits of the Project

This project's value and benefits to the future of the congregation are significant but indirect. The overarching need for the TCoC body is a vision for the future of this church. This project has been aimed at educating, training and equipping individuals in their personal relationship with God. Based on the assessments and questionnaires the project members are more competent and confident in their ability to do this after participating in the project. This in and of itself is a great success, but it does not directly address the need for the congregation at large.

The need for a vision for the congregation was not met through this project. There is now a small group of leaders who are more capable and confident in their ability to discern God's presence and guidance in their own lives, but not necessarily in the life of the TCoC. The leaders at the TCoC still need to be educated, trained and equipped in the practice of group discernment. The leadership still does not know how to listen for the

voice and guidance of God as a group. This was the larger purpose of this project, but the project itself was smaller in scope. It was more of a first step to a discerning leadership in that it sought to accomplish the equipping of individuals first with the hope of building off of the project's foundation and going from the individual to the body. With that in mind, this project showed itself to be valuable. The project indicates that a path forward to discerning a group vision is available. The individuals have grown in their ability to sense God's presence and in their ability to discern God's guidance in their own lives. They now have the experience, vocabulary and practices that should be easily transferred to group discernment. A strong foundation has been built within the individuals that can be built off of for the body.

Implications and Next Steps

The next steps for the TCoC, in regard to this project have two aspects. The first aspect concerns the individual members. The second aspect concerns the leadership.

The next steps for the individual members at TCoC include a continuation and amplification of the project. This project has benefited those who participated, which will influence and benefit the entire congregation, however neither the material of the project nor the underlying concepts are intended for a particular exclusive group. An interactional relationship with God that enables one to hear and discern his voice is not for a select group of Christians. This is foundational to everyone's journey of faith. The hope would be that every person at the congregation would be trained or guided into a theology and spiritual practices that make this accessible to all of them. One could

envision offering an adaption of this project once a year in a six-to-eight-week format focusing on the prayer of Examen and the discernment of Spirits.

An additional next step for the individual members at the congregation would include Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius originally composed *The Spiritual Exercises* with people contemplating entering the priesthood. The format involved a thirty-day retreat to go through the exercises with the help of a guide or spiritual director. Fortunately, Ignatius realized the benefit for people not considering the priesthood and he wrote the nineteenth annotation. The nineteenth annotation provides a format that is more accessible to people that cannot take a thirty-day retreat. In the nineteenth annotation, the retreatant spends an hour-to-ninety minutes a day for approximately six-to-nine months praying and meditating through the exercises. It is a powerful and transformative experience to do the exercises. Ignatius uses both the prayer of Examen and the rules for the discernment of spirits in the exercises. It would therefore seem like a natural next step for the members of this project that are ready, willing and able to do the spiritual exercises. In connection to this next step for the project members and other members that gain some experience with the prayer of Examen, the discernment of spirits and Ignatian spirituality.

The more pressing aspect of the next steps for the congregation as related to this project involves the leadership. The TCoC has struggled for many years to discern a corporate vision. Over the years the congregation has employed many strategies to do this, but ultimately it has not been able to sense or discern where God is leading. As mentioned earlier in the project, the leadership has claimed that the TCoC does not have

an obedience problem but a discernment problem. As this project was being conceived, the original purpose was to develop leaders to corporately discern God's will for the church. However, the decision was made to first develop this sensitivity to God's voice and discerning practices within the individuals before moving to the corporate level. As the information and practices have impacted the theology and awareness of the project members, the next step is to train and practice group discernment.

To do this the leaders of the TCoC need to begin practicing group discernment. Ultimately group discernment is practiced much like personal discernment. The leaders need to select a regular time to meet for this and to go through the uncomfortable learning curve of developing a new practice and skill. Such a meeting might include the following elements. First, the leaders would gather together and sit in silence to become fully present to God, the group and to one's self. Second the group would consider and discuss the topic, question or situation needing to be discerned. Third, the group would engage in a time of prayer to become, in Ignatius' words, "indifferent" to the results or outcome and interested in serving God and his goals not one's own agenda. Fourth, the group would engage in practice a time of silence to listen to God and the Spirit for his response to the question – listening for movements of the Spirit or the Enemy trying move the group closer to or farther away from God. Finally there would be the need for a time of sharing and discerning what was discovered during the shared silence. Now that there are people equipped and practiced in doing something similar in their own lives, doing this for the congregation is much more possible.

Of course there is a need for discussions about group discernment as well. Some of the members of the project noted that they would have been happy if the project lasted longer. With a heightened interest and energy among the project members and the leadership, the Adult Bible class has continued to introduce the entire class more in depth concerning Ignatian spirituality and further considerations of discernment of the spirits. It would also be an opportune time to educate them and to practice group spiritual direction as well as group discernment. Rose Mary Dougherty has some excellent resources on group spiritual discernment. There are also a number of practices and resources from the Quaker tradition that would be accessible and helpful to training the TCoC about group spiritual direction and discernment.

Discuss Recommendations and Implications of this Project for the Larger Christian Community

The TCoC, for much of its history has considered itself to be a bit on the cutting-edge of Church of Christ pushing and pioneering the thoughts and practices of the denomination. This vanguard perspective was noticed through the earlier adoption of praise songs in the 1970s and 1980s. It was noticed through the campus ministry started at UCSB in the 1970s, one of the first Church of Christ campus ministries on the West Coast. This perspective was demonstrated as the TCoC began moving in the direction of being more formationally oriented rather than that of a more traditional Church of Christ. More recently, in the 2000s, the TCoC adopted an egalitarian position on women and their role in the church and in Sunday worship. Currently, the size of the congregation limits its ability to be very denominationally influential, but it can be a type of case study

and testing ground. There are many other Churches of Christ floundering and eager to find a healthier, more biblical way of living out their faith and meeting God. As the TCoC goes through this project and even into the next steps described above, it might have a story of hope and possibility for other Churches of Christ.

As far as the Church beyond the Church of Christ and its specific challenges, it seems as if Ignatius and Ignatian spirituality might offer something too. The similarities between the world of Ignatius and today are many. The Renaissance moved people from myth and victim to a place of empowerment and possibility much like the Enlightenment. Humanism continued to elevate the importance of the individual and to undermine the hegemony of governments and the Church Post-modernity. The European discovery of the Western hemisphere brought a sense of adventure, mystery and wonder to the Old World much like technology today. Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation upended Christianity causing a great migration of people out of the Catholic Church much like the great migration of Christians today who profess to be “spiritual but not religious,” Nones or, as David Kinnaman calls them – Nomads, Prodigals and Exiles.¹ We appear to be at a point in history when a seismic shift is occurring, much like during Ignatius’ lifetime.

It seems that for a world filled with people who claim to encounter the divine more effectively outside the Church rather than in a theology and spirituality that embraces and encourages the finding of God in all places would make sense. For a world where people are intent on finding their true selves and learning to listen to their hearts and inner authority Ignatius might have something to say to them. It seems as if Ignatian

¹ David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 25.

spirituality and even just the parts this project address might have something to offer to those outside and inside the Church today.

That being said, it seems that it is important for the Church today to embrace and encourage and even equip people to be able to find God in all things. God is so much bigger than one can imagine. People are discovering him, whether they call him God or not in many places. Embracing these experiences and the reality that his presence can be found everywhere might open a space for a new creativity and connection to God in the lives of people of faith and those looking for it.

There is also an undisputable void in this world of a sense of right and wrong, good and bad. Who or what can be trusted has become an unanswerable question for many. There is obviously a need for grounding people into the stories and wisdom of the Scripture, but there is also a place for people to learn to discover the image of God within and the ways that the Spirit of God is at work to guide them into a discovery of who their true self is, of the inner authority they can find by listening to the Spirit in their hearts.

Overall, it seems that Ignatian spirituality has much to offer to the Church and to the world. Kinnaman's book, *You Lost Me*, offers research and insight into the struggles the Church is facing and some of the areas that have been neglected or forgotten causing younger people to wonder if the Church still matters or if it is important at all. Among those things that Kinnaman reveals as limiting are overprotectiveness, shallowness and doubtless. He offers as responses to these gaps, things like discernment rather than

overprotective,² meeting God and discovering God's role and purpose in one's calling and vocation rather than shallow,³ and doing rather than doubting⁴ – serving and caring.

These are all at the core of Ignatian spirituality. These things may be found in many approaches, but somehow they are not emphasized. If nothing else, this project and Ignatian spirituality can motivate people to discover these fundamental parts of life with God in their own tradition and practices.

² Ibid., 103.

³ Ibid., 126-128.

⁴ Ibid., 197.

APPENDIX A
SERMON SERIES

The With-God Life

“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 (Eph. 2:19-20; 3:10). The Bible traces the formation of this community from the creation in the Garden of Eden all the way to the new heaven and the new earth.”¹

The Bible is bookended with pictures of humanity living, breathing and co-existing with God in their midst. The story begins with God walking and talking with them in the garden as friends and the story ends with his coming to his people as a groom to his bride to make his home among them. This is the way the story begins and this is the way it ends. This is the way it was intended to be and this is the way it will be. This is what he wanted, this is what he offers and this is what he gets – life with him.

Throughout the Bible, we find a God who is always moving nearer and nearer to people and a God who is constantly at work trying to help those people recognize struggles at work within them that limit this loving intimacy and to help them redeem and grow beyond their brokenness so that together they might live life more abundantly.

From the beginning I have considered it absolutely essential that the group I work with understand that the with-God life isn't a serendipity or a sideshow to what God is up to and what he is accomplishing. Life with God is the point; it is salvation. Atonement is a means to an end. Heaven is not the goal; it is another place we will get to experience this with-God life in yet another level of intimacy and richness.

¹ The Life With God Bible, p 1.

In order to help state, clarify and demonstrate the reality of the With-God life as God's intention from the beginning and throughout history, I presented a 16 week sermon series. It was a survey of the entire Bible through the lens of the With-God life. The outline and inspiration was taken from *The Life With God Bible*. I have included in an outline of the 16 weeks as well as a detailed outline of one of the sermons.

The With-God Life

1. Introduction to the With-God Life
2. The People of God in Individual Communion Genesis 1-11
3. The People of God Become a Family Genesis 12-50
4. The People of God in Exodus Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,
Deuteronomy
5. The People of God in the Promised Land Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel 1-12
6. The People of God as a Nation 1 Samuel 13-31, 2 Samuel, 1 & 2
Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles
7. The People of God in Travail Job, Psalms of Lament, Eccl,
Lamentations
8. The People of God Prayer and Worship Psalms
9. The People of God in Daily Life Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of
Songs

10. The People of God in Rebellion	1 Kings 12-2 Kings 25:10, 2 Chronicles 10-36:19; Isaiah, Jeremiah 1-36, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah
11. The People of God in Exile	2 Kings 25:11-30, 2 Chronicles 36:20-23, Jeremiah 37-52, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah
12. The People of God in Restoration	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
13. The People of God with Immanuel	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
14. The People of God in Mission	Acts
15. The People of God in Community	Epistles
16. The People of God into Eternity	Revelation

The People of God in Travail

God's aim in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving person with God at the very center of the community as its Prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.

The Bible traces the formation of this community from the creation in the Garden of Eden all the way to the new heaven and new earth. We are exploring this with-God history from individual to family to tribe to people to nation to all humanity.

The With-God Life in

- **Individual Communion** as they walk and talk with God
- **Becoming a Family** promise to be faithful and making a covenant with God
- **Exodus:** tribes leaving, escaping, life with God in deliverance
- **Promised Land:** tribes learning to act with God in victory
- **As a Nation:** many tribes becoming one nation, one community with God in success

Travail

Review underlined statements above

Now we consider the with God life in travail in struggle in suffering

Intro:

Struggle of shopping:

- I try not to go to the store w/o a list especially if there are more than 3 items
- I forget 4 – mnemonic game with first letters...I forget
- List – quicker, don't forget things, I don't impulse shop
- Good intentions – shop the edges (fruit, veggies, dairy, meat) & avoid the center aisles (processed & junk food lurks)
- W/o a list – get home “Where'd this ice cream come from?” “Shoot, I forgot the onion but I did find the Oreos.”

Went in for 1 thing and came out with another

Oil Change recently

- Jiffy Lube: topped off fluids, checked your tire pressure, your wipers are bad, it's time to rotate tires, "Here's your air filter, would you like to get a new one?" "Do I need a new one?" "Here's your filter."
- Thinking: all I want is an oil change and now I need new wipers, rotate tires, new air filter, ...

Went in for X and told I need Y

Nissan – we're offering you a free car wash this month

- It's a bait and switch scam
- Somehow my free car wash will turn into \$500 of maintenance

God doesn't do bait and switch – entice you in with promises and then hand you a curse

Religion might, but the Bible doesn't. The Bible owns the reality the sometimes life is a struggle.

Texts of life with God in suffering

Psalms of Lament – spirits are crushed, flooding their bed with tears, angry vengeful hard to read Psalms

Picking songs: hard to find these Psalms. One's that are from Psalms of Lament cherry pick the 1 positive verse in the entire Psalm!

We are convinced on some level that life with God is going to be nothing but roses or at least we want to be convinced of this...but this isn't the human experience

Tend to Read the Bible: if you live a righteous life you'll be safe. Bad things happen to bad people. That's what the Law says!

Job:

Demonstrates that there simply is no easy relationship between good fortune and righteousness or between misfortune and wrath. He finds that life is a mystery that can be faced only by trust in and reliance upon God. This mystery eludes the easy answers of his companions and even his own best explanations. It defies Job's reason and shatters the boundaries of his understanding—as it does our own.

In the end, suffering challenges us to trust in a God, who, in ways beyond our knowing, controls the ultimate destinies of humans and nations.

Psalms of Lament:

We find kings and ordinary people who react to suffering with anger in their hearts, revenge on their minds or even despair in their emotions, all the while knowing that God is in control of their destiny. In their anguish they cry out to God for deliverance from enemies, rail at God when they are wronged, plead their case to heaven and cry into their pillows.

Many times their cause seems hopeless and God seems heartless. But the psalmist acknowledges that, constant like the needle of a compass, “the Lord sits enthroned forever, he has established his throne for judgement” (9:7).

Ecclesiastes:

Considers the utter futility of human life without any reference to God. “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (1:1-2). When the distinction between virtue and wickedness appear to be ignored by God, why should we even try to be good? Why should we pursue righteousness if there is no apparent reward in this life and no awareness of a life to come? The conclusion feels far from complete to these perplexing questions: “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone” (12:13).

Will Smith, 49, 4 time Grammy winning performer, 2 time Oscar nominee and Golden Globe nominated actor explained the meaning behind his new song “The Mountaintop,” which he believes represents this chapter of his life. “The idea is ... I’ve been to the top of money, I’ve had all the sex that I’ve ever wanted, I’ve had all of the adoration,” he said. “I’ve been to the top of all those material world mountains and nothing makes you happier other than being useful to others. That’s it. That’s the only thing that ever will satisfy that thing, is that what you’re doing is useful.”

God with us in Travail

- Bad things happen to good people (Job)
- Good things happening to bad people (Eccl)
- Good people struggling with suffering (Psalms of Lament)

Lamentations:

Returns and reinforces the teaching of the Law by suggesting that the terrible suffering befalling the Israelites is a result of their sin. “How lonely sits the city that once was full

of people! ... she that was great among the nations! ... Jerusalem sinned grievously, ... her downfall was appalling” (1:1-9)

The Problem of Evil / Theodicy

- Why does evil exist?
- The Question: If God is all powerful and God is all loving

Epicurus – 341-270 BC

- If an all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing God exists, then evil does not.
- There is evil in the world
- Therefore an all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing God exists, then evil does not.

This is built on the idea that ridding the world of evil and suffering is God’s goal.

- But - If God’s aim in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving person with God at the very center of the community as its Prime Sustainer and most glorious Inhabitant.
- Then - God is trying to transform us into loving people.

Love requires a choice! Without choice, without free will it isn’t love.

- To will the good of another is a choice
- Love isn’t love if we can’t choose not to love.

Could God have constructed a reality in which there were no consequences?

- Fall and not get hurt. Overeat and not suffer weight related health problem. Hurt someone and feel no guilt.
- Yes...but it wouldn’t be “very good”.
- If I never experienced the consequence of my poor choices would I ever choose otherwise?
- The joy of doing well would be joyless. Good decisions wouldn’t be good.

Olivia to camp:

- Not Seeing Olivia for 2 weeks – ugh!
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
- Suffering enables me to love more.

Dark Night of the Soul

- Senses and Spirit
- Are you in it for the perks or for Me?
- May we become the people of God, even in travail.

APPENDIX B
CLASS SERIES

This Appendix contains a description and outline of the class series on the discernment of spirits, a guide for praying the prayer of Examen and a sample of the class material.

The Discernment of Spirits – an introduction to Ignatian discernment and the Rules for Discernment of Spirits

The Churches of Christ have historically been skeptical of emotions and subjectivity. For much of its history the Church of Christ has held a theology that allowed for the Holy Spirit to only be at work through the Bible. Consequently, there is a disconnect between the members of the Churches of Christ and the work of the Spirit in all other ways – emotions, intuition, imagination, creativity, etc. Ignatius and his rules for discernment of the spirits provide clear, practical, objective guidance as to how to respond, understand and even trust the work of the Holy Spirit and its work outside of the written Bible.

For 13 weeks I meet with the participants teaching them to become a listening people. To do this I first taught them about the Prayer of Examen, a practice Ignatius recommended his friends to pray twice a day.²I asked the members to pray this prayer three times a week to help develop an inner awareness and sensitivity to the movement of the spirits within them; to give them fodder for discernment. I then taught them about the life of Ignatius so they could get a glimpse of what a life of awareness, listening and

² David L Fleming, SJ. *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, p 28

discerning God's voice might look like. Finally, I spent the majority of these meetings walking the participants of my project through a study of Ignatius' rules for discernment of the Spirits. These are found in his Spiritual Exercises (313-336). There are two sets of rules: Rules for perceiving and knowing in some manner the different movements which are caused in the soul (313-327) and Rules for the same effect with greater discernment of spirits (328-336).³

Below is a list of the classes I taught as well as a sample outline from the class on the prayer of Examen and from the Rules of Discernment. I relied heavily on Timothy Gallagher, OMV's book, *The Discernment of Spirits* and *Spiritual Consolation* for the classes on the discernment of spirits.

1. Prayer of Examen
2. Life of Ignatius
3. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 1 & 2
4. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 3 & 4
5. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 5 & 6
6. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 7 & 8
7. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 9
8. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 10 & 11

³ David L Fleming, SJ. *Draw Me Into Your Friendship*, p 246-267

9. Rules for Discerning the Spirits – Rules 12, 13, & 14
10. Rules for the Greater Discernment of Spirits – Rules 1, 2 & 3
11. Rules for the Greater Discernment of Spirits – Rules 3, 4 & 5
12. Rules for the Greater Discernment of Spirits – Rules 6, 7 & 8
13. Summary and Conclusion of Classes

The Prayer of Examen

1 Gratitude: Give Thanks

The day I have just lived is a gift from God. Be grateful for it.

- As you enter into this time of reflection and prayer, cultivate and nurture a spirit of gratitude for the gift of today.
- Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God.
- **“If the only prayer you ever prayed was ‘thank you,’ it would be enough.”**
Meister Eckhart

2 Petition: Ask God for Light

I want to look at my day with God’s eyes, not merely my own.

- I want eyes to see God in the big and small things of life.
- **Pay attention to the small things – the food you ate, the sights you saw and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.**
- Begin by asking for the grace you want through this prayer.
- **God is a God who wants to be known! He is a revealing God!**

3 Review: Revisit the Day

I carefully look back on the day just completed, being guided by the Holy Spirit.

- When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God’s action in your life? When were you resisting?

- Where did I feel true joy today? What troubled me today? What was challenging today? Where and when did I pause today? Did I notice God's presence in any of this?
- **Pay attention to your emotions. We detect the presence of the Spirit I the movement of our emotions.**

4 Forgiveness: Face Your Shortcomings

I face up to what is wrong – in my life and in me.

- In light of my review, what is my response to the God of my life?
- I savor and celebrate the gifts I've received and the gifts I have been able to give.
- **NOT GUILT DRIVEN! FOCUSED ON A GOD WHO READILY AND JOYFULLY ACCEPTS AND EMBRACES ME**
- 'We can only truly accept others as they are, and forgive them, when we discover that we are truly accepted by God as we are forgiven by him. It is a deep experience, knowing that we are loved and held by God in all our brokenness and littleness.' Jean Vanier
- **#4 is a 'deep experience!' ... If and only if it is done in light of #1-3!**

5 Renewal: Look Toward the Day to Come

I ask where I need God in the day to come

- You already know 75% of what will happen tomorrow; where do you already know you will need His presence and grace? Ask for it.
- Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn to prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

Insights into the Prayer of Examen

The space our hearts enters in the Examen:

Steps 1 & 2: When we review the day, **our hearts discover the concrete signs of God's love** and we give thanks for that love.

Steps 3 & 4: We look to see **how we have responded to his love**, asking forgiveness where necessary.

Step 5: Then the light of today's Examen assists us in pursuing with the Lord how **we may grow** in the day to come.

The logic to the order of the 5 Steps:

Step 1 To **know in a tangible way that we are loved is the foundation for all prayer**

Step 2 Rooted in the relationship, **we ask God for light and strength**, and

Step 3 **Review our responses** to that love,

Step 4 A review that flows into the **healing encounter of forgiveness**, and which,

Step 5 With the insight gained, **seeks new growth** in the future

Building a relationship through the Examen

Step 1 Gratitude: A God who is **good**

Step 2 Petition: A God is **everywhere**

Step 3 Review: A God is **always** inviting us to move closer to him

Step 4 Forgiveness: A God **knows and loves** me regardless

Step 5 Renewal: A God who wants to do **life with me** tomorrow

Rule #5: In Desolation Never Make a Change

Four Guidelines dealing with spiritual desolation:

Fifth Rule: When we find ourselves weighed down by a certain desolation, *we should not try to change a previous decision or to come to a new decision.* The reason is that in desolation the evil spirit is making an attempt to obstruct the good direction of our life or to change it, and so we would be thwarted from the gentle lead of God and what is more conducive to our own salvation. As a result, at a time of desolation, we hold fast to the decision which guided us during the time before the desolation came on us.

Rules 1-4 are the basics or fundamentals to discerning the spirits

- Be Aware, Be Understanding / Name it, Take Appropriate Action
- Direction of Life (North Star) and how the spirits work depending on my direction (1,2)
- Consolation & Desolation (3, 4)

Remaining rules are tools to use to reject the tactics and discouragement when in desolation

The main problem for most: discouragement that leads to letting go of our spiritual life

“When we find ourselves weighed down by a certain desolation...”:

- If I can say that I am in spiritual desolation, then I can apply Rule 5

Example:

- Made a commitment or appointment to go to Thurs. Bible Study, Pray the Examen, meet with someone to visit and pray, extend a kindness/forgiveness/grace to someone
- Something happens and my heart is now anxious, weighed down, discouraged (phone call, \$, ...)
- As appointment approaches the voices begin: “Why waste your time?” “I won’t do any good.” “You’ll be a fake.”
- You want to cancel your appointment.

Ask 2 Questions:

1. Am I in spiritual desolation? (Yes)
2. Am I thinking about changing a previous (spiritual) decision (proposal) that was made before the desolation began? (Yes – cancelling)

Rule 5: do not make the change.

Me: Committed to going to Word and Life

- There may be things that arise that demand of me to miss, but I should not change it because of desolation.

Rule 5 and the Lord of the Rings

- Galadriel hands Frodo a light and says Frodo: “This will be for you a light when all other lights go out.”

2 Questions:

1. Am I in desolation?
2. Am I considering a change to a spiritual proposal I made before the desolation?

In confusion, pain, darkness – “I want to change X.” “I made a mistake in that proposal.” “It’ll be better if I make this change.”

Consider Ignatius as an older brother advising us.

Late in life. Amassed a good number of followers, mission work being sent out, schools starting, ...

Ignatius set upon a 40 day retreat to seek clarity on what to do with his movement (what form of poverty the Jesuits would embrace).

Ignatius’ Spiritual Diary:

Gets up early for prayer, *“I felt great devotion from midway on there was much of it, clear, lucid and as it were warm....”*

Prepares himself for chapel,

At chapel, *“During a part of the mass I felt great devotion, sometimes with movements to tears. During the other part I struggled many times...”*

After mass, *“When the mass was finished, and afterward in my room, I found myself totally alone and without help of any kind, without power to relish any of my mediators or any of the Divine Persons, but so remote and so separated from them, as if I had never felt anything of them, or never would feel anything again.”*

Rule 6: Changing Our self when in Desolation

Sixth Rule: Although we should not try to make new decisions at a time of desolation, we should not just sit back and do nothing. We are meant to *fight off whatever is making us less than we should be*. And so we might try to intensify our prayer, we might take on some penance, or we might make a closer examination of ourselves and our life of faith.

Rule 5 said make no change – to your spiritual proposals, which can lead to the following perspective:

“I wish to dedicate my life to the Lord and am trying to live this commitment faithfully. For days (weeks, months, years...) I have felt burdened and sad spiritually. God seems far away and I do not experience the warmth of grace in my heart. God permits this, and so, apparently, is calling me to carry this heaviness day after day in my life. My task is just to bear it as best I can.”

However: when endured in this good-willed but resigned manner, the spiritual desolation is likely to persist and, often enough, to deepen.

Rule 6 – we are to change ourselves intensely – precisely against the desolation itself.

What it’s not:

- God does call us to bear some sufferings, even for a long time – health, burdensome responsibilities, relationship trials, struggles that cannot be altered and must be born with God’s help.
- Remember, the way of discipleship is the way of the cross...and the cross anticipates resurrection
- Rule 6 isn’t about those circumstances, it’s about spiritual desolation:
- We are not meant to endure spiritual desolation passively.
- We are to take active steps to resist and reject the desolation.

Prayer, Examination of Self and life of faith, Penance

Prayer:

Petition

- Ask and it will be given to you. (Matt 7:7)
- Ask his help in resisting and overcoming
- Desolation tends to bring a sense of helplessness / trapped / stuck
- Ask God for the assistance we need

- In desolation this may require conscious effort. In desolation, we are not attracted to prayer. We feel “as if separated from our Creator and Lord”.
- Prayer counters the sense of separation from God.

Pray the Scripture

- Find God’s presence in passages such as Psalms (23), Prodigal Son, Romans 8

Examination:

- Consider previous times of discouragement – they were not final, in fact, they are typically new beginnings
- Allow your history to cause trust to stir within you.
- Examine closely to understand the strategies, narratives, the vices, the issues at work (Enneagram)
- What is happening in my heart? Am I in desolation? How did this begin?
- What was its cause? How has it developed? What action will help me to reject it?

“By reflection on my state of desolation, I set myself-in-desolation apart from myself-reflecting-on-myself-in-desolation...By doing this, I have made space in my consciousness for something besides desolation with its causes and consequences. In that space I can now reconnoiter, maneuver my attention and reason and will, and thus attack and weaken or even destroy the sources of desolation.”

Penance:

- To oppose directly the indulgent tendency of the desolation
- This is a way to reject the desolation to defy the enemies’ strategy
- Desolation calls us to find a distraction, escape or gratification to avoid the discomfort.
- Penance encourages us away from unsuitable indulgences that will prolong our unhappiness for a practice that will energize in a spiritually healthy way and aid in overcoming the desolation.
- The penance is suitable when it counters the precise tendency to flight we feel in desolation and permits us to act against the specific desolation
- Ignatius would advise retreatants to extend their prayer / meditation commitments beyond the previously determined time limit when they were in desolation
- Examples:
 - Smiling at the person who sent you into desolation
 - Praying for the person / situation
 - Delaying an impulse

- Serve a person in need
 - Holding one's tongue (privacy)
- See your act of penance as an act of resistance that engenders further courage...and thus, step by step, the desolation is vanquished.

APPENDIX C

ARTICLES

During Phase two of the project, every Wednesday an article was sent to the project members. These articles were meant to reinforce and encourage the theology and practice of learning to hear God. The articles were also intended to encourage and remind the project members to continue with the practice of praying the prayer of Examen three times a week.

Below is a list of the articles that were sent.

Article 1:

The One Thing About Martin Luther King Jr.'s Greatness Everyone Keeps Missing
John Blake, CNN

Article 2:

Hearing God Speak
Dallas Willard, from *The Allure of Gentleness*

Article 3:

A Conversational Life With God
Dallas Willard, from *Hearing God*
Renovare.org

Article 4:

Barriers to Hearing God
Dallas Willard, from *Hearing God*
Renovare.org

Article 5:

Monthly Practice: Recognizing God's Voice
Jan Johnson, Renovare Institute for Spiritual Formation, Year 1 March

Article 6:

If God is So Smart, What Am I Doing All the Talking?
Gary Moon, from *Apprenticeship with Jesus*

Article 7:

The Most Amazing Prayer You've Never Heard Of
Mark E Thibodeaux, S.J., from *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen*

Article 8:
How Does the Disciple Live?
Dallas Willard, Renovare.org

Article 9:
Knowing How to Acknowledge God
Dallas Willard, Excerpts from a Chapel Talk, published in The Westmont College
Magazine, Summer 1998

Article 10:
Book Excerpt: The Secret of Guidance
Frederick B Meyer, Renovare.org

Article 11:
Spiritual Disciplines: A Practical Strategy
Renovare.org

Article 12:
Transformational Living: Excerpts from Three of Dallas Willard's Books
Dallas Willard, Renovare.org

APPENDIX D
INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Age:

Gender:

Were you raised in a Christian family? If not, how long have you been a Christian?

Describe your current relationship with God.

What activities, practices, or disciplines help you to engage with God? How often do you do these?

Using the scale below, respond to the following statements:

- 5 – I'm doing great
- 4 – I'm doing well
- 3 – I'm doing okay
- 2 – I'm struggling
- 1 – I need help with this.
- 0 – This is unimportant to me.

_____ I am making progress in my relationship with God.

_____ I have a regular time to connect with God in one form or another.

_____ I take time to be still and quiet.

_____ I pray regularly.

_____ When I pray I have a sense of God's presence.

_____ I pray for God's guidance.

_____ I feel confident in my ability to discern God's presence in my life.

_____ I feel confident in my ability to discern God's guidance in my life.

Feedback Questionnaire:

Consistency:

How often did you attend Sunday class?

Regularly attended Missed Some Missed Most

How often did you pray the prayer of Examen?

3xs 2xs 1xs 0

How often did you read the weekly articles?

Every week 2-3/month 1/month 0

How many times did you meet with Paul?

3 2 1 0

Quality:

Rules for Discernment: Was the class material helpful in understanding how God and the enemy work in you?

Very Some Not Really Confusing

Why or Why not?

Prayer of Examen: Was the practice of the prayer of Examen helpful in noticing God’s presence in your life?

Very Some Not Really Confusing

Why or Why not?

Articles: Were the articles helpful in this project?

Very Some Not Really Confusing

Why or Why not?

Meeting with Paul: Were your meetings with Paul helpful?

Very

Some

Not Really

Confusing

Why or Why not?

What changes would you make to this project? Additions or subtractions?

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