

Website note:

**WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS:**

**FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL OVER-INVESTMENT IN CLERGY  
DEPLOYMENT**

This is a Doctor of Ministry project/thesis presented at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC in 1994. The formatting may be a little quirky in places... remember, it was written in 1994 with MS Word 1.0.

The following abstract is from RIM® (Research in Ministry) in use by the American Theological Library Association:

*In the Episcopal Church, small parishes expect to employ a full-time rector. In today's economy, a full-time priest serving one altar places severe demands on these congregations. As small churches over-invest financially in clergy deployment, they also over-invest emotionally. An atmosphere is created where clergy are expected to over-function to match the high level of investment. The stresses caused by this phenomena are causing clergy "burn-out" while these small cures are becoming harder to fill.*

*The Project/Thesis explores the connection between financial over-investment and the emotional expectations to over-function. The project seeks to lower one by lowering the other.*

At the time (1994), it earned me the ire of many bishops

and clergy who were not ready to give up on the old models. As one bishop intoned: "It seems to me you have an insufficient theology of stewardship." Another predicted (accurately, as it turned out), "You have relegated yourself to the ranks of non-stipendiary clergy."

At this posting (2011) dioceses are struggling with budgets, wringing their hands about closing churches, and crowing about alternative deployments. The parish clergy in my consulting practice seem mystified about their plight. Lay leaders—the folks ultimately responsible for keeping their parishes open—feel betrayed.

I used to sell this piece and teach related workshops. Knowing that many parishes are now seriously wrestling with alternative deployments, I now post the thesis, minus the *appendi*, in hopes that it might find a wider audience, and normalize their struggles.

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Chapter One:

**THE THESIS: Where Your Treasure Is**

At a small church conference in the 1980's, a bishop told me, "When I see a congregation spending 60% of its financial resources on clergy, that's normative in my diocese. But when I see a congregation spending 60% of its emotional resources on clergy, that's pathological."<sup>1</sup>

This paper goes one step further and submits that when a congregation is spending 60% of its financial resources on clergy, it is predisposed to spending 60% of its emotional resources on clergy. I understand this to be a manifestation of Matthew 6:21--"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

The more focused financial investment becomes in clergy role and functioning, the more emotional investment becomes attached to the level and manner in which clergy function. The intensity of the positive and negative transference experienced by clergy in these congregational settings can be expressed as a function of the ratio of clergy cost to parish income.

$$\text{Algebraically: } \pm\text{-Emotional Transf} = \frac{\text{Clergy Costs}}{\text{Parish Income}}$$

The implicit expectation is for clergy to over-function and comply in response to the emotional transference in ways not usually expected in larger churches. The driving factor is the ratio of clergy costs to parish income.

The setting of St. Stephen's, North Sassafras, will be described in Chapter Two. The parish has invested a disproportionate amount of its *financial* resources in clergy costs, leaving little remaining for program, community life and mission. The parish has also invested a disproportionate amount of its *emotional* energy in the role and functioning of its clergy. This has contributed to conflictual relationships with clerical leadership and a high turnover of rectors.

The emotional transference to clergy will admittedly be a "soft" measurement. Specifically, I will use parish narrative and vignette to track over-focus on and preoccupation with the role, appearance and functioning of the Rector, relative to other baptized ministers in their parish system.<sup>2</sup> Counter-transference can be thought of as the Rector's reactivity to the congregation and the preoccupation with the congregation's expectations.

This project/thesis will seek to begin lowering the emotional over-investment in clergy role by first lowering the financial over-investment in clergy role. This could be stated as a thesis question:

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<sup>1</sup>The Right Reverend William Beckham, then Bishop of Upper South Carolina, conversation, Second Annual (Episcopal) Small Church Conference, Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, NC, 1985.

<sup>2</sup>Every hour spent discussing the Rector, his car, his desk, his children, his wife's job, his shoes or what's in his refrigerator is energy that could better be directed or "projected" into Christian ministry.

"Can a congregation's emotional over-investment in the role of its clergy be reduced by lowering the financial over-investment in its clergy presence?"

This initial intervention uses both management and family systems theories. The specific theories and the works from which they are drawn will be described in Chapter Three. These include: early sociological work in congregations by Arlin Roughage which was used by Wesley Frensdorff and Charles Wilson as they designed a management strategy for small churches in the Diocese of Nevada. While Frensdorff and Wilson did apply some theological reflection on the life of the church, they still did not address the emotional dynamics that their radical strategies were likely to trigger in clergy and laity alike. Edwin Friedman talks about emotional field in Bowenian terms, but his work is based on a medical model and is largely devoid of theology. Writing for the Alban Institute, John Harris understood the theology and changing clergy role, but in 1977, had no idea how much the church and its clergy were going to be forced to change.

This project/thesis is unique because:

- it considers both management and family system strategies;
- considered theologically;
- each discipline critiquing and informing the other.

The theological foundations for these strategies are considered in Chapters Four and Five.

**CONTEXT: NORTH SASSAFRAS PARISH, 1991**

A. A Historical Introduction

In 1634, two ships, the Ark and the Dove, arrived at St. Clement's Island on the Maryland shore of the lower Potomac. Those aboard wished to plant a Roman Catholic Chapel and seat of government in the name of the proprietary, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore.<sup>3</sup> Calvert, a Roman Catholic serving a Protestant King, was attempting to establish a profitable enterprise, as well as a place of Roman Catholic refuge, with predominately Protestant settlers.

The idea of religious toleration was a noble one, and reached its nadir with the Maryland Toleration Act in 1649. Unfortunately, the religious and political strife of England inevitably leeches over the sea to the colonies. The unpleasantness was frequently fueled by property and trading disputes between those with varying religious backgrounds. The transference from disagreement over property to disagreement over religion was an easy one. As the "divine right" of the monarchs began to meet resistance in England, so too were the Proprietor's claims resisted by Maryland's lower legislature.

After William and Mary assumed the crown from the deposed James II, Maryland had its own "Glorious Revolution." The Protestant Association overwhelmed the government at St. Mary's, declared their loyalty to the joint monarchs, and prayed them to take Maryland under their protection. Calvert's enemies were active in London, and in 1692 the crown declared Maryland a Royal Province, and sent Lionel Copley as Governor. Copley carried with him a directive that the Church of England be established in Maryland. The Maryland legislature was happy to comply, passing the "Act for the Service of Almighty God..."<sup>4</sup> which directed the laying out of thirty parishes and a tax for support of the clergy.

The context for this project/thesis is St. Stephen's Church, the sole remaining Episcopal (Anglican) church in the 300 year old North Sassafras Parish. The church and churchyard are set in the corner of its own 296 acre glebe farm<sup>5</sup> outside of Earleville, in southern Cecil (rhymes with vessel) County, Maryland.

St. Stephen's will be profiled as it was in the Spring of 1991 when the interventions and ensuing project began. The profile will take the form of four categories:

<sup>3</sup>The grant of Maryland to the Calverts as a Proprietary Colony was made by Charles I on account of George Calvert's service to James I, promoter of the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible... "The King James Version." It is the orange and black field of Calvert's crest that adorns the Maryland flag today.

<sup>4</sup>This is known today as "The Maryland Vestry Act of 1692" and makes the Governor the Head of the Church in Maryland. Besides the more obvious theological problems of displacing Christ as the Head of the Church, there have been more subtle issues as well, such as when Marvin Mandel, a Jew, was Governor in the mid-1970s.

<sup>5</sup>Glebe Farm (definition): In English and Scots ecclesiastical law, the land devoted to the maintenance of the incumbent of the parish. It can be cultivated either by the incumbent himself, or by the tenant to whom he and vestry lease it. [E.L. Cross and E.A. Livingston, eds., The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).]

- B. Demographic Profile, 1991
- C. Parish Life Profile, 1991
- D. Financial Profile, 1991
- E. Clerical History, 1968-90

B. Demographic Profile: 1991

Primary membership cores in the North Sassafras Parish are: 1) Corporate retirees from the Wilmington and Philadelphia area who have moved into their summer homes; 2) local families, descended from early settlers; 3) and a few young, managerial class families.

While bedroom communities along US Route 40 in upper Cecil County are growing rapidly, the 1990 census depicted the area covered by the North Sassafras Parish as experiencing growth of only 3% during the 10 years covered. Both geographical and social elements tend to mitigate against growth in the North Sassafras.

Resistance to change and outside influence on the eastern shore of Maryland is legend. This cultural isolation finds its roots in geographical isolation. There was no bridge across the Chesapeake Bay for US Route 301 until a slender, two lane, four mile span was opened in 1951. A second parallel span was opened in 1973. Many older residents will still not cross the "Bay Bridge." The upper shore is further isolated by the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, which today can only be crossed at three points. (See Figure 1.)

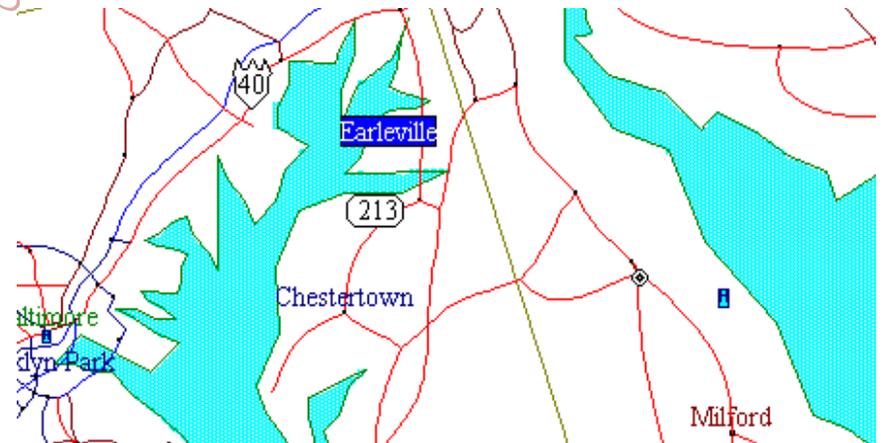


Figure 1.

C. Congregational Life Profile: 1991

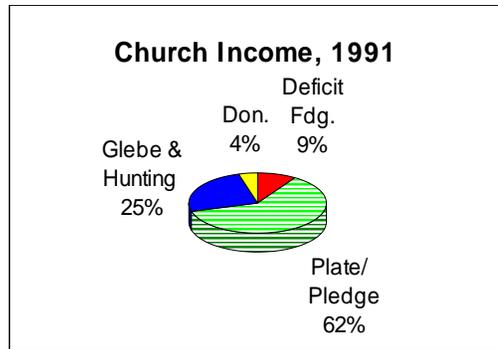
1. Worship. In 1991, there are two worship services on Sunday morning with a combined average attendance of 50-70. The dual service schedule has antecedents in worship style and demographic heritage.

The earlier service has used the very traditional Elizabethan, Rite One liturgy with no music. The later service has used the more

contemporary Rite Two with hymnody and service music. This later service also has a small, concurrent Sunday School program. Attendance at the later service averages 40-50. Attendance at the early service averages between 10-20.

In addition to worship style, there is demographic history. From 1890-1978, St. Stephen's Chapel operated in the town of Cecilton, five miles to the southwest of Earleville. This was a holdover from the last century when roads were poor and winter travel hard. The practice developed of having services in town during the winter months, and moving back to the country church during better weather. It was 1964 before the old parish site had electric lights, and not until the "new parish house" was built in 1988 that the parish church had access to rest rooms. The old church building at Earleville still has no running water. About the time electricity was installed at Old St. Stephen's, the leadership decided to have weekly services there. The practice developed of having an early service in town at the Chapel, and a late service in Earleville. Predictably, two congregations, of about 25 people each, developed-- both worshipping in the "real" church.

The natural force of Creation reasserted itself in 1978. It



was discovered that the Chapel was structurally destroyed by termites and powderpost beetles and the building was demolished. Both "congregations" then worshipped at Old St. Stephen's in Earleville on Sunday morning, year-round, albeit at 8:30 and 10 o'clock. Attempts to combine the services have always met with massive resistance.

2. Relationships. Relationships among the various clusters in the North Sassafras are characterized by a strained distance. The Wilmington/Philadelphia retirees may speak of the local families in ways that denote crudeness. The local families speak of their new neighbors as "the people down on the (Grove) Point" or "the Pennsylvania Navy." The irony is that the retirees are largely skilled, blue collar workers living on strained pensions and falling investments. The local people are frequently from quite old, solidly educated, frugal, but financially secure, farm families.

The young families who are migrating into the area baffle everyone. They have tremendous earning power, but are frequently cash poor. They have children, but with both parents working, no one is at home. The women not only work, but are frequently professionals. Cellular telephones, fax machines, car pool schedules and constant

motion signify a lifestyle that is incomprehensible to the two factions from preceding generations. The younger families complain that bridge parties, women's guilds and luncheons are not relevant to their lifestyle. The older adults respond that the younger people are undependable, their children disruptive, and that "the families don't contribute their fair share to the church."

At no time in the last 50 years has there been a coffee hour or social time on Sunday morning. Parishioners can frequently be observed hurriedly assuming their pew in church, pumping the Rector's hand and walking quickly to their car afterward, never uttering more than a few words to anyone during the entire Sunday morning experience. Worship seems to be an individual enterprise.

In a church where there have rarely been more than 40 people in a Sunday congregation, there are individuals who have worshipped in the same room for years who do not know the names of others. There are individuals-- many in the leadership circle-- who know little more than the names of others with whom they have worked, prayed and argued alongside, in some cases, for decades.

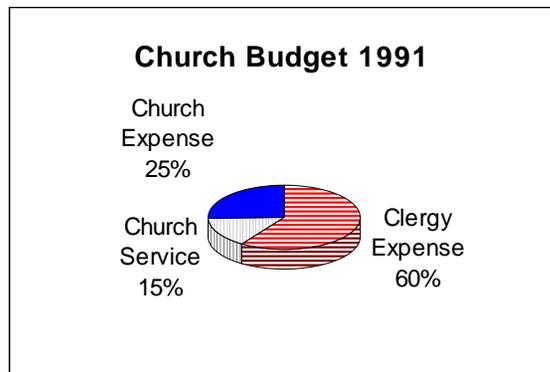
3. Organizations. The membership and activity of the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) has dwindled in recent years. This organization functions as a traditional "women's auxiliary," involved chiefly in fundraising through bazaars, memorabilia sales and bridge parties.

The men of the church serve in the Usher's Guild. Sunday School, when it has been active, has been taught by the same people for 30 years. The same dynamics exist for the Altar Guild, the Cemetery Committee and the Glebe Farm Committee, although with different personalities involved. There is a Bible Study which meets on a weekday morning.

All organizations lament their inability to "attract new people." Yet, communications, visibility and meeting times and places all subtly say "closed."

D. Financial Profile: 1991

St. Stephen's 1992 budget is projected at \$65,000 with a deficit of [\$5,900]. Plate and pledge income account for 61% of revenue; rental of the glebe farm and hunting rights, for 25% of revenue; and miscellaneous donations, fundraising or accounting constitute the remaining 14% of revenue. (See figure 2.)



The various elements of the clergy compensation package<sup>6</sup> account for 60% of parish expenses. (See Figure 3.) In 1991, the voluntary apportionment

for the support of the Diocese of Easton was cut by 50% for the second successive year.

**E. Clerical History**

Historically, St. Stephen's relationships with its clergy have been intense, conflictual and presumably abusive. A summary can be found in Figure 4. Unable to find intimacy elsewhere in church life, many parishioners seem to try to compensate for its loss by requiring an intense relationship with their pastor.

**Figure 4.**

Rector A	11/90-	incumbent
Rector B	1/81-12/88	opted for early retirement under pressure. Prone to "temper-tantrums."
Rector C	12/77-12/80	shared with Shrewsbury Parish; left to continue with Shrewsbury part-time. <sup>7</sup>
Rector D	4/71-4/76	Alcoholic; lost recovery while Rector; left drunk.
Rector E	9/68-2/71	left active ministry from St. Stephen's.

Individuals and groups who have had positive relationship with a particular rector have not been able to relate well to the succeeding rector. e.g., those who felt close to Rector D did not care for Rector C; those who admired C, hated B; those who liked B, do not understand A at all. At some distance, it is easy to see how Rectors have been used for long standing personal and political agenda. Unfortunately, this is common for small churches.

<sup>6</sup>This is the 1991 breakdown for the clergy compensation package: Rector's stipend, 20,496; FCIA 1,572; Health Insurance 5,832, Pension 6,000; car allowance 2,496; rectory utilities 2,700; supply clergy, 300.

<sup>7</sup>This priest, a late vocation, retired USMC officer, was half time each at North Sassafra and an adjoining parish. It is significant to this project that 1) he left after a relatively short tenure; 2) he closely monitored time and activity in each place; 3) many difficult decisions and much growth took place during his rectorate. He is remembered in narrative history as being "stubborn, authoritarian, but no nonsense." I would not want to emulate everything about his leadership style, but I would rate him as the parish's most effective rector in the last 50 years.

**F. Summary**

The North Sassafra is an old, pre-colonial parish, separated from the larger church by geography and culture. The individuals and groups within the parish are also emotionally isolated from each other. Church is thought of as an object to be used, rather than a community in which one lives and to which one is accountable. The parish is experiencing a new generation of newcomers-- young families-- before it has assimilated the last newcomers-- retirees who have moved into their summer homes.

Financially, its income is heavily dependent on non-active revenues such as glebe rent and transfers from savings. Eighty-five percent of the parish budget is expended on clergy deployment and fixed expenses, leaving only fifteen percent available for program.

Consciously and unconsciously, the parish holds the Rector in a central position. This person, like the church, is an object. The Rector is expected to uphold the many traditions, bear the responsibility to incorporate newcomers, mend fences, make relational connections among the clusters, and be the central figure at Sunday worship and in parish life. As there is little program in the church or intimacy among its members, much activity and interaction is expected of the Rector. Stated another way, the Rector is expected to over-function in these areas. This is reflected in the amount of money invested in the Rector's compensation which accounts for upwards of 60% of the annual budget. This figure is four times the amount spent on church program.

**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

The theoretical foundation of this project rest on four strains of thought emerging from the study of congregational life over the last 20 years. They are:

- Rothauge: Clergy Role as a Function of Church Size;
- Frensdorff and Wilson: Appropriateness of the Pastoral Model;
- Friedman: Over-investment in Clergy Role and Function;
- Harris: Environmental Leadership.

Each of these will be briefly described and later referred to throughout the project.

A. Rothauge: Clergy Role as a Function of Church Size

In the minds of most people, the typical Episcopal Church is one that most closely resembles what Arlin Rothauge calls the "pastoral church."<sup>8</sup> One imagines 100 people in attendance on a Sunday morning, served by a full-time, professionally trained priest-- the "mother" or "father"-- as the central figure of pastoral leadership, inspiration and care. Like the noble shepherd in charge of a flock, this central figure leads, protects and bears the primary responsibility for the welfare of his or her charges. This is clearly the model embedded in the collective consciousness (or unconsciousness) of most people.

Rothauge offers an operative numerical range for this "pastoral" size church-- between 50 and 150 people in regular attendance. Congregations that fall below the threshold of 50 are designated as a "family" church. Congregations of between 150 and 300 in attendance are designated as a "program" church.

Rothauge's theory can be summarized as follows: "The size of a congregation acts as the key variable in those factors that determine the structure, functions, and style of relationships in (the congregation's) life."<sup>9</sup> Rothauge goes on to delineate the social dynamics and leadership roles that can be expected from each size church. (See Figure 5.)

<sup>8</sup>Arlin Rothauge, Sizing Up a Congregation (New York: Seabury Press, 1986).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

**Figure 5.** Clergy Role as a Function of Church Size Based on Rothauge

Type	Attendance	Leadership Role
Family	0-50	Chaplain: in service to Matriarchs and Patriarchs who are the "real" leaders.
Pastoral	50-150	Pastor: center of leadership. "Primal Parent." Lots of conflict management. Wise as a fox; innocent as a dove. Shepherd of the sheep.
Program	150-300	Chief Pastor: Chief administrator for an interdisciplinary system. Cells beginning to form around interests.
Corporate	300+	Pastoral Administrator: Oversight. Clergy role is a symbol of stability and unity to a multi-celled, multi-layered group life.

B. Frensdorff and Wilson: Inappropriateness of the "Pastoral" Model

Wesley Frensdorff and Charles Wilson<sup>10</sup>-- a diocesan bishop and management consultant, respectively-- drew upon Rothauge's research and began to ask hard questions about stewardship of the Episcopal Church's human and financial resources in service of its family and pastoral sized congregations. Where Rothauge started with an analysis of social and leadership dynamics, Frensdorff and Wilson asked the question, "What size church can afford to employ a full-time pastor?"

Using statistical research<sup>11</sup> from 15 years of Annual Parochial reports, Frensdorff and Wilson submit that nearly 70% of Episcopal congregations fall into a statistical range below that needed to support a full-time cleric appropriately.<sup>12</sup> In some areas of the United States, up to 40% of these small congregations still try, struggling with a heritage that says such deployment of clergy is supposed to work.

Indeed, it did work in the largely agrarian, well-defined economic communities of 19th and early 20th century North America. However, the passage of time brings change. Frensdorff and Wilson identify the major changes as productivity and labor costs. Concerning the first:

<sup>10</sup>Wesley Frensdorff and Charles Wilson, Challenge for Change (Alverta, CO: Jethro Publications, 1987).

<sup>11</sup>CRW Management Services, Trends Update (Alverta: CO: Jethro Publications, 1991).

<sup>12</sup>Frensdorff and Wilson, Challenge for Change, *ibid*, p. 4-10.

The underlying phenomenon is the incredible-- almost unbelievable-- increase in the productivity of the work force over the last 50 years. Automation of factory and farm, electronic data processing in financial institutions and office, has revolutionized the productivity of the worker. With this, the economics of jobs has gone through its evolution, too. All sectors of society are affected, including those least able to benefit directly from automation and computers (e.g., one on one personal services such as social work, health care, religion). All have had to adapt... the employed pastor's job simply has to be reformed to somehow relate to a larger economic and people base.<sup>13</sup>

Management guru Peter Drucker cites productivity<sup>14</sup> as having increased three to four percent, compounded, over the last 125 years. This translates into a 45 fold increase in productivity.<sup>15</sup> There is no readily available objective measurement for productivity in "soft" labor positions such as pastoring a church. Clergy seem to have nothing with which to measure self-performance except parishioners' expressed expectations. Many clergy have simply tried to work harder, longer and under increased pressure to meet increased expectations for physical and emotional presence.

Concerning the second concern raised by Frensdorff and Wilson, labor costs have risen in all fields of employment, fueled by annual increases of five to ten percent in the cost of health insurance. This increase has been devastating for mainline churches. The cost of retaining full-time clergy has risen; the expectations for productivity as a function of labor costs has risen; but Episcopal clergy are still operating under a 19th century, "pastoral" model of ministry. Even though clergy are not able to "stretch" enough to cover the larger expectation for productivity, the costs borne by congregations for clergy deployment have skyrocketed.

It has become increasingly clear that these attempts to adapt the clergy role to these larger positions has not worked very well. There seems to be a "clergy surplus"; yet many small churches are remaining vacant and remaining vacant for longer periods of time. Record numbers of clergy are leaving parochial ministry for specialized vocations in hospital chaplaincy, social ministry, counseling, or simply taking secular jobs or early retirement. Clergy tenures are down; involuntary terminations are up; small congregations are increasingly perceived as angry, unstable and dysfunctional.<sup>16</sup>

Frensdorff and Wilson argue that the "country parson" model of clergy deployment-- one priest, one altar, small church-- is no longer viable for family and pastoral size congregations. They propose a

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup>Productivity (Definition): I understand Frensdorff and Wilson to use the term in the textbook sense of production function. Typically productivity is expressed as a relationship between an input factor and an output factor, e.g., the number of worker hours required for a stated level of output.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Drucker, Managing for the Future (New York: Dutton, 1992) p. 93.

<sup>16</sup>Kay Collier Sloane, "Can Clergy Families Cope," Diocese of Lexington (KY) The Church Advocate, September 1987, p. 1. This article includes a sidebar interview with Larry McSwain, a conflict consultant from Alban Institute, Washington, DC.

broader, revamped clergy role based on oversight and teaching-- ministry development rather than ministry delivery.

### C. Friedman: Over-Investment in Clergy Role and Functioning.

In 1985 Rabbi Edwin Friedman<sup>17</sup> wrote a landmark text for parochial clergy. Generation to Generation applied the Family Systems Theory of Murry Bowen<sup>18</sup> to congregational settings.

1. Origins in Bowen. When Murry Bowen was a Menninger Fellow in the late 1940s, he became fascinated with the intensity of relationships existing in families that had a schizophrenic member. He noted that as symbiotic relationships compounded over several generations, they reached a schizophrenic level of intensity that prohibited individuals in the family-- particularly the parent and child-- from achieving any real emotional autonomy from each other.<sup>19</sup> The emotional functioning of individual members was so interdependent that the family could best be understood as a single emotional unit.<sup>20</sup> This emotional functioning was largely instinctual and paralleled the phenomenology of other communal life forms. This was a major shift in the conceptualization of behavior for psychiatry. According to Bowen theory, the subject to be studied and treated was the relationship process as opposed to what was going on inside the heads of the family members. By the time Bowen published his work at National Institutes for Mental Health, he even began to discard the use of the term "mental illness" in favor of the more descriptive "emotional illness." Bowen Family Systems developed its own conceptual terminology that included:

- Symptomatic person vs. Symptomatic system
- Fusion vs. Self-differentiation
- Emotional Triangles vs. Dyadic Relationship
- Extended and Multi-Generational Emotional Systems
- Homeostasis

<sup>17</sup>Edwin H. Friedman, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue (New York: Guilford, 1985)

<sup>18</sup>Murry Bowen, Family Therapy in Clinical Practice(New York: Jason Aronson, 1978). A more contemporary revision, which will be cited throughout this paper, is Michael Kerr and Murry Bowen, Family Evaluation(New York: W.W. Norton, 1988). While Family Evaluation carries both names, Kerr, a student and colleague of Bowen, wrote most of text without Bowen's active participation. It is largely Kerr's commentary on the practice of Bowen Theory. The fascinating dynamics of this collaboration are described in Bowen's Epilogue, p.139-144.

<sup>19</sup>"Each person became an emotional prisoner of the way the other person functioned and neither was able to change his or her functioning enough to stop the process." Family Evaluation, ibid, note, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>"The family is an emotional unit because it operates as a system. One person responds to another, who responds to another, who responds to the first, who has already responded to the responses of others around him, etc. These responses are mediated through auditory and visual channels: People respond to tone of voice, facial expressions, body postures, etc. The family system is at one and the same time simple and complex. It is simple in the sense that one step predictable follows another, and complex in that there are a large number of intricately related variables on many levels." ibid, p. 10.

2. Adaptation by Friedman. Friedman made several adaptations to Bowen Theory as he applied it to congregations and their leadership. Only those most important to this project will be discussed here. Specifically, he took Bowen's notion of the "symptomatic person" or the person whom the family identifies as "the sick one" and applied it to the way a troubled congregation considers its leader.

Every time members of a congregation begin to concentrate on their minister's performance, there is a good chance they are displacing something from their own personal lives...When ministers accept that displacement (by getting lost in the content of the charges), they not only become the identified focus of the congregation, as in all such "family" situations, but they also permit the others not to have to face themselves.<sup>21</sup>

According to Friedman, the way out of the morass begins with Bowen's concept of self differentiation--the ability to remain an "I" while being emotionally connected to another. However, Friedman further refined this understanding for pastors by insisting that such self differentiation must be carried out non-anxiously. By this, he means with integrity and without reactivity. Concerning leadership in congregations:

What is vital to changing any kind of "family" is not knowledge of technique or even of pathology but, rather, the capacity of the family leader to define his or her own goals and values while remaining a non-anxious presence within the system.<sup>22</sup>

Friedman calls particular attention to the need for the leader to lead. In his understanding, clarity is more important than empathy. In a dysfunctional system, the dependent person holds the power.

As long as the leader is trying to change his or her followers, the latter are in the "cat-bird's seat." As long as the head, or the rest of the body, makes its functioning dependent on the other's functioning, the organism is in the other's control. But when the leader is concentrating on where he or she is "headed," the effects of that dependency are reversed. It is the dependents who now feel the pressure.<sup>23</sup>

Friedman takes particular interest in Bowen's concept of emotional triangles. Briefly stated, Bowen Theory holds that dyadic relationships are inherently unstable. When the anxiety level in the relationship passes a certain threshold, a third party becomes involved in order to reduce the emotional tension.<sup>24</sup> Friedman holds working knowledge of emotional triangles to be a basic survival skill in congregations.

Extended Family Field is another concept of importance which Friedman borrows from Bowen Theory. We are all products of our families of origin. Our worldviews, value systems and ways of relating are all transmitted to us within the context of family. Friedman echoes other Bowenians in his observation that we tend to recreate the dynamics of our families of origin in our nuclear family, congregational family and workplace.

Bowen Family Systems Theory can best be conceptualized by its focus on the emotional environment in which relationships are lived. It distinguishes between process--what is going on--in relational transactions, rather than the content--what is said or done--of those transactions. Having made this summary statement, I now cite its parallel in a management text.

#### D. Harris: Environmental Leadership

Rather than a living human community James Harris depicts a troubled congregation as having become merely

a physical organism--something like a dinosaur encased in a shell of biological necessity, maladaptive, lumbering into decline, its brain center programmed by past precedent and unexamined instinct...politeness, unexamined relationships, avoidance of life concerns--all were the order of the day.<sup>25</sup>

Harris' suggests an environmentally focused leadership on the congregation as a whole, as distinguished from a ministry to individuals.<sup>26</sup> Such leadership echoes the Bowenians' call to look at emotional systems and the process by which they function, rather than lose one's self in the content of individual transactions.

Environmentally focused leadership specifically directs energy to those things which Harris identifies as the most intractable of burnout inducing issues facing congregational pastors. This issues include: vague organizational goals, conflicting visions among membership, fear and ignorance over personal or social issues, and lack of organizational motivation.

Harris admits leadership under such circumstances is difficult and has not been historically cultivated by the Church. It requires a commitment to work out significant differences "on the job," face fear, act autonomously, feel compassion and function without large infusions of approval. It requires the spiritual maturity and technical skill for both creative aggression and empathic alliance. In other words, what he is calling for is clergy who are capable of self differentiation and non-anxious presence.

#### E. Summary

<sup>21</sup>Friedman, *ibid*, p. 208.

<sup>22</sup>*ibid*, p. 2-3.

<sup>23</sup>*ibid*, p. 231.

<sup>24</sup>Kerr and Bowen, *ibid*, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup>James C. Harris, Stress, Power and Ministry, (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1977) p. 36.

<sup>26</sup>*ibid*, p. 64-65.

I have presented four strains of theory from contemporary congregational studies. They share the following commonalities:

\* They all consider the congregation as a system of relationships, rather than a series of one on one relationships.

\* They all focus on congregational process, rather than content.<sup>27</sup>

\* They all require clarity of role, function and self-concept on the part of the pastoral leader.

\* They all run somewhat counter to popular notions of what church and pastor are about.

#### MANAGEMENT AS THEOLOGY

It is not that there are overlapping paradigms or interesting similarities between religious and management applications. What is being said is that solid management concepts are as valid an application of theological reality as religious concepts. Only the language used to describe this reality is different.

This project presumes management and administrative skill to be the spiritual gifts of  $\square\square\square\square\square\square$  and  $\square\square\square\square\square\square$  delineated by the Pauline Epistles and early church writings.

*Oikonomos*, from which we get the word *economic*, points to the doctrine of the church as being the care and economy of God's household.<sup>28</sup> Leadership for the household of God (looking after the economy of God's household) most closely corresponds to the image of steward: one who is entrusted with the task of conserving and dispensing of resources justly; also manager, guardian, one who is over the house.<sup>29</sup>

Closely related is *episkopos*, derived from the Greek root referring to guardianship, oversight, inspection and accountability.<sup>30</sup> *Episkopos* is the concept from which we draw the church office of bishop.

The exercise of these gifts, as the use of power in general, is presumed to have foundation in the will of God.

##### A. Money as Humanity's Indicator of Value.

Money, and its productive and efficient use, tends to dominate most discussions of management. To understand what an organization is "about," one need only look at its budget: "To what ends does this organization invest its financial and emotional energy?" Jesus had his own observation about the way such things worked, "Where your treasure(financial energy) is, there will your heart(emotional energy) be also."<sup>31</sup> In other words, the deployment of financial resources and the investment of emotional energy are highly inter-related.

This is a terribly important concept for small churches. A look at most small church budgets, using a "money as value" interpretation, places the highest investment in deployment of professional clergy. The mission, the "business" of the church is certainly higher and broader than the care and feeding of clergy, yet one could not deduce that from looking at most small church budgets. The higher the financial investment a congregation makes in its clergy, in relation to its income, the more emotionally turbulent, chaotic and confused will be the clergy task.

##### B. Power As Spiritual Gift and the Authority for its Use.

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<sup>27</sup>The term "process" refers to a continuous series of actions or changes that result in a given set of circumstances or phenomena; the term "content" refers to the circumstances or phenomena out of the context of those actions or changes. It is analogous to a movie being equivalent to process and an individual frame of a movie being equivalent to content." Bowen and Kerr, *ibid*, p. 14n.

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<sup>28</sup>M. Douglas Meeks, God the Economist, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) p. 23. *c.f.*, Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2.

<sup>29</sup>Meeks, *ibid*, p. 76. *c.f.*, 1 Cor. 4:1-5: stewards of the mysteries of God.

<sup>30</sup>e.g., 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:7-9.

<sup>31</sup>Mt. 6:21.

1. The Use of Power. Christians get squeamish about the use of power. Does God want us to be powerful or not?<sup>32</sup> There is no theological virtue in being impotent or ineffective if entrusted with leadership. If power is the ability to get things done, and God has things God wishes us to do, then power is a gift from God which enables us to do the work of God. In constant conversation with God, remembering who we are and whose power we are actually using, it would seem that we are called upon to risk using as much power as necessary in vocation. We are accountable to God for being *effective* at what we are called to be. In the parable of the talents, the servant judged most harshly is the one who was least assertive, failed to take initiative and use given judgment for advantage.<sup>33</sup>

2. Aggressive Use. Rollo May has pointed out that the aggressive style needed for using the power of God might seem to be a contradiction to gospel virtues of peaceableness and servanthood. Aggression is "reaching out" to others for affirmation of yourself and another. Aggression could include such behavior as

cutting through barriers to initiate a relationship;  
confronting another without intent to hurt but with the intent to penetrate into his consciousness; warding off powers that threaten one's integrity; actualizing one's own self and one's ideas in a hostile environment.<sup>34</sup>

This is an unusual use of the word "aggression" which is much stronger than the notion of assertion. In attempting boundary definitions with certain character structures-- both individual and corporate-- assertion is not a strong enough stance. The intensity of aggression (its *aggressiveness*) is helpful and intentional. The opposite of aggression in this context is isolation. Prophets are usually aggressive rather than assertive.

3. Authority for Use. What is the real authority for the use of power? The Gospel according to Matthew repeatedly portrays the scribes and Pharisees as being confused as to why people listened to Jesus? After all, he had neither civil office or scholastic training. Yet, the people understood Jesus was not teaching by those criteria, "but as one having *authority*."<sup>35</sup> It seems *real* authority can only come from God, and when *real* authority is exercised, it is God's authority.<sup>36</sup> Only operating out of the authority of God gives us license to exercise power. It is authority that keeps power from becoming corrupt.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Roy M. Oswald, Power Analysis of a Congregation, (Washington, DC: Alban Institute), 1981), supports this discussion.

<sup>33</sup>Mat. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27.

<sup>34</sup>Rollo May, Power and Innocence, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 150-151.

<sup>35</sup>Matt. 7:29; Mk. 1:22.

<sup>36</sup>Rm. 13:1; Jn. 19:11. Dan. 2:37f may be more typical in speaking of authority as a "grant" from God. Perhaps the concept of holding a lease on something that can only belong to God is helpful.

<sup>37</sup>Of course, criteria for discernment would depend on one's theology of the character of God. However, for this discussion, I would submit that God at least values spiritual growth and community and would authorize (make authentic) power exercised in support of those values.

Being able to operate out of a clear self-image and pastoral identity--knowing who you are and whose you are--frequently requires aggressive behavior as defined by May. Such aggression transcends political and military notions of power, and has more to do with what it means to have authenticity and authority.

### C. Time as a Gift From God.

The management of one's time is radical and threatening to many clergy and congregations. The average clergy work week in mainline congregations is 66.5 hours.<sup>38</sup> Clergy frequently see themselves as working "against time," time becoming something in conflict to their (God's) purposes. Professional life becomes an "I-It" relationship, rather than "I-Thou". Like a frenzied basketball team trying to make up points, over-worked clergy work against the clock. They want to do more ministry, but they "run out of time."

Conditioned to respond to the needs of others, clergy never seem to have enough time to address all the needs that present themselves. Sins of omission seem to pile up as choices are made. Conditioned to please and perform, clergy frequently inventory these seemingly endless lists of neglect and think, "what if THEY find out!" There are elements of self-doubt and role confusion in the perceived conflict between time expended and the value of work done. Many clergy seem driven by this fear of not meeting the expectations of as many as "bosses," as they have parishioners. Clergy perceive themselves to be "vulnerable to criticism in a job few laity understand, ..by keeping busy, you show you have something to do."<sup>39</sup> Fear of not being needed... fear of retribution for saying no, fear of revealing to the world that they cannot be counted on, all drive clergy to over-function.

A frequent comment heard is "I'll just have to make more time." Humanity is not the maker of time. Time is a gift from our God, who even while being timeless and eternal, ordered Creation with time as its centerpiece. The New Testament distinctions between *chronos* (measured time, duration) and *kairos* (period of opportunity, contentment, fulfillment), both witness to this gift which enables us to organize our experience of *Heilsgeschichte* around the concepts of story, action, history, past present and future. In this context, time is the opposite of chaos.

We are stewards of the time we are given. The notion that we are accountable for time is not new. Many people have punched a time clock at some point in life. But that is far different from an awareness that we are in charge of our time and accountable for its use to God.

Being the responsible steward for the gift of time given by God is affirming and redemptive. Others have no intrinsic right and claim to one's time. Although we are not given time to waste, we do have time to do what is important, congruent with our vocation in God. Such

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<sup>38</sup>Ben E. Helmer, "It's About Time," The L.A.N.D. Notebook, Leadership Academy for New Directions, 1987. Time for self and family frequently is relegated to tense Saturday evenings and windows of exhaustion between night meetings and odd hour phone calls. Clergy often report having trouble establishing one day "off", and admit to working extra hours on contiguous days to make even that possible.

<sup>39</sup>Harris, *ibid*, p. 90.

criteria helps bring order to chaos when people begin requests with, "I know you don't have time, but..."

#### D. Objective as Mission.

As a consultant, Peter Drucker could terrorize both secular and religious boards by asking: "What business are you in?" The answer is never obvious or simple. "Why do we exist and what are we supposed to be doing?" goes to the heart of existential and ontological inquiry. Such is the first question of theology: "Adam! ...where(who)are you?"

Lack of clarity in mission and objective is a primary, predisposing factor for leadership burnout in churches and other organizations.<sup>40</sup>

The mission of the church--its business--should always be the *missio Dei*: the mission of God. The Book of Common Prayer, echoing *1 Corinthians 7*, insists this is reconciliation-- the restoration of the union of God and humanity.<sup>41</sup> The church's strategy in service of the *missio Dei* is generally *metanoia*: the renewal of the hearts and minds of humanity. Evangelization is not the mission, though it can act in support of mission when not an end in itself. Proclamation is not mission, though proclamation can act in the service of mission when Christian leaders are clear about the desired outcome.<sup>42</sup> Evangelization, service, proclamation, education... even pastoral care, are only as good as the *metanoia* they produce towards restoring the relationship between God and humanity.

1. Policy and Word. *Policy* is a general statement-- preferably written-- that mirrors an organization's objective and provides the limits within which operational decisions must fall. Policy statements of an organization work in support of its mission.

For Christians the Word of God works in support and explication of the Mission of God for humanity. For the Christian Church, I equate the concept of *policy* with the concept of *the Word of God*. In Christian community, we use the Word of God as policy to evaluate our operations.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Proverbs 29:18; see also, Paul M. Dietrich, Leadership Skills: Managing Conflict (Chicago: Center for Parish Development, 1987) p. 22

<sup>41</sup>Catechism, New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, p. 854.

<sup>42</sup>The objective of the Church is to carry out the mission of God. Some clarity about the *missio dei* will translate into clarity about the mission of the local church.

Some examples: A sociological study of the 1970 Billy Graham Crusade in Knoxville, Tennessee, argued that while the objective of the program was to bring the people of Knoxville to Christ, the outcome was to reinforce the old middle-class values of the people attracted to this kind of event. There may be nothing wrong with those values, but they are not to be confused with the Gospel of Jesus or the Mission of God. [Cited in Urban T. Holmes, Turning to Christ, (New York: Seabury, 1981) p. 128.] Is This the Mission of the Church?

George Bush opened the first news conference of the Persian Gulf War by saying "Our young air crews did the Lord's work yesterday." Saddam Hussien could have said the same thing about his country's military action. Neither would have been a clear understanding of just what "the Lord's work" was.

<sup>43</sup>See Appendix 5 for definitions and uses of mission, policy, procedure and other planning terms.

*Policy* then becomes a sacramental word: an outward expression of an inward and spiritual power or blessing. *Policy* comes very close to the Hebrew conception of *word*: the command and power to deliver. For example, God spoke the Word and it was so; a Blessing or Curse once given cannot be withdrawn. Word and policy both reveal and enforce. Preaching the Word and pronouncing policy both have to do with implementation and enfleshment. Neither can be all talk, but to be genuine, word and policy must manifest in action.<sup>44</sup> The world's word "policy" and the church's word "Word" are attempts at capturing the same truth... the self actualizing aspect of ultimate reality, reason and fundamental law.

We can use the word *policy*, then, to evaluate. When we say that something is the *policy* of the church, do we really mean that it is our attempt to recreate the *Word* in action? Do we mean that such a policy is our expression of the *Word of God*? Is the policy an expression of our values? Do we mean to back it up with out resources? If not, why is it the policy of our church? If we do not intend to invest in it the resources of the organization, then, it does not even meet the world's criteria for the term "policy."<sup>45</sup>

#### E. Management as Stewardship.

The term management means stewardship. Unfortunately, we have trivialized stewardship to refer to "contributing time, money and treasure to the church." For those entrusted with church order, a wider concept of accountability or organizational stewardship might be more helpful. Such would speak not only to accountability for material resources, but of human resources and processes.<sup>46</sup>

Pastors in charge of congregations are stewards of human relationships within the household-- the household-- and are held accountable for providing safe processes for those interactions. A steward takes charge of resources and exercises power over that which the steward is given authority. But above all, a steward is accountable.<sup>47</sup>

God works through human activity. What we are doing when we practice managerial disciplines such as planning, quality control and delegation is actually the practice of a spiritual discipline as well<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Compare 1 John 3.18.

<sup>45</sup>Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities and Practices, *ibid*, p. 531 on value system statements; also, Jay W. Forrester, "A New Corporate Design," Industrial Management Review, Fall 1965, p. 4-5 on policy.

<sup>46</sup>Drucker, *ibid*, read substituting "organizational stewardship" for the word "management".

<sup>47</sup>Matt. 25.14-30; Luke 19.12-27.

<sup>48</sup>e.g., One early management consultation took place in the wilderness at the mountain of God. Jethro was the consultant, and Moses the client. It seemed as though Moses was putting in a 70 hour week and still people had to wait to have their cases heard. Jethro formulated the problem: what Moses was doing was no good for Moses or the people; they were wearing themselves out; and worst of all, Moses real job wasn't getting done.

Jethro set forth an organization which placed trained leaders over tens, fifties, hundreds and thousands. He even worked up a position description: they were to be "able people who fear God, are trustworthy and hate a bribe." Routine cases would be heard by these new judges, with only the most serious going to Moses. Moses could then get on with his real job, which was to "represent the people before God" and teach them so they would "know

For example, program evaluation bears every mark of confession and absolution. Many from a previous generation remember a more traditional rite of confession that was burdensome and juridical. Contemporary liturgies speak of reconciliation and growth from the process of self-examination. This process is reflected in current management process which calls for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).<sup>49</sup> We look over our work (examination), acknowledge our accomplishments (celebration); honestly inventory the inadequacies (confession), and take those into account when planning the future (penance). This process releases us from the burden of our earlier errors (absolution). As we hold ourselves accountable to the Policy of God (Word), we participate in our own *judgment* and are promised the grace and empowerment to make corrective changes, even as we praise God for our lives, our gifts and the world around us. It is this promise that enables us to run excitedly before our Creator and gleefully proclaim, "Bless me, for I have sinned! (I have found the problem!)."

F. "Godliness" as a Model for Leadership.

All of this, of course, presumes a God who loves us, trusts us, and gives us an environment in which to be creative and find our own divinity. God is not autocratic and directive in the ways of leadership. The God of Israel is not an over-functioner. This God invites us into collaboration with the divine *logos*.

In the church, *episcopos*- overseer- is still the scriptural model for leadership. It is a model based on Godliness. To oversee, one must be "above," not in the sense of bureaucratic or administrative power and hierarchy, nor in the sense of being "superior." What is sought is one who rises over the turbulence, who is above tactical squabbling, who is able to delegate strategic operations, while remaining vigilant about mission-- the mission of God. This seems to be the leadership style of the God of Israel. This is what we used to expect from those we "set apart" from the turbulence of the world, for the leadership of the church.

G. Leadership and the Church. In order for the community of faith to be the context in which such a healthy, joyful, redemptive, corporate effort can take place, the chief pastor must continually shepherd the process of the community... its *piety* or *ethos*.

Through the post-reformation period, pastoral theology concerned itself with "the cure of souls."<sup>50</sup> Late into this century, Protestant pastoral theologians spoke of "pastoral director... directing the ministry of the people of God,"<sup>51</sup> However, in the past

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the way in which they must walk." Moses would be *able to endure*, and the people could *go in peace*.

<sup>49</sup>Perhaps the best explanation for the difference between "Quality Control" and "Continuous Quality Improvement" comes from the mouth of a character in the motion picture Rising Sun (Paramount, 1993). "American way is to find fault and attach blame. Japanese way is to fix problem." Both confession and program evaluation are properly understood to be about identifying and fixing problems, rather than assigning blame. Theologically, this sounds like "Good News."

<sup>50</sup>Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1983, p. 187-205, probably contains the most exhaustive study.

<sup>51</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry, New York: Harper and Row, 1956. The concept of "Pastoral Director" is explored in Chapter 2, p. 48.

two decades, increasing attention is being paid to a wider, environmental understanding of shepherding a congregational process, rather than a shepherding a constellation of one-on-one relationships. "My task as Rector is to concentrate on the stability of the church and help us be able to change."<sup>52</sup> Such a view resonates with other systems models such as those of medicine and nursing which call for setting up an environment and removing obstacles so that divine, healing processes can take place.

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<sup>52</sup>James Green, quoted in Harris, *ibid*, p. 62.

Chapter Five

**FAMILY SYSTEMS AS THEOLOGY**

A. God as One who Calls Us into Right Relationship.

God is revealed to humanity through relationship. This is expressed first in God's desire for a relationship with the beloved whom God created. The prophets spoke of God's concern for the People--Household--of Israel. Covenant is a major framework for considering relationship in the Old Testament. For example, Jeremiah tells of God's everlasting love and loyalty (hesed): "I will be their God and they shall be my people."<sup>53</sup> Hosea's message was of a God whose love was so strong that it would not let a People go.<sup>54</sup> The Song of Songs portrays a God who is erotic in desire for relationship with the beloved. Such relationship seems based on mutual knowledge<sup>55</sup> and common will.<sup>56</sup>

Secondly, this is expressed as our finding God most fully revealed in right relationship with others. In the biblical creation story, even though Adam was fully in the presence of, and partnership with God, Adam was still incomplete. Adam needed another human to be in relationship with, in order to be fully human. The prophets taught of individuals only having access to God within the context of community. It was as a nation, a People, that salvation would come to Israel, "before the Lord." One's identity as a person of God was only realized as part of Israel: God's Chosen People.

But, humanity did not listen well to the prophets. Humanity had the *Word* of God<sup>57</sup>; even had the *Word* in words through the Law. But humanity could not be in right relationship with the *Word* as words. Ultimately the *Word* of God had to become flesh and dwell among humanity.<sup>58</sup> Words without flesh were inadequate revelation. Jesus Christ is the *Word* made flesh...God in intimate relationship with humanity as Christ is in intimate relationship with God. Where God once spoke to our mothers and fathers through the prophets, climactically the *Word* of God came into relationship with humanity through Jesus in the Incarnation.<sup>59</sup>

However, it is in the manifestation of the Incarnation in community that the themes of relationship with God and relationship with each other become fully espoused. The Johannine Jesus speaks of his disciples as having access to God through his own union with God. "I am in the Father, and the Father in me...dwell in me as I in you."<sup>60</sup> By the time the early Christians form in communities to proclaim the resurrection, the theme of *Koinon*--in common or group--appears frequently. It is in these communities, in relationship with each other, that persons find their relationship with the risen Lord.

<sup>53</sup>Jeremiah 31:33.

<sup>54</sup>Hosea 11:1, 8.

<sup>55</sup>The verb "know" means to perceive, learn, understand, or recognize; the word is related to experience rather than thought, and thus might refer, for example, to Abraham's sexual "knowledge" of Sarah, as well as his "knowledge of God."

<sup>56</sup>Leaving less to chance, in the New Covenant God will write the Torah upon the heart of humanity. (Jeremiah 31:33)

<sup>57</sup> see previous discussion on Word/policy/law.

<sup>58</sup> John 1:1-4.

<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 1:1f.

<sup>60</sup>John 14:11, 15:7. The theme is continued throughout the farewell discourses.

Early catholic thought held that sin ("the fall") never changed humanity's nature. Humanity was created, and remains *imago Dei*, holy, in the image of God.<sup>61</sup> Contrary to views of radical Protestantism, humanity did not, somehow, suddenly become evil. Rather, what changed was humanity's *relationship* with God.<sup>62</sup> Sin is about *estrangement*... "distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation."<sup>63</sup> This is somewhat different from classical Protestantism, where sin usually consists of attempts at domination of others or against God on the part of an isolated self. Earlier tradition recognized that both sin and salvation were worked out within the intimacy of community. Of late, feminist theology has advanced the concept of *intimacy* as right relationship.<sup>64</sup>

Feminists critique Christianity as having wandered rather far from the centrality of relationship inherent in Jewish community life as exemplified in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>65</sup> Heyward and others have described patristic Christianity as devoid of relationship and depicting God as "other."

Through Jesus Christ, our relationships become particularly sacramental. They function as outward, salvific signs of our mysterious relationship with God. What we are to learn about love, judgment, forgiveness and reconciliation are learned experientially through human relationship. Not only can we love because he first loved us,<sup>66</sup> but what we do unto the least of others we do unto the Incarnate Word.<sup>67</sup> Our relationships serve as *via divina*. To paraphrase both the Letter to the Hebrews and family therapist Carl Whitaker, by our relationships we are broken, and by our relationships we are healed.

B. The Church as a Community in Right Relationship.

The right relationship called for in family systems interventions is resonant with Anglican theology's emphasis on the Incarnation. We by Grace, through Christ, are called to be the enfleshment of the *Word of God*. This is the mission of all Christians, the mission of the church, because it is the *missio Dei*.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup>Used here, the use of *imago Dei* with the concept of holiness has to do with our essence, connection and potentiality as holy creatures. (John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, (New York: Scribner's, 1966) p. 212-13; also, Dorothy Sayers, The Mind of the Maker, (New York: Harcourt/Living Age, 1956) p. 33-44.

<sup>62</sup>M. Claude Tresmontant, Christian Metaphysics, (Paris: Universite de Paris, 1963), outlines a comprehensive comparison between Catholic and Protestant metaphysical philosophy.

<sup>63</sup>Catechism, The Book of Common Prayer, ibid, p. 845 on human nature, p. 848 on sin.

<sup>64</sup>Daphne Hampson, "Reinhold Niebuhr on Sin: A Critique," in Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time, R. Harris, ed., (Oxford: Mowbray, 1988), is not only an excellent discussion, but a rather complete bibliography for feminist writings on sin. Most differentiate the more relational sense of women with the more individuated sense of men and how that has effected classical understandings of theology.

<sup>65</sup>Heyward, Carter, The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation, University Press of America, Washington, DC, 1982.

<sup>66</sup>1 John 4:19.

<sup>67</sup>Matthew 25:40,45.

<sup>68</sup>This is found in much process theology, but most consistent with my own theological tradition would be William Temple, Christus Veritas, (London: Macmillan & Co.,

Such right relationships would redeem us, liberating us from the debilitating, life defeating scripts written by others who would exploit us to reduce their own anxiety and vulnerability to God.<sup>69</sup> Our ability to self-differentiate, and allow others to do the same, goes to the heart of our baptismal covenant, remembering who we are, whose we are, and "respecting the dignity of every human being."<sup>70</sup>

The Church, then, should at least be a primary community where such right relationship can be made manifest. Church as a cultural institution, a historical shrine where kinship clans bring babies to be "christened" trivializes relationship.<sup>71</sup> The proper mission of the Church remains reconciliation., " adult children come to be married, and the dead are brought to be eulogized,

### C. Leadership for the Church in Right Relationship: Some Tools.

Much of what we know about community in the early Christian Church we know from the letters of the Apostle Paul. Paul understood the systemic nature of community, and likened life in community to the inter-relatedness of the human body.

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not serve all the same function, so in Christ, we who are many form one body and each member belongs to the other.<sup>72</sup>

Now the body is not made up of one part, but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? But in fact, God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as God wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I do not need you!"<sup>73</sup>

1. Systems and Process. The leadership style required for such a community, again, brings the discussion back to *environmental and systemic* understandings of what it means to be a pastor. Rather than shepherding a constellation of one-on-one relationships, a pastor operating out of a family systems orientation will focus on

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1924) p. 113ff. See also Holmes, Turning to Christ, *ibid.* See also collateral theology of Missio Dei in the discussion of Mission/Objective in the management section of this paper.

<sup>69</sup>A host of liberation theology writings could be cited here, but primarily I will rely on Is. 58:3-11. In serving our own interest, we both bind others and find ourselves bound.

<sup>70</sup>Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer, *ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>71</sup>Pastorally, these nodal events should be very relational occasions. However, many Anglican Churches, operating out of their heritage as the "State Church," function as a civil authority within the community. St. Stephen's heritage is of the English parish church, an institution which functions as a courthouse at prayer: a combination of civil and religious institution where families come to have births, marriage and death "witnessed and recorded upon the records." The idea of a faith community gathering to celebrate is foreign.

In the North Sassafras, people "belong to the church" so that they can "have weddings and funerals at the church" in much the same way that they hold membership in the country club. The preference would be for private weddings and baptisms rather than have to deal with community. (Quotes from parish narrative and Interim Consultant's Notes.)

<sup>72</sup>Romans 12:4-5.

<sup>73</sup>Ephesians 2:14, 16.

congregational process, creating an environment conducive to the reconciling, recreative process of God.

Again, hear James Green: "My task as Rector is to concentrate on the stability of the church and help us be able to change."<sup>74</sup> Such leadership concerns itself with evoking the best from a congregation as a whole. It is a creative process which calls the community into restoration of its original image and intended identity as a holy people, a community of God and a priesthood of believers. Friedman asserts "The leader who accepts this model of leadership not only creates in God's image, he or she images God's model for the congregation."<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately, the pastoral leader working out of a family systems orientation does not so much "take care" of a community, as to "coach" a community to take care of itself. This, too, mirrors the loving care of God who does not "rescue" or caretake as the world does, but truly saves, as from the Hebrew word *yeshua*... meaning to redeem, set free in the open, to develop without hindrance.<sup>76</sup> Salvation has to do with allowing a being to evolve into its *imago Dei*. Salvation and evolution are naturally linked in the mind of God. All we know about human relationship systems links them inextricably to evolutionary life process well established at the very beginning of creation, and well before the meddling of *Homo Sapiens*.<sup>77</sup>

2. Homeostasis. In a dysfunctional system, honed through generations to concentrate on the content of transactions rather than community process,<sup>78</sup> a systemic style of leadership will likely be perceived as divisive and offensive. It should come as no surprise to readers of the biblical narratives of Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles, that the system's homeostatic reaction will be *anger*.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps a more organic, natural image is the medical and biological concept of "inflammation" in living tissue when a foreign substance is introduced. Even when that "foreign" substance is a skin graft or organ transplant which seeks to save the host, the host tissue will have a homeostatic reaction in an attempt to reject the intruder. In this model, the inflammation can be monitored and managed, and may be understood as part of the creative process of (counter) self-differentiation and adaptation to changing circumstances.

3. Self Differentiation. The ability to say "I" seems linked to salvation. Self-differentiation refers to the ability to be an individual while still remaining emotionally connected to a group.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>James Green, quoted in Harris, Stress, Power and Ministry, *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>75</sup>Generation, *ibid.*, p. 233. See also previous discussion in "Theology of Management" section.

<sup>76</sup>J.F. Taylor, "Save," A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, Alan Richardson, ed., New York: Collier, 1950, p. 219.

<sup>77</sup>Kerr and Bowen, *ibid.*; Chapter One presents a compelling theology for systems theory being "written in nature."

<sup>78</sup>An example of content issues: gossip, which candle to light first, cole slaw or potato salad at the reception vs. policy questions: "how does this action recreate God's Word?"; or "How does this make us vulnerable to God and able to act out our Baptismal Covenant?" See also *policy*, in the "Theology of Management" section. See also, Generation, *ibid.*, p.205 for discussion of process versus content.

<sup>79</sup>Friedman uses Bowen's concept of "identified patient" to explain the congregation's response to the pastor's differentiation. Generation, chap. 8, specifically p. 207-219. The more classical discussion can be found in Kerr and Bowen, *ibid.*, as "family projection process," p. 201n, "the Symptomatic Person," p. 313.

<sup>80</sup>Kerr and Bowen, *ibid.*, 94.

Self-differentiation is necessary, both to survive as an individual in community, and to define one's self as an "I." When Joshua calls Israel to renew the Covenant he recites a summary reflection of their relationship with Yahweh, and then defines a differentiated, bottom line position for himself:

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.<sup>81</sup>

Here, the model of Jesus as non-anxious, well differentiated leader is most helpful. Jesus seemed well able to separate from family<sup>82</sup> while still showing respect, love and concern;<sup>83</sup> he trained disciples to an internal sense of vocation and self that could survive the assaults of others projections;<sup>84</sup> his ministry was witness to that same sense of vocation that did not make itself dependent on the behavior of others;<sup>85</sup> he did not minister in ways that made others excessively dependent upon him;<sup>86</sup> he was not easily caught up in anxious<sup>87</sup> or crazy-making<sup>88</sup> behavior of others. Jesus consistently used the "I" messages necessary for self-definition.<sup>89</sup>

If systems therapists assert that a system can be changed by coaching one person to function differently, Christians assert that the world has changed because God became flesh and refused to function as the world functions.

3.a. Self as Soul. Theologically, the leader's concern for self is not the same thing as selfishness. Hebrew thought conceptualized the essential self as that part of us that could truly know God: the *soul*... that which could discern the eternal. In the post-exilic writings, synonyms could be, 'spirit' or 'heart,' "the seat of intelligence and emotion in humanity."<sup>90</sup>

<sup>81</sup>Joshua 24:14-15

<sup>82</sup>c.f., Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 41-52. "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?"

<sup>83</sup>John 19:26-27: "Woman, behold your son..."

<sup>84</sup>Luke 9:5; if not received, shake the dust from your feet as witness.

<sup>85</sup>Matthew 10:16-23 on others' likely reactions to one's living out and proclaiming the gospel; Matthew 19:16-22: Jesus does not run after the rich young ruler in an attempt to "save" him.

<sup>86</sup>Instead he says "I must go away." John 14:1-31. See also Friedman on empowering families rather than playing savior, Generation, ibid, p. 168.

<sup>87</sup>Existential juggling will not bring peace. Luke 12:22-34. See also, Gerald May, Simply Sane: The Spirituality of Mental Health, (New York: Crossroads, 1989).

<sup>88</sup>While the disciples go into hysterics worthy of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, Jesus naps. Mark 4:35-41.

<sup>89</sup>"I am the bread of life," (John 6:35); "...the light of the world" (8:2); "...the good shepherd" (10:11); "...the resurrection and the life" (11:25).

<sup>90</sup>c.f. Job 20.3, 32:18, Isafah 57.15, Daniel 5.20. G. Adman Smith, The Book of the Twelve Prophets, v.II, p. 241, characterizes spirit as the inner self "their conscience and radical force of character." cited in Alan A. Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible, New York: Collier, 1950, 1962, p. 234.

In the New Testament, the synonymous use of spirit or soul to the inner self begins to appear as a matter of course.<sup>91</sup> Thus Jesus could say, "Do not concern yourself with those things which can harm the body, but rather those things which can destroy the soul."<sup>92</sup>

Paul of Tarsus devotes his Letter to the Church in Galatia to exploring this tension between *spirit*, which brings freedom, and *flesh*, which offers nothing but slavery. For Paul, the concept of flesh includes sins of the mind: hatreds, jealousy, envy.<sup>93</sup> Separating things of our selfish nature, he was able to discern the true self within him and identify that true self as the Word of God re-embodied within him: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives within me."<sup>94</sup>

We are not talking about a dualistic split between mind and body.<sup>95</sup> We are talking about what lies at the very core of a human being, our center that still bears the indelible stamp of God.

C.G. Jung developed the same conceptualization for modern psychology with his archetypes of *ego*, the conscious "I" part of us and the *Self*, our genuine, authentic and complete potential. Jung understood the *Self* as being like a vessel filled with divine grace.<sup>96</sup>

But it was Fritz Kunkel, building upon Jung's work, who saw the *Self* as the source of attributes such as the capacity to love, ability to sacrifice for others, and the ability to lead others for their benefit and not for the ego's own egocentric gratification. (This is the very essence of *agape*.) He saw the connection with Christian ideas about humanity's relationship to God.

The *Self* is the creative energy and purpose of the creator manifested within us; for this reason, to live from the *Self* as our center, is to live in accordance with God's Will. Sin, on the other hand, is the egocentric deviation of the ego from the *Self*.<sup>97</sup>

4. Differentiated Leadership. Co-dependent, charismatic leaders who are overly dependent on external affirmation for pastoral identity become invariably confused and react with anger and/or passivity.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>91</sup>Mark 2:8, 8:12; Luke 1:80, John 11:33, 13:21; c.f. also Luke 1.47, Mark 14.38 Acts 17:16 and possibly Hebrews 4.12. In Pauline literature, 1 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 13; possibly 2 Corinthians 2:13, 1 Corinthians 5:4 Cited in Richardson, Word Book, ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Matthew 10:28, 16:26; Mark 8:36.

<sup>93</sup>Galatians 5:19-21.

<sup>94</sup>Galatians 2:20.

<sup>95</sup>Within the last two decades, a number of theologians have begun to identify historically negative attitudes toward women with body/mind dualism. See Rosemary Radford Ruther, New Woman: New Earth, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Tom F. Driver, Patterns of Grace: Human Experience as Word of God, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

<sup>96</sup>A very accessible presentation of the thought of C.G. Jung can be found in Morton Kelsey, Christo-Psychology, New York: Crossroads, 1988.

<sup>97</sup>Cited in Sandford, John A., "A Summary of the Psychologies of C.G. Jung and Fritz Kunkel," appendix to The Man Who Wrestled with God, New York: Paulist Press, 1974, 1987, p. 128.

<sup>98</sup>Also to be guarded against here is the dynamic of emotional cut-off as a way of managing this anxiety of leadership. Cut-offs always leave "live wires" flapping about and signal unresolved emotional issues. Perhaps this is what Jesus was referring to in his counsel with the Samaritan woman: "You have answered correctly that you have no husband, for you

Responding non-anxiously to the inflammation one's systemic leadership causes in a congregation requires a strong, well differentiated, even aggressive sense of self and one's pastoral identity.

Robert Dale cites powerful examples of self-defining Christian leadership, including Martin Luther's "Here I stand, I can do no other" and Martin Luther King's "I have a dream...".<sup>99</sup>

The aggressive style<sup>100</sup> needed for differentiation would seem to be a contradiction to the gospel virtue of peaceableness and servanthood. However, again Rollo May points out that aggression is properly understood as

cutting through barriers to initiate a relationship; confronting another without intent to hurt but with the intent to penetrate into his consciousness; warding off powers that threaten one's integrity; actualizing one's own self and one's ideas in a hostile environment.<sup>101</sup>

#### 4.a. Leader's Sense of Self v. Selfishness: Ego v. Egocentricity.

The emphasis on *self* may seem inconsistent with gospel ideas of "dying to self and loving others."<sup>102</sup> Yet Jesus instructed "love thy neighbor as thyself,"<sup>103</sup> which at least means that love and respect for one's self is prerequisite to love and respect for another. The consequence of neglecting our own creation in God's image is deprivation of self, a refusal to claim our blessing and be blessed. If we cannot honor our own created self, neither will we be able to recognize and honor the unique creation of God in others.

Much modern psychology is teaching us to become more aware, nurturing and even protective of the rights and dignity of the "child within" whom we must love and set free to love. But the temptations to oppress the life of the inner Self in the name of Christian ministry have been a concern to Christian pastoral writers for some time:

For that love is shameful and unworthy of the name of friendship wherein anything foul is demanded... As for those who, apart from faith, danger to their fatherland, or unjust injury to another, put themselves at the disposal or pleasure [control] of their friends, I would say they are not so much foolish as insane; sparing others, they do not see fit to spare themselves; and safeguarding the honor of others they unhappily betray their own.<sup>104</sup>

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have had five(unresolved marital relationships)..."(John 4.17). Cut-offs are like a blown fuse; they signal the *presence* of unmanaged intensity rather than its *absence*. We must stay connected, even, especially, in painful relationships in order to bring growth to our selves and others.

<sup>99</sup>Robert D. Dale, Good News from Great Leaders, (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1992), p. 12-13.

<sup>100</sup>Peter's aggressive pastoral care on behalf of Ananias and Sapphira made a lasting impression. (Acts 5:1-11); such discussion always has to raise the issue of what Jesus meant when he advised: "I came not to bring Peace, but a sword."

<sup>101</sup>May, Rollo, Power and Innocence, New York: W.W. Norton, 1972, p. 150-151.

<sup>102</sup>1 John 3:16; Matthew 6:27, 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24, 17:33; John 12:25.

<sup>103</sup>Matthew 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31, 12:33; Luke 10:27. see also, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14; James 2:8. Love for neighbor seem never to be mentioned outside of love for self.

<sup>104</sup>Aelred of Rievaulx, Spiritual Friendship, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), cited in Isabel Anders, Faces of Friendship, (Boston: Cowley, 1992), p. 48.

Those in pastoral leadership need desperately to understand healthy ways of practicing self-care in relation to systems in which they function. When people in congregations relate to their leaders in ways that make the leader the bearer of the congregation's pathology, transfer emotional energy to the leader inappropriately, become overly dependent and demanding or project upon the leader roles best filled by others, leaders need to understand that they are *being exploited*, and that in the words of Aelred, it is something "foul."

4.b. Differentiation as Vocation. For a pastoral leader, the centering of Self upon its created purpose and identity in God constitutes the very essence of vocational discernment and faithfulness. Far from being selfish or egocentric, such centering is essential to receiving spiritual empowerment for the task.

As pastoral leaders, we are incapable of being stewards of a loving ethos and environment within our communities unless we love ourselves. Just as parents are incapable of teaching children self-discipline if they themselves are not self-disciplined, "it is impossible to forsake our own spiritual development in favor of someone else's."<sup>105</sup> We cannot give to others that which we do not possess.

5. Triangles. When we speak of relationships, we tend to think of two party relationships. But, two-person systems are inherently unstable. Anxiety and conflict will not stay contained between two parties for more than a short time.<sup>106</sup> A third party will either by choice or chance be triangled in. This process is so natural and automatic that emotional triangles, rather than dyads, have been called the basic unit of human functioning; triangles evoke as if by natural law, "like a law of physics," especially under stress.<sup>107</sup> God created Adam and Eve in dyad, the teller of God's story also created an articulate serpent. Are emotional triangles part of God-imagined human order, or are they part of humanity's sin, disorder and pathology?

Humanity's sin is repeatedly made manifest in disordered relationships. God repeatedly sends third parties, judges, prophets and martyrs to speak the Word of God which calls those relationships back into Torah. Changes in relationships are brought about by a third party functioning in such a way as to evoke change from the existing dyad. Dyadic change does not happen any other way; it is a law of nature, a law of Creation.

But as with any gift of created order, there are criteria governing holy, righteous use of an emotional triangle. Because triangles *can* operate righteously and *can* contain gratuitous conflict, we may resort to triangling as an automatic defense mechanism. This may be unrighteous use because it avoids and undermines relationship and exploits third parties who are "triangled in."

In order to be righteous, the triangle must operate in support of, rather than at the expense of the God-imagined, created self of the other parties. Jesus had little compunction healing third parties (i.e., or imaged another way, becoming the third party in a

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<sup>105</sup>M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled, (New York: Touchstone, 1978), p.82.

<sup>106</sup>Kerr, *ibid*, p. 135.

<sup>107</sup>Harriet Goldhor Lerner, The Dance of Intimacy, (New York, Harper and Row, 1989), p. 142, 151. Kerr and Bowen refer to triangles as "a fact of nature," (*ibid*, p. 134). McGoldrick and Gerson refer to triangles as the basic unit of an emotional system (*ibid*, p. 7).

Carroll Saussy of Wesley Seminary voices strong dissent, and asks if personal experience would really bear out a natural theology for triangles. (Carroll Saussy, lecture comments, Seminar: "Practice of Ministry: Family Systems in Marriage and Family Counseling," Wesley Seminary, 5/92; Correspondence 7/93, 8/93.

relationship) at the request of another. Such was the dynamic present in behalf of Jairus' daughter,<sup>108</sup> the centurion's servant,<sup>109</sup> Lazarus and his family,<sup>110</sup> and the men who lowered their friend through the roof.<sup>111</sup> Such interventions supported the created, spirit or Self of all involved. But, Jesus did not view the invitation to comment about Caesar's authority<sup>112</sup> or the conflict between the Zebedee brothers<sup>113</sup> in the same way.

Emotional triangles work righteously when they operate in stabilization and support of our<sup>114</sup> God imaged, spiritual Self. Dyads, if lived in honestly, are intense. To be able to go outside the dyad to share our own pain, or helplessness, or fear; to share our joy, to give witness to healing, to tell others we are in love; to ask for help or offer what we feel God wishes to give; is to experience communion within the Body of Christ.

Emotional triangles work sinfully, pathologically and against Created order when they operate at the expense of our God imaged, spiritual Self. For example, extra-marital affairs--emotional or genital--adulterate relationships and operate at the expense of those involved. Gossip--the talk about another's shortcomings, rather than the sharing of our own feelings-- adulterates relationships and operates at the expense of those involved.<sup>115</sup>

6. Identified Patient. Friedman defines the concept of identified patient as follows:

"the family member with the obvious symptom is to be seen not as the "sick one," but as the one in whom the family's stress or pathology has surfaced."<sup>116</sup>

"Every time members of a congregation begin to concentrate on their minister's "performance," there is a good chance they are displacing something from their own personal lives."<sup>117</sup>

Such uses of another human being violates the Baptismal Covenant<sup>118</sup> and defiles souls made in the image of God by reducing people to the order of objects. "When people can 'thingify' you, then they can hate and debase and exploit you."<sup>119</sup> Souls made in the image

<sup>108</sup>Mark 5:21-43.

<sup>109</sup>Luke 7:1-10.

<sup>110</sup>John 11.

<sup>111</sup>Mark 2:1-12.

<sup>112</sup>Matthew 22:15-22.

<sup>113</sup>Mark 10:35-45.

<sup>114</sup>The possessive plural is used here intentionally. Even when we seemingly

consolidate our relationship with one party at the expense of another, everyone involved is debased and exploited. "Each person in a triangle is responsible for his or her own behavior. No one person does it to the other two." (Dance, *ibid.* p. 151.) Conversely, when one person takes a self-responsible, holy position, all will be drawn toward right relationship.

<sup>115</sup>Dance, *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>116</sup>Friedman, *ibid.*, p.19, also see note 73.

<sup>117</sup>*ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>118</sup>"Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" Book of Common Prayer, p. 305.

<sup>119</sup>"Thingify"--separating people from their basic humanity and holiness--was a reoccurring motif in the sermons of Martin Luther King, Jr., e.g. "Where Do We Go From Here?" The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., (New York: Harper and Row, 1991).

of God are the subjects of salvation history; turning subjects into objects is pornography.

Leaders must also come to understand when they, themselves, are colluding in their own exploitation, and learn to defend the Self that God has called and loves. Here also is the opportunity to cultivate "righteous anger" as the gift and tool given us by God for Self protection, as well as challenge and change.<sup>120</sup> Anger should be considered a "feeling-signal" that something has gone wrong in relationship.<sup>121</sup>

Anger is not the opposite of love, and it is not sinful. As a matter of fact, Christianity may have come very close, at times, to losing love completely, precisely because we understood anger to be a deadly sin.<sup>122</sup> Anger expressed honestly is an intimate mode of relationship; anger suppressed is distancing, avoidance of relationship. Martin Buber decided that even hatred was closer to love than avoidance of feeling for the other.<sup>123</sup> God is frequently angry in Hebrew scripture; that is why we can say God is love.

7. Love one Another, as I Have Loved You.<sup>124</sup> As Christians, we are frequently reminded that we are called to "love one another." Less attention is paid to the qualifier attached to that commandment: "as I have loved you." We are not called to love each other as the world teaches us, but to love as Jesus loved. It is a very disciplined and specific sort of love that lies at the heart of apostolic leadership. It is the "disinterested" love translated from  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\epsilon$  agape. Nygren argued that such love is the most powerful, creative force in the universe and is of the same substance as God's love for humanity.<sup>125</sup>

M. Scott Peck has defined love as: "The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth."<sup>126</sup> He adds the following criteria: "In the case of genuine love the aim is always spiritual growth. In the case of non-love the aim is always something else."<sup>127</sup> Jesus' love for his disciples, and others encountered in healings and teaching, is consistent witness to his concern for their spiritual growth, i.e., the calling forth and nurture of their *Self* or *soul*. The world witnesses to love used to control, manipulate, lessen pain, quench desire. Jesus' love was the manifestation of God's redeeming power, resorting people to their created intention in God, calling forth their Spirit, empowering their divine Self... indeed, the most powerful, creative force in the universe.

<sup>120</sup>"Anger is a tool for change when it challenges us to become more of an expert on the self and less of an expert on others." Harriet Goldhor Lerner, The Dance of Anger, (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 102.

<sup>121</sup>*ibid.* also, Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," in Ann Loades, ed., Feminist Theology: A Reader, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990) p. 194.

<sup>122</sup>Harrison, *ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>123</sup>M. Buber, I and Thou, trans. W. Kaufmann, (New York: Scribner's, 1970), p. 67f.

<sup>124</sup>John 15:12.

<sup>125</sup>Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, (Philadelphia: Westminster 1957).

<sup>126</sup>Road, *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>127</sup>*ibid.*, p. 116.

Chapter Six

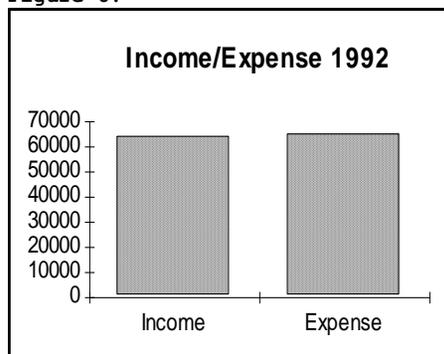
**THE PROJECT**

A. Methodology

The methodology for this project follows a simple process:

- 1) Establish covenant committee for support and advice;
- 2) Reduce clergy presence, cost and involvement in the life of St. Stephen's, North Sassafras;
- 3) Use both management and family systems concepts to reinforce this less intense (fused) relationship and defend against possible homeostatic reaction (sabotage);
- 4) Collect data to measure parish life before and after the intervention; this data will be in the form of: a) vignettes, and b) parochial statistics;
- 5) Interpret the data with the help of the covenant committee.

Figure 6.

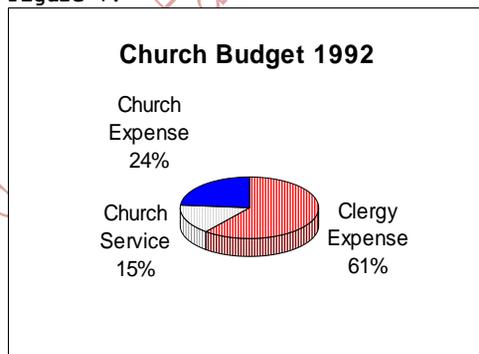


B. The Question

A parish's financial over-investment in clergy deployment carries its expectation that clergy will over-function in the pastoral role. The project conducted in the North Sassafras Parish attempts to answer the following question: **Can a congregation's emotional over-investment in the role and functioning of its clergy be reduced by lowering the financial over-investment in its clergy presence?**

If the financial and emotional intensity of St. Stephen's relationship with its rectors could be lowered, perhaps

Figure 7.



some of this energy could be redeployed toward parish activity that more positively advanced the mission of the church. If the rector of St. Stephen's did not always feel like the subject of everyone's statements--positive and negative--about church, perhaps he or she could stay longer and leave under less ambiguous circumstances. If the church's dollars, thoughts and hours were focused on something other than the clergy, perhaps that human capital could be redeemed in support of a living Christian community. The church's mission must be larger than supporting its clergy.

C. The Implementation I

I was very excited about the implementation of this project. In December of 1991, I carefully, painstakingly chose four people to enter into this process with me, for support and to help me think and interpret. There were three lay people from St. Stephen's, two men, one woman; and an Episcopal priest from a distant parish who was interested in the project. I met with members of this group individually to explain the project and we met once as a group before the December 1991 Vestry meeting. It was at this Vestry meeting that I was to introduce my proposal for decreased clergy deployment.

It was like walking into a buzzsaw. The Vestry interpreted the proposal as a hostile action. I was abandoning the church. They had always had a full-time Rector (not true). There was too much work for the Rector to do. The Rector should always be there, on call for emergencies. Who would "take care of everything?" It would upset "the other people" too much. How would people get it touch with me when they needed me? What would I do? What would people think? They had always been able to afford a full-time rector before. Several big dogs stated they would "quit the Vestry" if such a thing was allowed to happen. They wanted no part of it. The motion failed.

The parish members of the covenant committee scattered in the face of the opposition. "We didn't think it would work." The Bishop called just to let me know that he had been called. The project had crashed before it even began. Like the psalmist, my allies had gone, and darkness was my only companion. I had learned my first lesson in St. Stephen's league homeostatic reaction.

In the early Spring of 1992, I was able to reconvene two of the three lay people and recruit a replacement. We decided that even though the proposal for decreased deployment had failed, the stimulus for change had been introduced. We should try again next year.

Facts were facts. Income was up in 1992 as a result of higher pledging levels. (See Figure 6.) Expenses had been curtailed at great pain, despite rising health insurance and utility costs. Mission work, Christian education and some maintenance projects were being underwritten out of parishioners pockets in order to keep expense off of the parish books.

Yet, clergy costs were still eating 61% of the budget. (See Figure 7.) On the financial issue alone, the parish could not afford to underwrite its revenues from its savings accounts.

In addition to the financial woes, St. Stephen's was beginning to relive some of its clerical history too. Complaints about the Rector's performance were piling up like cordwood. These complaints were invariably in the form of double messages: e.g., I didn't visit enough. I was out visiting too much and never in the office. I visited and said things that made people angry. Vestry was unable to elect a

Senior Warden; no one wanted to answer the telephone. A "posse" was organizing to meet with the Bishop. I responded with a very angry reply in the parish newsletter. (See Appendix 1.) It was cathartic, and some people did hear my pain. But it was an uncharacteristic lashing out. I felt as if I were acting out the script of some of the former Rectors. It was time to make a decision as to whether to stay.

I came to the realization that I had made this project (which involved my pastoral identity and self-differentiation) dependent on Vestry's approval. That did not seem to be a good start.

After some prayerful consideration, I told the covenant committee I would like to proceed with the project, implementing whole clusters of interventions throughout the parish system. It was understood that like the part-time deployment proposal, not all of the interventions would be successful. However, if planned properly, these interventions could disrupt the arrhythmia of the parish system and create an opportunity for change.

A second committee member remembered a prior commitment, but this time a replacement volunteered. The original remaining parish committee member ran unopposed for Senior Warden. The Bishop was so excited about having a 40 year old Senior Warden in the North Sassafras he volunteered to help in any way we asked.

1. Focus. The committee understood the breadth of the project. However, we decided to work primarily with several issues:

- a. Stewardship of material and human resources: particularly the use of time and money.
- b. Mission statement: what business are we in and are our resources committed in support of that mission.
- c. Process vs. Content: stay airborne; don't get drawn into petty issues. Try to aim all interventions at systems and process, rather than individuals and content of transactions.
- d. Model Detriangling: triangles seemed to be the medium of social and emotional exchange in the parish. Identify healthy from unhealthy. Refuse to play when unhealthy.

2. Evaluation. We struggled with developing criteria for evaluation. "How do we know when the project has worked? How do we objectively measure and 'prove' something as slippery as 'emotional over-involvement?'"

We chose two means for measurement: 1) vignettes or stories; and 2) parochial statistics. For evaluation, we wanted to see some of the following:

- a. Evidence that Vestry and congregation perceives part-time deployment as supportive to ministry rather than abandonment.
- b. Pledge and plate income remains steady, or increases, despite reduced clergy costs.

c. Surplus funds created by decreased deployment are reinvested in budget line items that would be interpreted as supportive of total common ministry in the parish: e.g., Christian education, training of lay ministers, mission and evangelism.

d. Vestry and key leadership are able to articulate the congregations mission and ministry without deferring to the person and ministry of the Rector.

e. Leadership of all major program areas is assumed by laity.

f. Increased accountability on the part of congregational leaders for community life issues, as measured by decreased attempts to violate personal boundaries, triangle, scapegoat and assign motive to others.

g. Evidence of leadership's ability to differentiate Rector's needs from the congregations.

h. Evidence of increased ability of Rector, Wardens and Vestry to practice non-anxious presence in the face of active sabotage.

#### D. The Implementation II

##### 1. Mission and Objective.

1.a. Vignette. There was concern that no one seemed to know what business the church was supposed to be in. Were we a fellowship, a service organization, a religious resource for the community? Who were we as a congregation? Were we a rural church or chapel to a retirement community? How did we relate to the diocese? To the national church? Every one seemed to have a different answer.

In October of 1991 I had called Vestry to special session to address Mission and Objectives. Specifically I requested (See Appendix 2) Vestry to revisit the profile and goals under which I was called to St. Stephen's (See Appendix 3) and either affirm them or change them. Vestry had about two weeks to review the old documents before they met in the special workshop session. During this session, Vestry members were each asked to complete a new parish life instrument, one item at a time. We then went around the room and each member spoke briefly as to how they perceived the parish and in which direction they wished to see the parish move. Others could ask clarifying questions, but there was to be no debate. Member's opinions were valid expressions; we were assembled to listen to each other. The data from this new instrument is found in Appendix 4.

This was a tense meeting. Members not only had to express their opinions, feelings and hopes, but also had to listen to others. This was apparently a new experience. Members were dumb-struck over the divergence of opinion, both from the original profile and from each other. The exercise took all of a Saturday morning. I asked from Vestry 1) permission to publish the results in the parish newsletter and 2) for members to listen to the response from the congregation. We

would meet again in special session to discuss identity and goal statements.

We met again in workshop session on this issue in March of 1992. I had asked that they review some planning terms as to have some common definitions. (See Appendix 5) Three key members representing a solidified position were conspicuously absent. The members who did show up elected to continue the work. They identified the issue of opening the community to involvement of new people and began to explore what that might look like. They specifically felt that a goal statement based on this issue would need to address a change in the "environment" of the parish... "a transformation from what we are to something else...not focused on numbers or program, but how we act." The results of this session are found in Appendix 6.

We met next on this issue in May 1992. This time, those members absent from the last session were all present, but a competing group from another solidified position were conspicuously absent. The well defined position of the March meeting was effectively amended away. Furthermore, there was some feeling that the process was "a waste of time." The results of this last meeting are found in Appendix 7.

1.b. Evaluation. I was absolutely distraught. Not only had I failed to facilitate the process of defining the identity and goals of the parish, but 18 months into the deployment, I did not even have the parish's "destination" toward which I could lead. Furthermore, what if my detractors were correct and the process was "a waste of time...we have to do this every time we get a new rector, particularly if he's young." My internal demons told me I had wasted a very large block of human energy.

The covenant committee did not feel the same way. They pointed to the incredible revelation that occurred in the Fall when members of Vestry had to go around the table and both speak and listen to "I" statements from each other. "I don't think C.G. has ever been forced to listen to anybody before... and R.D. has never told those things to anyone." The committee asked me to back off from the content issue of evoking a mission statement and objectives, and enjoy the process of making people aware of each other's presence. This was definitely new behavior for the leadership of the North Sassafras and definitely not part of the culture. While the absences were consciously or unconsciously acts of sabotage, I was warned not to personalize those actions. "It's like you have introduced a virus into the system," said one covenant member. "That virus is going to tease, taunt and eat away at the pathology. You may not see the results now, or next year. But I don't think things are ever going to be the same!"

This intervention ultimately functioned in support of the project goals in that it provided a vehicle for Vestry members (and the positions they represent) to interact with each other, rather than through the Rector. I was freed to chair Vestry, oversee the process and act out of my *episkopos*.

## 2. Money as Humanity's Indicator of Value.

2.a. Vignette. Traditionally, stipends on the Eastern Shore have been meager. Part of this is rural heritage... the parishes really were cash poor. Throughout the last one hundred years, however, there always seemed to be "guardian angels" around who would periodically rescue the rector and his family from destitution through their generosity. These gratuities are not of the bushel of vegetables

or box of deer meat variety. There are retired clergy who live in various quarters on the farms of these families. Rectors have been given automobiles by families. Easter, ordination anniversaries and birthdays (even of children) might be marked by the arrival of cards containing personal checks of \$500. There is a tradition of a Christmas "purse" to which selected members of the parish are asked to contribute. The purse is to be grandly presented to the Rector at the Christmas Eve service, not in cash, or even a lump sum check, but containing everyone's personal checks in varying amounts. Cash was used too. "Father, I wanted to give you this in cash instead of a check. You know how people talk up at the bank." This was part of the culture. It was not part of mine.

At first I tried to quietly thank people and advise them as to how I put this money into my Discretionary Fund for use in ministry. They thought I was just stupid and asked the Senior Warden to tell me what I was really supposed to do with the money. I also refused gratuities for performing pastoral services such as baptisms, burials and weddings. My position was that these rites were part of the ministry of the church. The community of faith paid for this ministry through their pledges, they did not need to pay for them again as individuals.<sup>128</sup>

Complaints began to come into Vestry as to how I "wouldn't take people's money." Some Vestry members wondered if I could not "show more appreciation." Rather than approach this as an emotionally charged ethical problem of whether or not the Rector could be "bought," I was able to engage in a more systems and process centered approach. We spoke of "what does it mean for people to give money to a Rector but not to the church?" As of Christmas 1993, cash flow of this sort has dwindled to a trickle.

This intervention supported the project goals in that it reinforced some boundaries between the Rector and congregation and called attention to the need for members to support the parish as a system, rather than focus attention on the leader.

2.b. Vignette. This type of "backing away from an issue to look at it" proved so successful, we tried it with several other problems. Individuals spent over \$2000 each year on altar flowers given each Sunday. What does it mean for a congregation to spend \$2000 on altar flowers and \$200 dollars for Christian Education? What does it mean for a congregation to spend \$2500 mowing the churchyard every summer, and \$250 for evangelism. What would be important to these congregations? Could someone write a mission statement for these congregations based on how they use their resources? By 1992 we were asking questions like, "what does it mean to spend \$40,000 on professional clergy and \$50 in support of lay ministry?" "How can we make statements saying we support the ministry of the baptized when our checkbook belies our true intention?"

2.c. Evaluation. The covenant committee was impressed with the perceptual changes given by considering our use of money as a value statement. They were excited about the cognitive change: looking at budgeted money as a statement of investment in ministry, rather than cost to be contained. They were interested in how various items in the

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<sup>128</sup>This stance is made easier for me as I do not perform sacramental services outside the context of the active congregation. I cannot be "paid" to perform a wedding or baptism.

budget compared with each other. They had never really considered using financial reports in this way.<sup>129</sup> They were more frightened, however, by what it would mean to carry these arguments to their logical conclusion. St. Stephen's is 300 years old. It sets on 300 acres of prime Maryland farm land. It holds well over \$1,500,000 of improvements to that property and has perhaps another \$150,000 in various investments. "Isn't this an awful lot of money to tie up so that 60 people can worship and have flowers on Sunday?... what does that say about our Christian mission?"

### 3. The Stewardship of Time.

3.a. Vignette. It occurred to me about a year into this intervention that people's upset over my wanting to go part-time had little to do with the difference between 40 hours per week and 30 hours per week. What they were upset about was the assumption that I could measure, track and limit their access to my time at all. Again, rather than do individual battles over what committee meeting I would attend, when I would be in the office, when I would visit, etc., I tried a more process and systems oriented approach. Using a theology which suggests time as being finite and a gift requiring stewardship, I projected a work week as being composed of 10 time blocks of four hours each. (See Appendix 8.) I find it very difficult to work less than four hours at a time. Given the expectation of clergy to attend night meetings, it is possible (probably normative) for them to work three blocks, or 12 hours, per day. (Night meetings count as one block. Yes, even if you rush home for dinner.) Using this scheme, not only would it be possible to be a parish priest and have two days off like everyone else, one could conceivably leave work after the Sunday service and not return until Thursday morning. I made available to Vestry blank time grids and a monthly accounting of my hours. (See Appendix 9.)

3.b. Evaluation. This turned out to be an extremely valuable intervention in term of defining boundaries and role. Grids and monthly accounting a) gave me an objective measurement that kept me less anxious and defensive about my use of time; b) put any discussion on a systems/process level rather than "Why didn't you visit Mrs. X?" c) made Vestry a collaborator in how I invested my time. If they wanted more time given to a certain activity, they would have to agree to limit the time given to another activity. Curiously, the covenant committee greeted this with some ambivalence. I interpreted this as transference around their own uses and abuses of time and this became an opportunity for at least one member of the committee to seriously evaluate his time management following heart by-pass surgery.

Two additional system learnings were provoked. The first was the issue of productivity. Comparing preparation and execution time against attendance figures for the Sunday services helped soften the opposition to moving toward combining the services. There was also increased awareness that time invested in preparation for Sunday worship, pastoral communication through the newsletter, and training or supervision of lay ministries utilized time much more productively than one-on-one visits with marginal parishioners. All were astounded at how much time some activities required: a death of an active member of the parish consumed about 30 hours during the first month after death; a hospital visit in Wilmington or Baltimore easily took four or five hours.

<sup>129</sup>During this time was also when we had a change in Treasurers. Previous to this time, financial information had always been a "big mystery" and not made public.

There were things that were obviously poor utilization of masters level professional time: presence at routine committee meetings, talking with tourists and handling requests for historical information, waiting on service and delivery people, visiting people not connected to the active congregation, being the "paid volunteer" for the church on community service boards.

Using the instruments, it was particularly easy to spot parishioners who engage in attention seeking behavior requiring repeated counseling and telephone consultation, as well as crazy-makers whose exploits require large blocks of time in "cleaning up messes" or settling others down. Once a problem was identified, Vestry could be advised of the time required and asked for input on how much clergy investment they wished to commit.

This intervention worked in support of project goals in that it addressed boundaries to the Rector's time and person, and invited a collaborative effort in deciding how parish ministry tasks could be carried out.

4. Triangles and Communication. Emotional triangles seem to be a relational tool of choice in the North Sassafras Parish. Some examples: Two weeks before my arrival in the parish in October, 1990, I received telephone calls from two different parish factions attempting to lobby me on issues pertaining to a day care center. Within 48 hours of my arrival, I was advised I was expected at dinner on the same evening at the homes of two conflicting parish "matriarchs." My first Senior Warden in the parish articulated his job description as "acting as channel between the people and the Rector."

4.a. Vignette. Rector, Vestry and Bishop form an inherent triangle in Anglican polity. For the most part, open communication defuses any overloading between any two poles in this triangle. The outgoing Bishop of Easton was aware of the problems in the parish, aware of the project, and regularly met with Vestry and myself every six months.

In the Spring of 1992, a group of disgruntled parishioners began calling around the parish, organizing a delegation to go to Easton to voice their complaints to the Bishop. Interlocking triangles were thrown one upon another as people chose sides and then called me (and anyone else who would listen) to report what had been said to them, by whom, and what their reply had been. Part of the complaint seemed to be about new behaviors on the part of Vestry; Vestry members called me and seemed very anxious. What should I do? Defend myself, defend Vestry, refuse to listen? Try to stop the uproar? Mostly from the result of feeling de-skilled, I decided to do nothing. I listened as non-anxiously as possible to the play-by-play and tried to pretend the uproar was about someone else.

When the group called the Bishop for an appointment, he was able to simply turn them away with the remark, "I am working with Rector and Vestry, I suggest you work with them too."

4.b. Vignette. On the monthly Rector's Report to Vestry (Appendix 8.) there is an item designated "Pastoral Care of Staff." For the most part this is used for processing the stress caused by parishioner's interactions with individual members in leadership positions. More often than not, the stress from these interactions was caused by efforts to triangle these leaders in some sort of dispute. It was very stressful for earnest, volunteer leaders to be handed responsibility for a conflict which did not otherwise involve

them. Rather than deal primarily with the content of these carried messages, the Senior Warden and I began to reply in ways which addressed the process of what was happening. "So F called to tell you how upset she was at me. How does it feel to be used that way? Can you think of any other ways for this information to be handled that might be more productive?"

In time, several Vestry members asked for, and received, a training block in appropriate and inappropriate uses of emotional triangles. They summarized their learning with the 12 Step proverb: "Everyone has to own *their own* feelings." It was Vestry learning some of these detriangling skills that probably caused the attempt to "bring in the Bishop" in the previous illustration.

4.c. Vignette. One of the remarkable aspects of this intervention is how quickly the skills have become integrated into the management style of some of the leaders. Last Summer, during coffee hour, I overheard someone ask the Senior Warden, "Who are those new people over there?" Without batting an eye, the Warden responded, "Why don't you go over and find out!" During process time, the warden owned that he had felt as if the parishioner was assigning him the responsibility of incorporating the newcomers. "I can't make somebody part of this parish, we all have to make each other part of the parish."

4.d. Vignette. I was perpetually troubled by telephone calls from parishioners who were presumably asking for information: "How is Mrs. Q? I hear she's not too well." I kept thinking, "why don't they just call her and ask?" My own feelings were that I was being quizzed as to "had I been diligent in providing pastoral care for Mrs. Q?" These feelings, of course, were particularly acute had I not been keeping up with Mrs. Q, if Mrs. Q was not really part of the active congregation, or if I didn't particularly like Mrs. Q. I began to realize that I had fallen into the old parish script of the Rector being responsible for Mrs. Q's pastoral care. If pastoral care was a function of the community, my task was to largely oversee that function, and become directly involved only as appropriate.

Now it is not unusual for me to say something like, "I'm going over there Friday afternoon. What time would you like me to pick you up?" If someone were really interested in Mrs. Q, they appreciated my offer to empower them in her pastoral care. If Mrs. Q was not the real agenda, the matter would be quietly dropped.

4.E. Evaluation. This intervention was extremely supportive of project goals in that it addressed role and boundaries of the Rector and others in leadership positions. The intervention removed the Rector and other leaders from the perpetual expectation for pastorally and emotionally over-functioning on behalf of the parish. The intervention further encouraged members of the congregation to "carry their own baggage" which frequently allowed for wider interaction in the parish. Leadership in this environment is less stressful and emotional process in the parish runs more smoothly.

The covenant committee has also been impressed with the "trickle down" effect of this intervention as people carry their learning and new skills relative to emotional triangling into their own families and workplaces.

5. Self-Differentiation of the Rector. At times, it seemed the worst offender for putting the Rector in the center position, was the Rector. I frequently had to remind myself that my real job was to celebrate the Eucharist and oversee a safe and effective process (or at least its preparation) of change and growth for the parish. Regardless of what I was told or what had been done before, I was not responsible for everyone's pastoral care, every decision of Vestry or every use of church property.

I was surprised at my own relatively minor expression of status on the masthead of the Sunday bulletin. In an expression of political correctness, we had dropped the titles "Mr." And "Mrs." from names and had been referring to women by their given names rather than "Mrs. Edgar Baaa." But there it was, up on the top line like a head of state, "The Rev. HW Doc Whitaker." Its gone now. I suppose I was looking forward to reading "The Rev. Dr..."

5.a. Vignette. While the rest of the Episcopal Church experienced liturgical renewal during the last two decades, this phenomena largely passed St. Stephen's by. The clergy in charge was not only expected to be the celebrant of the Eucharist, but to officiate most of the rest of the liturgy as well. There were three "Lay Readers" who vested after the fashion of minor clergy, read lessons and administered the chalice. There was one acolyte who, the following year, would be away at college. New canonical provisions for increased congregational participation were in place, but were ignored.<sup>130</sup> Within 36 months we added 10 acolytes (no one knew we had 10 children), six lectors, two chalicists and a lay preacher. Two Lay Eucharistic Ministers are now licensed to take the elements from the principle Eucharist to sick and shut-in. The Prayers of the People are now read from the midst of the congregation by laity.

I do not make other people's announcements before the offertory. I do not stand at the back door of the church and "punch tickets" after the service. I am usually available during the coffee hour should anyone wish to talk briefly.

This is all pretty tame by contemporary standards, but for St. Stephen's it has been very radical and not always well received or easy to implement.

5.b. Evaluation. When it has worked, the effect of adding other ministers of the liturgy has been to make many other people and their ministries sacramentally visible on Sunday morning. This reinforces the idea of worshipping community and ministry of the baptized. This intervention specifically supports the goals of this project by decreasing the visibility and affective presence of the Rector.

There was unbelievable resistance to the dropping of ritual announcements and "exit rite" involving the Rector standing at the back door pumping everyone's hand on the way out to their car. Comments to the first, one family told me,

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<sup>130</sup>The Lay Readers were very protective of their duties. I apparently offended one Lay Reader at my first service at St. Stephen's. I never saw him again after that service. Now there were two.

"it makes us feel like someone's in charge...like the principal coming over the PA system in the morning) In reference to the last, one woman lamented, "But you're our host! You have to tell us good-bye as we leave the house!" I knew I had made the right decision.

5.c. Vignette. During the first year in the North Sassafras, it seemed like my family and I were under constant barrage from an arrogant, entitled people. All sorts of characters seemed to have keys to the rectory and would just let themselves in. People would let themselves into my office "to just clean up a little." We came home one day in December to find wreaths and bows on all our doors. The church phone has two extensions in the rectory and they seemed to ring constantly with trivial concerns about altar duties, bulletin notices and just plain gossip. There was an office for the Rector in the two year old parish house, but people continued to come to (sometimes let themselves in) the house on church business. There was a round of complaints to Vestry regarding our "not using the house correctly." (Our children were using the old office as a TV room, they left their bicycles in the yard... And couldn't we park our cars in the garage? We certainly left a lot of lights on around the house!)

We got the impression we were "hired help." And we had some shortcomings at that.

One woman called to tell me she noticed I might need a suit and had made an appointment with her salesman in Wilmington for me to be fitted. We were treated to an endless string of humor about southerners, hillbillies and comments about our speech and manner, all of which we considered offensive and insulting to our heritage. We felt we were continuously asked to affirm the statement, "Aren't you glad to be out of the hills?"

My wife was given pointed instructions as to how to care for bulbs planted in the rectory flower beds. There were constant attempts to involve her in women's guilds, bridge parties and committees in which she had no time or interest. A busy professional who enjoys her work, she had to constantly hear pointed and suggestive stories of how the wives of former rectors had been leaders in parish activities and opened their homes for weekly Bible study and prayer groups.

My wife was unhappy, the children were sulky, I was having violent dreams. We felt we were continuously being violated, criticized for not being grateful and treated like we were stupid.

About six months after our arrival, we were attempting to leave on a week long vacation. The car was packed, the kids were in, but Rosie and I were having problems. I was rushing around trying to clean up the house and heard myself speak the following line from the script of a paranoid person: "I know they're going to come in here while we're gone... it has to look OK." Rosie was wanting to leave, "how can they ruin our vacation!"

I stopped. I sent my family out to lunch. I went to the hardware store. Within 90 minutes, I had changed every

lock on the house, plus the lock on my office door. We said nothing to anyone, departed in peace and had a wonderful time.

After we returned, and while the parish was still in an uproar over having been "locked out of the rectory," I went to the lumber yard, bought 12 panels of 4x8 lattice, painted them white and erected them around the side porch of the house for privacy. Next came a 3x12 above ground swimming pool in the backyard.<sup>131</sup> We had been considering buying a horse.<sup>132</sup> By the time this story made its way around it came back that we were getting pigs. The story seemed so biblical, I let it stand unchallenged until the next Vestry meeting. When asked about it at the meeting, I simply said hog farming was a lot of trouble, but I'd think about it.

Life in the rectory calmed down considerably after that.

5.d. Evaluation. It is hard to pinpoint how this series of incidents became as important as it did. First, it seemed to dissipate, at least for a while, the chronic anxiety that is part of the parish's heritage. The family systems explanation is that it was the first time since my arrival that I took my focus off of those who seemed focused on me. Not only was I no longer reacting to the parish's focus on me, I really didn't give a damn about the parish. I fully expected to be fired within the year. My primary concern was making my family comfortable during the interim. These were not actions of rebellion, these were actions of self-preservation.

It was like a hinge upon which I was able to create some space from which I could begin to minister out of my own identity. "I am who I am," said God. Me too. I had become authentic. I began to minister out of my authenticity. I begin to find my authority.

I had had friends and supporters and sympathizers in the parish up to this point. But it was only now that I could begin to develop some intimate relationships within the parish. That is not to say that these relationships were always pleasant or that my detractors and I began to become of one mind on mission, ministry and church. Nor is this to say that these people became close friends. But we wasted less energy obsessing about whether we could change each other into the church or pastor of our dreams. It became permissible to focus on relationships instead of behavior. I had to become differentiated before I could seek intimacy. And as a leader, I had to model that differentiation for others.

It was during this time that program changes began to happen, and with program, changes in the relational patterns within the parish system. The parish had its first (now annual) Vacation Church School, not because it was a good ministry to the community or a good witness to the gospel, but because I had small children and enjoy working with children. We began having a coffee hour after the service, not because it was necessary to "make" people relate to each other, but

<sup>131</sup>The folks in town were having so much fun watching this, the Cecilton Fire Company offered to send an engine to fill the pool.

<sup>132</sup>While this was really for the kids, it hadn't escaped Rosie's and my attention that more fencing would be needed between church and rectory.

because a half dozen people, myself included, wanted to enjoy each other's company for a time on Sunday morning. We now have one service on Sunday morning, not because the two congregations came to their senses, but because I made a statement about my time and energy.

Children's ministries, community and a united worship service are things that seemed impossible three years ago.

#### 6. Appropriate Deployment of Clergy.

6.a. Vignette. During the process leading up to the 1993 parish budget, the Finance Committee recommended that the Rector's position be funded for 3/4 time. With assurances that 1) I would give priority to being present for Sunday service, and 2) I would continue to collaboratively study time usage with Vestry, Vestry approved.

When the same line item was introduced for the 1994 budget, there was not even a discussion.

6.b. Evaluation. The covenant committee and I intended to reduce the presence and cost of the clergy role in the North Sassafras Parish and by that action decrease the emotional over-investment of the people in the clergy role.

The project interventions began in 1991. However, it was not until 1993 that the decreased level of deployment actually began. The project happened backwards. This is not to say that decreased deployment could not have produced the expectations for over-functioning. It is to say that having experienced a Rector who did not function at the (emotionally) fused level expected, made the formal agreement for reduced deployment less frightening.

Rising insurance and utility costs have continued to erode the parish budget, even more than expected. Still, some funds that would have ordinarily gone to sustain a full-time Rector have instead been re-invested in line items that are supportive of persons who have, and will continue, to practice their ministry within the context of the parish church. (See Appendix 10.) Not only have these ministries begun to function in roles traditionally thought to belong exclusively to the ordained ministry (e.g., teaching, preaching, sacramental visitation of the sick, officiating public worship), but increased program activity has shifted the emotional process from the ordained person to the ministering community. There is an increased sense that pledging and fund raising activity take place to support a community of ministers, rather than a minister who functions for a community.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the Episcopal Church, small parishes expect to employ a full-time Rector. In today's economy a full-time priest serving one altar places severe demands on small congregations. As these churches over-invest financially in clergy deployment they also over-invest emotionally. An atmosphere is created where clergy are expected to over-function to match this level of investment. The congregation's tendency to over-invest, coupled with the clergy's tendency to over-function is causing clergy "burn-out" while small cures are becoming harder to fill.

This Project Thesis explored the connection between financial over-investment of the congregation in the clergy function and the emotional over-investment in the way that function is carried out. The project sought to lower the emotional over-investment by lowering the financial over-investment.

### A. Results.

The following criteria for measurement are scored on a scale of 1 to 10.

- a. Vestry and congregation perceive part-time deployment (reduced clergy presence) as supportive of ministry = 5.
- b. Pledge and plate income remain steady or increase despite reduced clergy costs = 9.
- c. Surplus funds created by the reduced deployment are reinvested in the ministry or ministries of the congregation = 7.
- d. Vestry and key leadership are able to articulate the congregation's mission and ministry without deferring to the Rector = 6.
- e. Leadership of major program areas is assumed by laity = 7.
- f. Increased responsibility on the part of congregational leaders for community life issues, such as violations of personal boundaries, assigning motives, scapegoating and triangling = 7.
- g. Ability of leadership to differentiate rector's needs for congregation's needs = 7.
- h. Ability of Rector, Wardens and Vestry to practice non-anxious presence in the face of active sabotage = 7.

### B. Problems and Surprises.

I had assumed that the leading stimulus and intervention for the project would be the implementation of part-time deployment of clergy. The other interventions would have been collateral and

supportive. As things happened, it could well be argued that it was the collateral interventions which ended up *creating the environment* which allowed part-time deployment of clergy.

It could also be argued that the stance of implementing *multiple clusters* of interventions was actually a more appropriate systems intervention (that is more systemic rather than linear) than the dependence on the part-time deployment alone to stimulate change. While not counter-indicative to the goals of the project, it does not make the results as neat and striking as I had hoped.

A problem that plagued the project also reinforces how important the issues addressed by the project will be in the future. Medical insurance and utility cost continued to rise in the years 1990-94.<sup>133</sup> These increases ate into much of the surplus created by the decreased clergy deployment. While the phenomena made the numbers less dramatic, without the decreased deployment, clergy costs would have taken upward of 70% of the budget, created even more emotional turbulence within the system and further undermined program.<sup>134</sup>

The other surprise was how much emotional and behavioral change had to occur with me, as the Rector, in order to allow change to happen within the parish system. I had assumed I had "all my ducks in a row" and only needed to introduce my well defined, differentiated self into the parish system and observe the changes. Repeatedly, however, I found my own perceptions and awareness-- my counter-transference-- needed attention. During Fall 1992 and Spring 1993, I was able to receive professional, peer support from a CPE group of which I was a member in Baltimore. I was able to use my parish work as case study and received much good feedback from peers and supervisor. However, by Fall 1993, I was the (acting) CPE Supervisor. It was no longer appropriate to my new role to ask for that sort of support for my parish ministry. Predictably, my already difficult parish ministry became harder.

Understanding self-differentiation and continuously practicing it in a system prone to fusion, are two quite different things. Yet, I could only minister, lead, and find intimacy when I was being truly authentic and well defined.

### C. Implications and Recommendations.

I believe these issues deserve more study as the Episcopal Church moves into the next century. While contemporary parishes show promise of becoming large and active enough to be self-sustaining with full time clergy, older parishes are geographically bound and have a heritage of being small, village churches. Many, like North Sassafras, have churchyards (cemeteries) and are part of the National Registry of Historical Sites. In short, they cannot simply be "closed" when they have outlived their original vocation. Appropriate deployment of clergy to these parishes needs to be revisited in new and creative ways.

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<sup>133</sup>Some of the utility increase was the result of increased use of the buildings for program. While this would be a positive indicator for the project, there is no way to isolate just how much of the increase was from increased use.

<sup>134</sup>I had hoped for the final clergy expense figure to account for around 40% of the budget with a church program portion closer to 30%. Increasing expenses would not allow this.

The Rothauge research continues to be important from a sociological perspective. Frensdorff and Wilson's vision has been tried in the Diocese of Nevada as a management strategy.<sup>135</sup> However, grand ideas about social engineering and management must remain in dialogue with a discipline that addresses the emotional field of these human communities when these strategies are played out. Family Systems Theory shows much promise in that it is itself a construct for managing the emotional field of a human system.

However, in order to experiment, the church must normalize the opportunity for part-time, bi-vocational and retired clergy to remain in parish ministry. There are emotional reasons as well as economic reasons for this. The small church experience for clergy tends to be intense and isolative. Clergy being able to "have a life" outside of the turbulence of the small church is critical for keeping clergy and congregations healthy over long periods of time.<sup>136</sup> Multi-point cures and clusters that access a consortium of clergy in common are also possibilities on a larger scale.

Because of the way the project unfolded, I am unable to identify the congregation's financial investment in clergy as being the primary element driving the congregation's emotional investment. However, it is at least a significant element. It is still difficult for me to imagine how the emotional investment could be lowered in a family or pastoral size church with full-time clergy lurking around without enough ordained ministry to do. It is also difficult to image how change can be carried out when a congregation's ability to do ministry is compromised by debilitating clergy costs.

The complex mix of power, money, role and boundaries in small parishes presents the Episcopal Church with a problem that will not go away in the next decade. There can be no harm in examining where we invest our treasure, what our hearts expect as a result, and comparing what the vision of community promises us when we practice good organizational stewardship and live in right relationship.

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<sup>135</sup>CRW Management Services, Living Out the Vision: Nevada's Experience in Total Ministry, (Alverda, CO: Jethro, 1983).

<sup>136</sup>e.g., During this project, I also was a staff chaplain and clinical educator at Sheppard-Pratt Hospital in Baltimore.