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Signature:

Lindsey E. Hardegree

Date

**Spirituality in Secular Spaces:
Constructing a Practical Missional Ecclesiology**

By

Lindsey E. Hardegree
Doctor of Ministry

Candler School of Theology

Ellen Ott Marshall
Project Consultant

Roger Nam
Director of DMin Program

Abstract

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By Lindsey E. Hardegree

How are people outside of our church institutions experiencing God's Presence in a spiritually meaningful way, and what implications does this have for the Church's understanding of ecclesiology? Can the ministry of lay people bridge the gap between our increasingly declining church institutions and the robust spiritual expressions of people outside those institutions? In this paper, I construct a practical missional ecclesiology that seeks to inform our religious institutions on new, expansive ways to relate to people unlikely to self-select into an explicitly religious experience. This paper reframes Millennial secularity as a form of everyday spirituality, affirms the significance of these mundane activities by drawing on literature about spirituality and reflecting on the orientation of embodied spiritual practices, and proposes a missional posture and pedagogical approach which empowers lay people as central to the living out of *missio Dei*, thus engaging and supporting meaningful mundane spiritual practices and embodied spiritual formation outside of the institutional church structure. I provide an example of spiritually meaningful practice in a secular space with an ethnographic case study on the experiences of Certified KonMari Consultants, people working as professional organizers using Marie Kondo's decluttering method. I then ground these explorations by demonstrating an implementation of this ecclesiology through a pedagogical curriculum I developed to equip lay people to engage in the spiritually rich spaces in their own lives which lie outside the church, fostering a deeper awareness of God's Presence and a sense of purpose rooted in *missio Dei* for their own lives. As religiosity shifts in our contemporary culture, the Church must shift its perspective as well to ensure that an orthodox but adaptive future is possible.

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By

Lindsey E. Hardegree

Wake Forest University, BA, 2006
University of North Carolina School of the Arts, MFA, 2010
Fuller Theological Seminary, Certificate, 2017
Nashotah House Theological Seminary, MTS & MDiv Equivalent, 2018

Project Consultant: Ellen Ott Marshall, PhD

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To my aunt, Karen Goes (1957-2020)

who encouraged my curiosity and supported my own journey to live into God's mission

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Introduction

Background

Religiosity has been changing dramatically for decades in the United States. We are on the precipice of a significant generational shift, with Baby Boomers aging out of positions of leadership (both in society at large and within church institutions) and taking their long-held understandings of faith and religion with them. The decline of church institutions will become steeper when Baby Boomers will not be replaced by Gen X and Millennials who do not identify with institutional religion and do not believe that their spirituality needs church to flourish.

In tandem with this, the shape of spiritual expression in our country is fluid, with people in their 30s and 40s finding deep meaning within non-religious communities and through nontraditional spiritual practices. These people see a wide variety of encounters and spaces as opportunities to give their lives meaning or experience something larger than themselves. The fear many of our churches hold is that increasingly more people are rejecting faith and turning to secular practices, but they fail to recognize a critically important point: the Holy Spirit does not need to be explicitly acknowledged to move and work in the world. God's Presence is being felt in secular life, whether someone chooses to identify this with God or not, and faith has always been accessible to people outside of church institutions.

The challenge is not that people are devoid of faith or spirituality; rather, they no longer see church as a necessary avenue for spiritual experience, especially when they view churches as inflexible, judgmental, or irrelevant. And ultimately, they are onto something: we don't *need* church to be the Church. Our efforts to grow the Kingdom of God, to further God's mission in the world, have left us to adopt some bad habits within the Church. Chief among these is the false conflation of our manmade, human-centered church with *the Church*, the Body of Christ.

Our church institutions are not all bad. They are highly effective for organizing and gathering people for worship, sacraments, and communal life – all elements that are central to the Church. But our focus on these institutions has made space for a false understanding of the Church within our larger society. As a result, people who find church institutions to be harmful or simply irrelevant are left without a clear understanding of the universal Church.

The Church's Challenge

The Church has an opportunity at the intersection of these truths. Rather than seeing secular spaces, experiences, and cultural phenomena and then “Christianizing” them to “recruit” people into the Church, what if we acknowledged that these spiritual experiences are whole and holy in and of themselves? In the same way that we have different learning styles (visual learner, kinetic learner), we also have different styles for how we experience God's Presence, for how we connect with the Holy Spirit.

Rather than lamenting the spiritual journeys of people outside our institutions, we have the chance to take the Church beyond the church. How are these people experiencing God's Presence in a spiritually meaningful way, and what implications does this have for the Church's understanding of ecclesiology? We think of ecclesiology as the structure of our church's polity and the hierarchy of holy orders, but what about the largest order in the Church – the laity? How does our institutional understanding of ecclesiology need to shift to fully encompass expressions of *missio Dei* within our congregations? It is God's mission at work in the world, and our role as the Church to enter all of creation and live out our vocation as people of God, regardless of clerical order or theological training. Can the ministry of lay people bridge the gap between our increasingly declining church institutions and the robust spiritual expressions of people outside those institutions?

In this paper, I will construct a practical missional ecclesiology that seeks to inform our religious institutions on new, expansive ways to relate to people unlikely to self-select into an explicitly religious experience. This paper reframes Millennial secularity as a form of everyday spirituality, affirms the significance of these mundane activities by drawing on literature about spirituality and reflecting on the orientation of embodied spiritual practices, and proposes a missional posture and pedagogical approach that empowers lay people as central to the living out of *missio Dei*, thus engaging and supporting meaningful mundane spiritual practices and embodied spiritual formation outside of the institutional church structure. I will provide an example of spiritually meaningful practice in a secular space with an ethnographic case study on the experiences of Certified KonMari® Consultants, people working as professional organizers using Marie Kondo's decluttering method. I will then ground these explorations by demonstrating an implementation of this ecclesiology through a pedagogical curriculum I developed to equip lay people to engage in the spiritually rich spaces in their own lives which lie outside the church, fostering a deeper awareness of God's Presence and a sense of purpose rooted in *missio Dei* for their own lives.

My aim is that this broad exploration and more narrow observation that have informed my approach will aid the Church in understanding how the perceived tension between what is "sacred" and what is "common" is irrelevant when it comes to the Holy Spirit. Authentically spiritual practices can (and do) happen outside of historically sacred spaces, and embracing spiritual practices outside of our traditional liturgy will help the Church connect with those who currently do not see a need for church in their spiritual life. Contemporary society is a valid (and vibrant) space for spiritual engagement, and I will engage this claim in a way that is consistent with trinitarian theology and complementary to The Episcopal Church's ecclesiology. By

observing what spirituality can look like outside of religious spaces, the Church can engage people in a way that is organic and meaningful to them. As religiosity shifts in our contemporary culture, the Church must shift its perspective as well to ensure that an orthodox but adaptive future is possible.

My use and capitalization of the word “church” warrants explanation. The Body of Christ is more than any church group, institution, building, etc. and as such may be referred to as the “Church” throughout this paper. The Church is what we are initiated into through baptism. In support of that, our churches are what hold together the Church; they are the communities we commit to in confirmation and are where we gather to worship, confess, and break bread. Society knows us by our churches, but God knows us as the Church.¹

Reflexivity Statement

My personal context informs my approach to this research, so it is worth noting a few details about myself at the outset. As a lay person, I bring a very different viewpoint to the work of ecclesiology than that of a congregational leader, a denominational authority, or any ordained person. As a Millennial, I not only relate to the observations of sociologists about my generation, but I have seen countless real-life examples of these trends in the lives of my personal friends and networks (my anecdotal experiences align with the demographic research). While not my primary vocation, I do consider a significant part of my ministry to be the work that I have done part-time for five years as a Certified KonMari Consultant. I often refer to this work as my unofficial chaplaincy. Given how the intersectional nature of identity shapes individual perspective, I share that I am a white, heterosexual, cis-gendered neurodivergent woman who

¹ The caveat to this capitalization is where the word “church” is used as a proper noun for a denomination or specific congregation; when appropriate, I will refer to “church institutions” to reduce confusion.

worships in a mainline Protestant Christian denomination (The Episcopal Church). Each element of my identity provides me with both a unique perspective and an added limitation when discerning how to best develop practices for the universal Church, and I highlight here how incredibly important it is to contextualize any approach to ecclesiology for the unique people and communities involved.

Ethnography

The literature examined in this paper explores the opportunity that the Church has at the intersection of overt religious experiences associated with church institutions and the in-breaking of God's Spirit in common, everyday life. Building on these findings, I have conducted two phases of ethnographic research: a case study of the spiritual experiences of Marie Kondo's Certified KonMari Consultants and a pilot implementation of a curriculum developed for use in congregations with lay people. Aiming to provide a robust, real-world example of spirituality outside of religious institutions and spaces, I have investigated the spirituality of decluttering practices, with particular attention to Marie Kondo's KonMari Method™. As a practicing Certified KonMari Consultant, I have personally observed my clients' spirituality (even if they might not name it that) as they declutter their belongings with intention. Additionally, this work can serve as a spiritually meaningful experience for the consultant. I conducted interviews with six of my fellow consultants to identify what (if anything) about the work of decluttering is spiritually meaningful, regardless of religious affiliation or orientation for its practitioners. Building on the deconstruction of spirituality in a particular mundane experience (i.e., decluttering), I then construct a pedagogy by which we might analyze other secular, but spiritual, experiences and practices, resulting in the development of a curriculum for use with lay people. I piloted this curriculum, "Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life," as a five-week Lenten

series at my own Episcopal congregation, the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, GA. This curriculum, included in the appendix, offers an example for how the Church can equip lay people for ministry in mundane spaces.

Examining Contemporary Secular Contexts

Phenomena of SBNR/Nones

The religious lives of people in the United States, particularly those of Millennials (adults now in their 30s and 40s²) have been the subject of countless studies and surveys for decades. The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR)³ identified the concept of *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism* to summarize a worldview that was prominent amongst teen interviewees. Sociologist Christian Smith identifies this concept as “not so much a consciously and intentionally held ideology, but rather a taken-for-granted set of assumptions and commitments about the human self, society, and life’s purpose that powerfully defines everyday moral and relational codes and boundaries in the contemporary United States.”⁴ As teenagers, Millennials identified that “religion helps them in knowing right from wrong, making good decisions, providing a sense of hope and purpose in life, motivating them to be moral and altruistic, and helping them get through hard circumstances.”⁵ These teenagers expressed the belief that a primary function of religion is to help people “be good” (moralistic), but since being religious isn’t required in order to “be good,” religion becomes nonessential, “an optional individual lifestyle choice that does indeed help many people but is certainly not itself ultimately

² Stephanie Yuhas, “Losing My Religion: Why Millennials Are Leaving The Church,” in *The Emerging Church, Millennials, and Religion: Prospects and Problems*, ed. Randall Reed and G. Michael Zbaraschuk, vol. 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 141.

³ The National Study of Youth and Religion was a longitudinal study which explored the influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of Millennials over a ten-year period. Select observations of this study include that Millennials are inarticulate about their faith and that Millennials recognize milestones of self-sufficiency and independence as indicators of adulthood. This differs from prior generations which marked adulthood with marriage and familial participation, factors which sociologists have observed stabilize religious participation. See Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Back-Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁴ Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 172.

⁵ Smith, 138.

necessary.”⁶ Ten years later at the conclusion of the study, these teenagers (now adults) adhered to the sentiment that “religion doesn’t really affect or benefit their lives in any direct, practical, everyday sense. Religion occupies a residual space for them, where it would ‘be nice’ if religious claims were true, but most likely they aren’t, so it is not worth the investment of time and energy to pursue.”⁷

Today, people in their 30s and 40s are largely unaffiliated with religious institutions. Factors that contribute to this include “a focus on rational, pragmatic, and scientific approaches in higher education, geographical nomadism, financial uncertainty, technology, and an anti-institutional outlook.”⁸ However, religious participation is not necessarily an indicator of spiritual engagement; in fact, many people who have intentionally disaffiliated from religious institutions have an increasing interest in spirituality or identify as spiritual in some way.⁹ The term “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR) became prominent in the latter half of the twentieth century, though it is not a term that Millennials typically embrace.¹⁰ Instead, describing one’s religion as “none” more frequently captures the perspective of people in their 30s and 40s, though “defining ‘Nones’ is a difficult proposition as the category attempts to encompass a broad sweeping generality of people who have a wide range of relationships to spirituality.”¹¹

⁶ Smith, 155.

⁷ Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Back-Pocket God: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 224.

⁸ Yuhas, “‘Losing My Religion’ Emerging Church, Vol. 1,” 141.

⁹ Terry Shoemaker, Rachel Schneider, and Xochitl Alvizo, eds., *The Emerging Church, Millennials, and Religion: Curations and Durations*, vol. 2 (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022), xxv.

¹⁰ Millennials do not typically use the term “spiritual but not religious” when describing their beliefs for a variety of reasons, including skepticism or disconnection. See Denton, *Back-Pocket God*, 143–47.

¹¹ Yuhas, “‘Losing My Religion’ Emerging Church, Vol. 1,” 142.

The most common reasons that Nones give for disaffiliation from religious institutions include theological, ideological, social, or political differences.¹² Theologian Linda Mercadante notes that there are many paths to becoming a None, though it is unclear as to “whether intellectual disagreements were the reason for becoming religiously unaffiliated or were used as justification for a non-religious identity.”¹³ However, a recent study by the Fetzer Institute notes that “those who told us they were neither religious nor spiritual discovered through conversation that, in fact, spirituality showed up in their lives.”¹⁴ With the rise of Nones or SBNR, forms of secular or non-religious spirituality are becoming more prominent, with people finding new ways of spiritual connection and expression that are able to fit into their contemporary lives which are less family-oriented and more focused on individual pursuits and professional achievements.

Non-Religious or Secular Spirituality

One of the appeals of the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism construct is that it “defines the individual self as the source and standard of authentic moral knowledge and authority, and individual self-fulfillment as the preoccupying purpose of life.”¹⁵ This is crucial as people in their 30s and 40s believe that while they “may ask God to help them out, they do not necessarily have any real expectation of a response. Rather, it is the process of asking that is helpful to them.”¹⁶ This is congruent with the belief held by many Millennials that “all persons should have access to the divine and be able to facilitate this for others, regardless of official ordination and

¹² Pew Research Center, “Why America’s ‘Nones’ Don’t Identify with a Religion,” *Pew Research Center* (blog), August 8, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/08/why-americas-nones-dont-identify-with-a-religion/>.

¹³ Linda Mercadante, “Spiritual Struggles of Nones and ‘Spiritual but Not Religious’ (SBNRs),” *Religions* 11, no. 10 (2020): 6, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11100513>.

¹⁴ Veronica Selzler, Gillian Gonda, and Mohammed Mohammed, “Study of Spirituality in the United States” (Fetzer Institute, September 2020), 4, <https://spiritualitystudy.fetzer.org/>.

¹⁵ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 173.

¹⁶ Denton, *Back-Pocket God*, 232.

training.”¹⁷ This rejection of religious institutions and clerical hierarchy, and emphasis on self-reliance and personal encounter, provides a way for spiritual exploration in mundane spaces and experiences.¹⁸ With secular spirituality becoming more prominent amongst people in their 30s and 40s, we must ask ourselves “whether Millennials, ex- and post-evangelicals are truly on a linear trajectory towards being ‘done’ with religion or [are they] simply in the process of constructing spiritual alternatives suited to the demands of contemporary social life?”¹⁹

As observed by psychologist Pamela Ebstyn King, “spirituality is a source of aspiration for many in the U.S. . . . Spirituality informs ideals and fuels behaviors, indicating that it may be an under-tapped resource for personal and social transformation.”²⁰ Millennials may be turned off by religion, but they embrace a spirituality that lives in everyday experiences. As church institutions grapple with decline and aging congregations, it is imperative that the Church recognize the importance of “the language of spirituality, religiosity, and community outside the institution.”²¹ Adults in their 30s and 40s are creating communities that embrace common ideals and gather to support each other and the world at large, much in the way that churches have historically been communities of people with common beliefs and practices. Sacred Design Lab’s “How We Gather” report notes how “overwhelmingly, these organizations use secular language while mirroring many of the functions fulfilled by religious community. Examples include fellowship, personal reflection, pilgrimage, aesthetic discipline, liturgy, confession, and worship.”²² I will further examine this report, and the implications it has for constructing new pedagogies for lay ministry, later in this paper.

¹⁷ Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, *Emerging Church, Vol. 2*, 2:97–98.

¹⁸ Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, 2:49.

¹⁹ Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, 2:xxix.

²⁰ Selzler, Gonda, and Mohammed, “Study of Spirituality in the United States,” 59.

²¹ Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, *Emerging Church, Vol. 2*, 2:166.

²² Sacred Design Lab, “How We Gather,” April 11, 2017, 7, <https://sacred.design/insights>.

Reflecting Theologically on Embodied Spirituality

Perceiving God Through Spiritual Practices

If we are to embrace that God is accessible outside of formal church institutions and structures, even to those who might not identify God's Presence directly, then we must explore how it is that the Holy Spirit is active in creation. If "Church has no monopoly on the work of the Spirit,"²³ then how does our theology support working in the contemporary context we have just laid out? Our biblical sense of God's Presence is often grounded in prophecy and revelation,²⁴ and it is well established that the Holy Spirit is experienced in creation. Intentionally seeking God in creation-at-large and cultivating spiritual practices that heighten our perception of God are ways that we can orient our worldly participation towards God's mission. All of life involves God's Presence to some degree, which means that "Christian life is not only about gospel imperatives. The ordinary rhythms of eating and resting, working and playing, are not to be scorned, nor held up to continual suspicion—as if communities of Christian faith always had more noble duties to perform."²⁵ If the Holy Spirit moves throughout all creation, and experiences of God's Presence, of revelation, are accessible to all people, then we must develop practices that strengthen our perception and align our desires to God. We need spiritual disciplines.

Bradley Holt provides a simple yet effective framework for aligning our spiritual disciplines around four types of relationships: "our relationships to God, to self, to others, and to

²³ Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time: A Wisdom Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 39.

²⁴ See Daniel Castelo, *Pneumatology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015); Donal Dorr, "The Holy Spirit as Source, Power and Inspiration for Spiritual Practice," *Practical Theology* 10, no. 1 (February 6, 2017): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2016.1273642>.

²⁵ Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time*, 47.

creation.”²⁶ By considering all of these layers to spirituality, our disciplines will not only prepare us for “communal life in the church,”²⁷ but for life in God’s creation. Our spiritual practices are not simply a preparatory tool; they are a honing edge that helps us to perceive God in the everyday. Rather than striving for monk-like spirituality, “we can explore how our mind, action, heart, and body conspire to support or thwart our contemplative desires. How do our habits around what we eat, watch, read, listen to, buy, clean with, vote for, wear, and think make us more alive to beauty?”²⁸ How are we able to take contemplative practices, like prayer, and actively weave them into our mundane lives “so life itself becomes the practice”²⁹ and we are open to revelation, to perceiving God’s Presence, in the everyday? For example, in their examination on running as an embodied spiritual practice,³⁰ Darren Cronshaw and Stephen Parker affirm that running can enhance “connection with God, others, ourselves and creation” through six practices: “warm-up focus, gratitude, attentiveness, breathing, playfulness and the examen.”³¹ We can foster an embodied, everyday spirituality by cultivating practices such as these with mundane activities throughout our lives.

In his exploration of secular spiritual practices and community, Casper ter Kuile states that spiritual practices and rituals are delineated by “intention, attention, and repetition . . . be clear about our intention (what are we inviting into this moment?), bring it our attention (coming back to being present in this moment), and make space for repetition (coming back to this

²⁶ Bradley P. Holt, *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*, 3rd ed (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 31.

²⁷ Holt, 9.

²⁸ Wendy Farley, “Practice,” in *Beguiled by Beauty: Cultivating a Life of Contemplation and Compassion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 69.

²⁹ Farley, 64.

³⁰ Darren Cronshaw and Stephen Parker, “Embodied Spiritual Practices on the Run: Six Exercises for a Spirituality of Running,” *Practical Theology* 12, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2018.1540508>.

³¹ Cronshaw and Parker, 240.

practice time and again).”³² His work *The Power of Ritual* deconstructs secular spiritual practices observed in secular communities, likening them to Christian practices such as Sabbath, *lectio Divina*, sacred meals, and Rule of Life. He guides readers through deepening connections with self, others, nature, and the transcendent,³³ a secular rendering of Holt’s description of Christian spirituality. He laments the commonly understood delineations of sacred space (i.e., church buildings) vs. secular space (grocery stores, for example) and encourages readers to “imagine a horizontal line between the shallow and the deep. It stretches across every place and every person,”³⁴ a nod to how being attuned to God’s Presence might enable us to find spaces like the grocery store to be “thin places.” While ter Kuile’s aim is to encourage rituals and spiritual practices regardless of religion, the fact that secular disciplines mimic Christian disciplines is revealing; the intentional attention to God’s Presence leads to revelation, whether you name God or not.

Orienting Embodied, Everyday Spirituality

More than just a singular activity, spiritual disciplines are rituals repeated with the intention of deepening our awareness of God’s Presence. Practices paired with intention create space for the Holy Spirit to move within us, opening us up to inner change.³⁵ However, spiritual practices are not solely the defined disciplines upheld by religious communities and touted by spiritual writers. Today it is tempting to “compartmentalize – here, the spiritual life and here, the

³² Casper ter Kuile, *The Power of Ritual: Turning Everyday Activities into Soulful Practices* (New York: HarperOne, 2021), 25–26.

³³ ter Kuile, 23.

³⁴ ter Kuile, 28.

³⁵ Nathan Hedt, “Missional Spirituality Among Digital Natives: Technology, Spirituality and Mission in an Age of Social Media,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 47, no. 3 (December 2013): 194, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1475123199/citation/E9880A67788E430FPQ/1>.

everyday life,”³⁶ but as we have already recognized, our everyday is en-Spirited.³⁷ Creation and culture are ripe with spiritual practices as long as our attention is turned toward God and our intention aligns with God’s mission. Amy Plantinga Pauw draws our focus to this accessibility, noting that “faith is received and perceived first of all in our bodies, and God works redemptively through our bodies to create a world where creaturely bodies are celebrated and affirmed.”³⁸ What better way to live into God’s mission than to fully live as God’s creatures, oriented towards a life which honors all that God has created us to be?

If “intention, attention, and repetition”³⁹ are central to ritual and spiritual disciplines, then what makes a secular practice any different than a distinctly Christian practice? As we have examined, activities in our mundane, ordinary lives can bring people closer to God, whether they recognize God’s Presence or not. However, the practices themselves are not intrinsically spiritual practices; for that matter, traditionally recognized Christian practices of spiritual devotion do not always act on us in spiritually rich ways. A practice can bring us closer to God, regardless of whether it is religious or secular; in either case, it is our *desire* that orients our practices, and it is this orientation that determines how we are *formed* by those practices. James K. A. Smith proposes that “we are, ultimately, *liturgical animals* because we are fundamentally desiring creatures. We are what we love, and our love is shaped, primed, and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and aim our heart to certain ends.”⁴⁰ It is this aiming that sets the path of formation for our practices.

³⁶ E. Glenn Hinson, “Everyday Spirituality for Ordinary Time,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 67, no. 3 (July 2013): 269, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1476492133/abstract/CF560ED3CFAE4404PQ/1>.

³⁷ Daniel Castelo, *Pneumatology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, UK: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 73.

³⁸ Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time*, 63.

³⁹ ter Kuile, *The Power of Ritual*, 25–26.

⁴⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Cultural Liturgies 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 40.

Because we are liturgical creatures, we are constantly being formed by our habits, practices, actions, activities – whether we are conscious of this fact or not. Stated belief does not push us towards these disciplines, but rather “we are pulled by a *telos* that we desire,”⁴¹ and “our habits thus constitute the *fulcrum* of our desire: they are the hinge that ‘turns’ our heart, our love, such that it is predisposed to be aimed in certain directions.”⁴² We have the capacity to utilize our habits to intentionally aim our practices so that we grow our desire for God,⁴³ bringing us back to the “intention, attention, and repetition” of ritual, both sacred and secular.

If *telos* relates to ultimate purpose, then “the *telos* for a Christian is to become mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28);”⁴⁴ our aim should be to “place God at the center of your mental orientation toward life.”⁴⁵ The way that we do this is not through withdrawal as “God is most fundamentally found not by escaping the self, the world, or other people, but by engaging them.”⁴⁶ Therefore it is critical that we examine our secular liturgies to ascertain the *telos* that is at their center; God’s Kingdom is not found locked up in a church building but out in the world, in God’s creation. Smith highlights how “the church responds to the overwhelming cultural activation and formation of desire by trying to fill our head with ideas and beliefs,”⁴⁷ but “this is not merely ‘wrong-headed,’ [it] neglects the way humans really work.”⁴⁸

Len Hjalmarson makes a case for a missional approach to spirituality, raising the question “What if the work of formation is not just about habits and intellect, but about hearts and

⁴¹ Smith, 54.

⁴² Smith, 56.

⁴³ Smith, 71.

⁴⁴ Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality: Embodying God’s Love from the Inside Out* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 94.

⁴⁵ Helland and Hjalmarson, 136.

⁴⁶ Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 145.

⁴⁷ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 76.

⁴⁸ Len Hjalmarson, “A Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 1 (2013): 99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/193979091300600109>.

bodies?”⁴⁹ He highlights that “every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us to be a certain kind of person;”⁵⁰ this is true not only for our sacred liturgies, but secular liturgies of the body as well. It is for this reason that we must consider a missional spirituality, rooted in *missio Dei*, as a way forward in our contemporary context. A missional spirituality orients itself towards a way of life rather than a belief system,⁵¹ making itself accessible to those who seek to experience God’s Presence but are unable (or unwilling) to engage with church institutions.

⁴⁹ Hjalmarson, 98.

⁵⁰ Helland and Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality*, 170.

⁵¹ Helland and Hjalmarson, 168.

Constructing a Practical Missional Ecclesiology

missio Dei as *telos* for God's People

Karl Barth was one of the earliest theologians to speak on *missio Dei* with the understanding of mission “as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* [was expanded to] . . . Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”⁵² David Bosch built upon Barth’s concept by stating that “in its missionary activity, the church encounters a humanity and a world in which God's salvation has already been operative secretly, through the Spirit.”⁵³ Mission does not exist as a work of the Church; rather, it is God’s work that the Church is invited to participate in, and is sent into the world to do; “to say that the church is essentially missionary does not mean that mission is church-centered. It is *missio Dei*. It is trinitarian. It is mediating the love of God the Father who is the Parent of all people, whoever and wherever they may be.”⁵⁴ Lesslie Newbigin “bemoaned an ecclesio-centric (“church-centric”) view of missions and advocated a theocentric reconceptualization of mission — grounded not as an activity of the church but in God’s initiative of sending.”⁵⁵ The phrase *missio Dei* captures the fact that “mission is initiated by God and God’s mission is broader than the activities of the church,”⁵⁶ and it is through this path that we are able to conceptualize

⁵² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 399.

⁵³ Bosch, 401.

⁵⁴ Bosch, 505.

⁵⁵ Darren Cronshaw, “Missio Dei Is Missio Trinitas: Sharing the Whole Life of God, Father, Son and Spirit,” *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2020): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341699>.

⁵⁶ Nathan A. Finn and Keith S. Whitfield, “The Missional Church and Spiritual Formation,” in *Spirituality for the Sent: Casting a New Vision for the Missional Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 13.

missional spirituality, “mission as the self-unfolding of contemplation,”⁵⁷ grounded in the Church’s participation with God.⁵⁸

If humans are desiring creatures, pulled by a *telos* which orients our habits and practices, then what is the *telos* of a missional spirituality? To what end does a missional spirituality direct us? This kind of formation “is not primarily about self-improvement, spiritual disciplines, personal devotional life or even spiritual formation for our own sake . . . Christian spiritual formation happens when the human spirit is formed into Christlikeness.”⁵⁹ Therefore the *telos* for our mission does not lead to building church; *missio Dei* is oriented towards building the Kingdom of God,⁶⁰ regardless of church involvement. At its center, “a missional spirituality is an attentive and active engagement of embodied love for God and neighbor expressed from the inside out.”⁶¹ When considering the practicalities of missional spirituality, “contemplation and mission are two sides of a coin, two tracks that find their unity in the being of God.”⁶² It’s not a matter of either or – it’s both and. Nathan Finn and Keith Whitfield offer three statements to understanding how we are to interpret the term *missional*: “Being missional means living directed by the mission of God . . . living a life shaped by the mission of God . . . and living sent on the mission of God;”⁶³ focusing on God’s mission with intention, attention, and repetition, allowing *missio Dei* to be the *telos* for one’s habits and actions. Missional spirituality will both form us in habits of mission as well as feed us spiritually through the community of mission,⁶⁴ community formed in the image of God, the Trinity.

⁵⁷ Hjalmarson, “A Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 93.

⁵⁸ Cronshaw, “Missio Dei Is Missio Trinitas,” 131.

⁵⁹ Helland and Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality*, 26.

⁶⁰ William Whitmore and Andrew Parker, “Towards a Theology of Sports Chaplaincy,” *Practical Theology* 13, no. 5 (September 2, 2020): 494, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2020.1730566>.

⁶¹ Helland and Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality*, 31.

⁶² Hjalmarson, “A Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 100.

⁶³ Finn and Whitfield, “The Missional Church and Spiritual Formation,” 17–18.

⁶⁴ Helland and Hjalmarson, *Missional Spirituality*, 27.

A critical component of *missio Dei* is the recognition that the Church is invited to *participate* in God's mission; that does not mean the Church *oversees* God's mission, or that God's mission is *solely* the responsibility of the Church.⁶⁵ The Church is commissioned: co-commissioned. The Church, God's People, are invited to work cooperatively alongside the Holy Spirit, living into the great commission. Jesus commanded the disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you,"⁶⁶ primarily to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . [and] love your neighbor as yourself."⁶⁷ We are not commanded to take ownership for converting people's hearts, we are not commanded to act as judge over people's actions, and we are not commanded to sign-up as many people for our churches as we can. A missional spirituality will go out into the world, interact with "all nations," and serve as a living witness to God's love through our own love of each other. Intentionally orienting our own practices towards God's mission does not mean our participation in secular culture has a goal of converting people: that is God's work, not ours. It *does* mean that we are called to participate, engaging with others and with creation to the glory of God. Missional evangelism is not coercive or argumentative; it is the act of living in the world for God.

Empowering Lay People Through a Practical Missional Ecclesiology

This interpretation of *missio Dei* reorients the Church, creating the need for a new understanding of ecclesiology. Our identity as Church is understood as being "rooted in the life of God. Mission is not a secondary, optional, and derivative thing that churches do once they

⁶⁵ Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time*, 39.

⁶⁶ Matthew 28:19-20a (NRSVue)

⁶⁷ Matthew 22:37,39 (NRSVue)

have the main thing down.”⁶⁸ The Church is not a place or ideology; “the church becomes the hermeneutic of the gospel.”⁶⁹ Church is oriented to bringing about the Kingdom of God, which is not an era or a place but “a *way of life*, a constellation of loves and longing and beliefs bundled up in communal rhythms, routines, and rituals”⁷⁰ which bring each of us closer to God.

What does this understanding of Church mean for our church institutions and the work they do to further *missio Dei*? Rather than placing ourselves in “an ontological middle position between God and creation,”⁷¹ the Church must recognize that our organizations and buildings should be used as tools for *missio Dei*; our “church life is a site of training in wisdom”⁷² and “Christian worship is . . . the training ground for a *sent* people whose *missio* will take them into the contested space of market and elections, corporations and council halls.”⁷³ Living into God’s mission is not solely the work of clergy or religious institutions; rather, “mission is ministry by the whole people of God, or the ‘apostolate of the laity’ sent into the everyday life of their world.”⁷⁴ Our ecclesiology must prioritize forming lay people for mission as God calls us all, together, as a community, to live into *missio Dei*.⁷⁵

The ways that our church institutions proceed with this ecclesiology must be led by the Spirit and contextualized for different mission fields,⁷⁶ requiring intention, attention, and repetition. To this point, it is crucial to recognize that our contemporary cultural context in the United States has “seen a major shift from hierarchies to networks as a primary organizational

⁶⁸ Hjalmarson, “A Trinitarian Spirituality of Mission,” 106–7.

⁶⁹ Hjalmarson, 108.

⁷⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, Cultural Liturgies 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 19.

⁷¹ Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time*, 26.

⁷² Pauw, 15.

⁷³ Smith, *Awaiting the King*, 96.

⁷⁴ Cronshaw, “Missio Dei Is Missio Trinitas,” 135.

⁷⁵ Cronshaw, 136.

⁷⁶ Craig Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America*, ed. Dwight J. Zscheile (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2018), 256.

paradigm.”⁷⁷ It is no wonder that people in their 30s and 40s struggle with the hierarchical nature of our church institutions. Traditional church hierarchy, developed from a Christological perspective, “tends to be solitary, hierarchical, and male.”⁷⁸ But by approaching our ecclesiology with *missio Dei* in mind, we are challenged to reorient our structure in a trinitarian fashion, a structure which can “move in a more inclusive, participatory, collaborative direction”⁷⁹ which creates space for lay people to be empowered in ministry.

By equipping lay people for mission, we acknowledge the incarnational nature of our faith; not only do we worship and proclaim God in our religious lives, but also in our mundane relationships and encounters.⁸⁰ This is the direction our ecclesiology must take. The work of *missio Dei* is not the work of individual people, but the work of the Church. We are to be formed as a community, for “*spiritual lives require spiritual communities*: attendance, participation, and involvement clearly do matter for shaping spiritual and religious practice.”⁸¹ It is not enough to offer formation so that our lay people can go to their individual lives and practice piety on their own. We are to provide opportunities for lay people to be formed so that they can be sent from our church communities into the larger community that is God’s creation.

Some may argue that with finite financial and human resources, our efforts would be best spent drawing folks into our communities, welcoming them in so that together we can build up our churches. They lament, “how will we ever reverse church decline if we aren’t focusing on bringing new people, and younger people, into our faith?” At the very least, shouldn’t we “reach

⁷⁷ Van Gelder, 304.

⁷⁸ Van Gelder, 305.

⁷⁹ Van Gelder, 305.

⁸⁰ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “Ethnography in Theology: A Work in Process,” in *Lived Theology: New Perspectives on Method, Style, and Pedagogy*, ed. Charles Marsh, Peter Slade, and Sarah Azaransky (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 120.

⁸¹ Van Gelder, *Participating in God’s Mission: A Theological Missiology for the Church in America*, 228.

the margins and find ways to keep the margins connected to the center”?⁸² This is a tempting approach, but as we have previously explored, these margins “can have a life and purpose of their own that refuse to be brought ‘in’ or ‘back’.”⁸³ This is not a new revelation, and one only has to look as far as the Gospels to see how we might approach this challenge. Jesus did not seek to find those at the margins and bring them back to the synagogue to join in with Jewish life. His ministry was outward-focused, and so must ours be. It is time that we redirect the efforts of our churches and “turn them into schools of love . . . let love radiate outward to the community and to the world. Was that not Jesus’ vision?”⁸⁴

⁸² Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, *Emerging Church, Vol. 2*, 2:xxix.

⁸³ Shoemaker, Schneider, and Alvizo, 2:xxix.

⁸⁴ Hinson, “Everyday Spirituality for Ordinary Time,” 280.

Decluttering as Spiritual Practice: A Case Study

Context for the Decluttering Movement

My initial exploration into implementing a missional approach to ecclesiology is rooted in my own personal experience as one of Marie Kondo's Certified KonMari Consultants. Since early in my practice, the spiritual implications of this work have been glaringly obvious to me and were a natural starting point for ethnographic study. The KonMari Method is a decluttering process developed by Kondo which asks people to imagine their ideal lifestyle, then evaluate the items that they own with that vision as a hermeneutic. The method promotes the message that we should only keep items which fit into our vision for our lives as those are items that "spark joy," and items that do not serve our vision should be discarded. Kondo offers specific steps to guide this process, including an order for examining items which guides people from less challenging objects to the most challenging objects.

This organizational method is just one pathway in a maze of organizational and productivity advice. Makeover television shows, social media and influencer culture, and an industry of self-help books are evidence of a deep cultural desire for control over the accumulation of things our capitalistic society values. Journalist Jennifer Howard explores the history of decluttering movements in her work *Clutter: An Untidy History*. While her objective is far more documentary investigation than theological reflection, she reveals that she has "been intrigued by the hunger for spiritual cleansing that has gone hand in hand with the latest minimalist outbreak in the United States and beyond. Today's minimalist gurus turn the quest for fewer things into something close to religion."⁸⁵ Theologian Christy Lang Hearlson notes that the decluttering movement "is occurring amid rising interest in the *spiritual dimensions of*

⁸⁵ Jennifer Howard, *Clutter: An Untidy History* (Cleveland, OH: Belt Publishing, 2020), 92.

mundane domestic life.”⁸⁶ Through my own observations in working with clients, there is a deeply spiritual aspect to the work of decluttering, though it is not, as Lang Hearlson asserts, as simple as “what matters . . . is ourselves and the present moment.”⁸⁷

Anecdotally, I have worked with dozens of people and have observed their desire to focus on the people and experiences that bring meaning to their life, if only they could get past the disorganization and clutter that keeps them from what they want in life. Howard notes that “a therapist described clutter to me as ‘delayed decisions,’ a phrase that neatly sums up that sense of overwhelm and paralysis that sets in when people cannot or will not deal with what they’ve accumulated.”⁸⁸ This accurately reflects the observations that I have of my own clients who often struggle to articulate what is most important to them at the beginning of the process. I am struck by the parallels that I see between my clients’ inability to describe meaning and the observation of NSYR researchers who noted that Millennials were unable to articulate their faith.

Howard also observes that “the never-ending war on clutter represents a hunger to find or create order out of the unpredictable chaos of life.”⁸⁹ While the constructed order of religious participation is certainly not a cure-all for all spiritual seeking, I do wonder if this desire for order in our physical space is a result of the pendulum swinging far away from religious order, ultimately resulting in people seeking spiritual structure through decluttering. Without a clearly defined *telos*, is the need to declutter an outward manifestation of a rudderless drift into liturgical practices of consumption?

⁸⁶ Christy Lang Hearlson, “The Invention of Clutter and the New Spiritual Discipline of Decluttering,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 25, no. 2 (2021): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2020-0062> (emphasis mine).

⁸⁷ Lang Hearlson, 237.

⁸⁸ Howard, *Clutter*, 34.

⁸⁹ Howard, 137.

The perspective Lang Hearlson brings to the subject of decluttering is the perspective of an academic outsider observing a cultural phenomenon, not as someone active and engaged in the community who has had firsthand experience with the spiritual dimensions of this work. Her narrow perspective on who engages in this work (affluent women) and why they engage in this work (guilt, shame, and justifying consumerism) leads to an unhelpful construction of spiritual practice. As someone who is on the ground participating in this work, I can see elements of her observations at play in my practice, but there are much deeper dimensions to this work that she simply doesn't see. My desire to explore the spiritual dimensions of this work from a practitioner's perspective led me to interviewing six other Certified KonMari Consultants about their experiences working with clients to identify what (if anything) about the work of decluttering is spiritually meaningful, regardless of religious affiliation or orientation for its practitioners.

Personal Experiences of Certified KonMari Consultants

The interviewees represented a diverse group of perspectives whose spiritual and religious backgrounds were varied.⁹⁰ Prior to each interview,⁹¹ interviewees completed a survey which included “scales to measure the strength of spirituality and religiosity”⁹² as utilized in the Fetzer Institute's 2020 “Study of Spirituality in the United States.” While each interviewee clearly demonstrated how they tailor their approach with their own personal style, they were nearly unanimous in their belief that this work is spiritually meaningful, both for their clients and for themselves as consultants. Common themes across all the interviews included how the decluttering process can serve as a way to process grief and loss, that the process often leads to

⁹⁰ See Appendix C for a “Summary of Interviewee Demographics.”

⁹¹ See Appendix A for the complete “Interview Protocol.”

⁹² Selzler, Gonda, and Mohammed, “Study of Spirituality in the United States,” 10.

transformation beyond the physical space, and how working with clients contributes to a sense of purpose or calling for the consultants.

The motivations for why a client might hire a Certified KonMari Consultant are varied, but common to most clients is the desire to physically declutter their spaces while also changing their habits and routines to support maintaining a decluttered space long-term. Clients commonly experience a sense of overwhelm for their situation, and many are driven to seek help because of circumstances which arise from life transitions, grief, or past trauma. While many professional organizing methods may focus on specific styles of categorization or storage, the KonMari Method specifically names life transformation as its goal. Marie Kondo claims that “a dramatic reorganization of the home causes correspondingly dramatic changes in lifestyle and perspective. It is life transforming,”⁹³ centering personal change as the practice’s purpose. The physical decluttering process is simply the mechanism for facilitating this transformation.

Certified KonMari Consultants recognize that some clients are more open to this transformation than others; not all clients are ready to “go deeper,” but for those who are, spiritual moments and connections are common. Interviewees identified several factors which might contribute to helping their clients open themselves to a deeper level of spirituality: connecting the work at hand to the client’s vision for their life, “taking the journey from their head to their heart”⁹⁴ and naming feelings and emotions as they surface, and “actually listening . . . [showing] up for [clients] as someone who is genuinely compassionate.”⁹⁵ Some interviewees empathetically share their own experiences as a way to foster camaraderie and a sense of

⁹³ Marie Kondō, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2014), 2–3.

⁹⁴ “Annie,” KMC Interview #5, interview by Lindsey Hardegree, Zoom, July 5, 2023, transcript.

⁹⁵ Melissa Klug, KMC Interview #6, interview by Lindsey Hardegree, Zoom, July 24, 2023, transcript.

community; most named practices of self-reflection and gratitude as particularly useful for connecting in these more spiritual moments.

Outside of their KonMari work, interviewees nearly universally identified relationships with others, nature, and gratitude practices as primary spiritual activities. A few identified religious communities as a part of their spirituality, but just as many identified past religious trauma as a reason they were not currently involved in a religious community. One interviewee who does not actively participate in religion views their work with their clients as a primary way that God shows up in their life, noting that “I’m helping people have a home that supports their spirituality, their interactions with the community, their ability to have time to volunteer, go to church or take care of their kids or whatever spiritual means to them.”⁹⁶

The one respondent who did not identify as spiritual or religious was the sole interviewee who did not explicitly claim this practice as spiritually meaningful, though they did identify the altruistic nature of the work as personally meaningful, noting that they are seeking the “high” they get from helping someone. Interestingly, when asked “Where are you finding meaning in your own life?” this person responded “I’m roadblocked on this . . . I’ve been roadblocked on what I actually want for the past few years.” It may be that those consultants who have personally explored their own spirituality more fully may be more inclined to identify this work as spiritually meaningful, though additional research is needed to confirm this assumption.

Identifying Elements of Missional Spirituality

Two-thirds of the interviewees identified as religious to some degree and through our conversations I identified that Christianity is the core religious belief of these people, though specific traditions varied. All these interviewees named that God is at work in their relationships

⁹⁶ “Kandace,” KMC Interview #2, interview by Lindsey Hardegree, Zoom, June 1, 2023, transcript.

with clients in some way. For example, when reflecting on the vulnerability that clients have with their consultant, one responded that they “feel privileged that God put me in that place that I can do that,”⁹⁷ and described how they think this is when the Holy Spirit is present. Recognition of God’s Presence, paired with a sense of calling around helping people, led several interviewees to use words such as “vocation” and “discernment” to describe their work with clients. In secular settings we might anticipate a focus on “purpose” or “passion,” or even the KonMari-favored term “vision,” but these interviewees used terms often utilized in Christian spiritual formation.

Several interviewees noted that when they learn they have a client who shares their religious tradition, they may use religious language or invite practices such as prayer into their sessions with those clients. One interviewee recalled a specific instance of incorporating the spirituality of decluttering into a conversation about Lenten practices with a client:

On Ash Wednesday I had a client, and I had been to mass, and I had ashes on my forehead. And I was at her house, and she was like, “Oh, it's Lent, I need to think of something to give up for Lent.” And as we were working, at one point she started berating herself, saying “oh, I'm so stupid.” We talk to ourselves more than anyone else, and we need to treat ourselves with the same love that we would treat other people with. I thought it was a powerful moment for me to be able to coach her there. I said, “you were looking for something to give up for Lent. And I noticed you're struggling with negative self-talk. Let's let go of that.”⁹⁸

Another interviewee noted that they call on God specifically during their sessions with clients, saying “Lord, help me understand how you want me to guide this person; show me what’s going on here. Show me how you want me to lead them . . . or if I need to remain silent, help me to understand that too.”⁹⁹

While the *telos* of decluttering practices might not inherently point towards God, the intention of these specific practitioners indicates that they are “plac[ing] God at the center of

⁹⁷ Kati Carrapa, KMC Interview #1, interview by Lindsey Hardegree, Zoom, May 20, 2023, transcript.

⁹⁸ “Laura,” KMC Interview #3, interview by Lindsey Hardegree, Zoom, June 9, 2023, transcript, paraphrase.

⁹⁹ “Annie,” KMC Interview #5.

[their] mental orientation,”¹⁰⁰ thus reorienting a seemingly secular practice to engage with others¹⁰¹ missionally. These practitioners intentionally attune their understanding of a secular practice towards God. By infusing the ritualistic intention, attention, and repetition of the KonMari Method with a missional mindset, these interviewees are demonstrating that “as we practice our love of God with our talents, we intentionally channel and use our physical energy and capacities as *servants* of God.”¹⁰² These interviewees are embodying practices of *missio Dei* in their everyday lives, clearly operating outside of any institutional church efforts but firmly rooted in God’s universal Church.

¹⁰⁰ Helland and Hjalmanson, *Missional Spirituality*, 136.

¹⁰¹ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 145.

¹⁰² Helland and Hjalmanson, *Missional Spirituality*, 167.

Innovating Pedagogy for Lay Ministry

An Apology for Lay Missional Training

Ministry in mundane spaces is by its very nature contextual. Just as Lang Hearlson¹⁰³ cannot fully engage with the spiritual complexities of the KonMari Method as an outsider, understanding the spirituality of any secular space is an undertaking best made by people who are active participants in that space. Rather than expending our efforts training clergy to intervene in entirely new settings or engaging in a mass marketing attempt at broad conversion, we need to consider that our best resource to engage this mission field may be the people in our churches who are already participating in these communities organically. That said, many Christians might not explicitly understand their role in God's mission. It's not that Christians have stopped participating and serving in the larger secular community; it's that people might not draw the connection between their faith and these activities, so they fail to recognize their actions as motivated by their beliefs.¹⁰⁴ It's as though they have lost any sense of *telos* in their actions, but with formation and intention the laity are uniquely poised to further *missio Dei* in their everyday lives.

Our lay people are already participating in the decluttering movement, engaging in the CrossFit community, attending sci-fi and fantasy conventions, and numerous other mundane contexts where unchurched people are finding meaning and spiritual fulfillment. Exploring a wide variety of experiences and spaces where unchurched people are experiencing something larger than themselves would be an impossible task for a single church leader to complete; this is not a one-time undertaking for a priest, a vestry, or a committee. When one considers the ways in

¹⁰³ Lang Hearlson, "Invention of Clutter."

¹⁰⁴ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 9.

which individual churchgoers are situated in their own lives and secular experiences, one can see that all members of the Body of Christ have the potential to observe and participate in these mundane experiences and places. Lay people are uniquely positioned within the ecclesiology of our church institutions to live into *missio Dei* in their everyday lives, but they lack the skills and confidence to engage missionally.¹⁰⁵ So how can we equip the Church's largest order, the laity, as ministers for this missional work?

Pedagogical Aims for Curriculum

The NSYR noted that “teens who report regular discussions in the household about God, prayer, scripture, or other religious things are much more likely to stay religious themselves over time. We think this measure is likely capturing how faith is integrated into daily living and routines in some households.”¹⁰⁶ It may be that integrating spiritual practices into our lives serves as a key contributor towards maintaining faith in general. A primary aim for this curriculum is to help workshop participants connect their faith to their everyday life through habits, routines, and intentional practices, acknowledging that our missional formation should highlight this integration clearly. The workshop is not intended to give participants a list of new disciplines to explore, but rather to tease out existing habits and practices to discern the *telos* of those activities. As previously noted, Christians may struggle to draw the connection between their beliefs and their behavior,¹⁰⁷ so illumination and discernment are pedagogical priorities.

The course outline¹⁰⁸ is designed to lead workshop participants through a discernment path: (1) identify what your spirituality looks like outside of church settings, (2) articulate your

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix G for my Theory of Change.

¹⁰⁶ Denton, *Back-Pocket God*, 188.

¹⁰⁷ Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix F for the course outline utilized in the pilot implementation.

call or vocation, (3) understand distinctions between the vocations of each holy order as context for defining lay participation in *missio Dei*, (4) explore your individual habits, practices, and activities as they relate to *missio Dei*, and (5) name communities you are involved in so that we can live into *missio Dei* as the Church. A successful implementation of this workshop will result in participants having a deeper understanding of their role in *missio Dei* and an articulated trust of God's Presence in this work. Inherent to *missio Dei* is the acknowledgement that this is God's mission, not our own, and it is fulfilled in and through God, not in or through our own actions. Our role as lay people is to live in the world for God.

In addition to guided questions, workshop participants are provided with select materials¹⁰⁹ to aid in their exploration and examination; in particular, spiritual practices observed in the Fetzer Institute's "Study of Spirituality in the United States" and the six themes of spiritual communities observed in the Sacred Design Lab's "How We Gather" report provide suggestions that may assist workshop participants in identifying secular spaces and practices in their own lives as spiritually meaningful. It is intentional that these resources come from reports generated through observing secular spirituality, not established religious traditions.

Limitations and Challenges of Pilot Implementation

Over the course of the pilot implementation, I was able to evaluate how effective the material was at communicating *missio Dei* to participants. However, this pilot was extremely limited; attendance was low for all Lenten classes presented at this time, and over the course of the five-week period, no participants attended every class. Final feedback was also limited,¹¹⁰ but comparing responses to similar questions from the demographics survey did demonstrate that

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix F for all handouts and presentation slides presented in the pilot implementation.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix E for feedback survey protocol and a summary of responses.

several goals of the curriculum were achieved to some degree. Participants more clearly articulated areas of personal spirituality outside of the church, indicated a more robust understanding of purpose or calling, and identified existing habits and activities where they might live into *missio Dei*. Feedback did not indicate an understanding of how intentional participation in secular communities can help participants further *missio Dei*; this material was covered in the final class which did not have any attendees. Additional development will be necessary for future implementation of this curriculum with larger groups.

I originally envisioned this curriculum taking on a cohort-based approach which would convene space for lay people undertaking this effort to not only articulate their personal spirituality, but also collaborate (and commiserate) with each other around their shared experiences of intentionally living *missio Dei* in their extra-church communities. This pilot was implemented as a seasonal workshop; as such, it did not pilot the community aspect that is envisioned for a larger implementation of this material. Additional development will be required to adapt the existing curriculum for a cohort model, and there may be additional resources identified for supporting lay people in this work long-term.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have demonstrated that spiritually meaningful experiences are not only possible outside of our church institutions, but that the very future of those institutions may depend on the Church's ability to embrace these same experiences. I have reevaluated the secularity of contemporary society, particularly the activities of Millennials, as an expression of embodied, everyday spirituality which follows consistent forms and structures to traditionally religious spiritual practices. This paper has provided an argument for a missional reorientation of our ecclesiology to educate and form the laity to participate in *missio Dei* outside the structures of our church institutions. The mission field is ripe for lay engagement, as demonstrated through the presented case study with Certified KonMari Consultants, and the pedagogical approach presented in this paper provides a path forward to form and empower lay people to live into God's mission in their own lives.

At the outset of this examination, I posed the question: Can the ministry of lay people bridge the gap between our increasingly declining church institutions and the robust spiritual expressions of people outside those institutions? By pivoting our approach to embrace *missio Dei* in lay formation, I believe the answer is a resounding yes. We are created in the image of a creative and playful God. Delighting in all of God's creation should not be seen as the threat that many church institutions make contemporary society out to be. Secular spaces are not the enemy – they are an opportunity. They provide a chance for the Church to live into *missio Dei* in expansive, creative, adaptive ways. They offer a new way for us to experience the inbreaking of the Holy Spirit and love each other as Christ commanded.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

This appendix describes the methods used to identify or recruit research participants and collect interview and survey data analyzed in this paper.

Personal Interviews with Certified KonMari Consultants

Interviewee Identification

Certified KonMari Consultants are located all over the world and most intra-community communication is conducted virtually through social media. I have been a member of this community since March 2019 and have developed relationships with many of my fellow consultants which were initially instigated through social media. I leaned on these personal relationships to identify consultants that I anticipated would be open and candid in interviews, had what I perceived to be varying degrees of spiritual/religious affinity, and had been actively practicing the KonMari Method for at least two or three years. KonMari Media, Inc., the certifying organization for Certified KonMari Consultants, uses a tiered certification system primarily based on contact hours with clients, and I intentionally reached out to consultants who were at minimum a Bronze level consultant (meaning they had reported at least 150 contact hours with clients), with most interviewees being Gold (minimum 600 hours), Platinum (minimum 900 hours), or Master (minimum 1,500 hours) level consultants.¹¹¹ I intentionally wanted to speak with consultants who were seasoned practitioners, people who had worked with enough clients that they would have a variety of experiences to draw from and would be able to speak to these deeper aspects of client relationships. Ultimately, I reached out to ten consultants via email using the following template; of these, six completed interviews:

¹¹¹ KonMari Media, Inc., “What Are the Levels of Consultants? | Consultant FAQ’s,” KonMari, accessed March 15, 2024, <https://shop.konmari.com/pages/consultant-faq>.

Subject: Request to Participate in My Doctoral Research

As you may be aware, I am currently completing a doctoral degree through Emory University. We are entering the research phase of our program, and I'm hoping I might be able to schedule a one hour Zoom interview with you as a part of my research.

I believe that the work that we do as KonMari consultants can be a great source of spiritual support for the clients that we work with. Our role as a listening presence, someone who holds space for our clients, can at times be deeply spiritual for ourselves and our clients. As a part of my research, I'd like to gather the experiences of other consultants to share what this work is like.

I'm seeking to conduct these interviews over the next 8 weeks and I would be grateful for your participation in this research! If you agree, I will send you a Calendly link so that you can schedule your interview time, and before your interview I'll also need you to e-sign an informed consent form and complete a quick demographics survey.

Thank you for your consideration and the great work that you do with your clients to help live joyful lives!

Interviewees were not compensated for their participation in this study. I personally provided a \$10 Starbucks e-gift card to each interviewee as a thank you after each completed interview.

Interview Protocol

I conducted six semi-structured interviews via Zoom between May 20, 2023, and July 24, 2023. Prior to their interview, each interviewee completed an electronic consent form (see Appendix B) and an electronic demographics survey (see Appendix C). Interviews were 50-60 minutes and used the following list of questions:

- Biographical
 - What got you started working with clients using the KonMari Method?
- Personal Spiritual
 - What do you find meaningful in this work?
 - What is it about this work that sparks joy for you?
 - Does this work nourish you spiritually in some way?
- Communal Spiritual
 - What are the words that you use to describe that dimension of your experience as a consultant?
 - Tell me a story that captures what you've been sharing.
 - What do you think makes these moments happen?
 - What combination of factors are present to create these moments?

- Non-KonMari
 - What feeds your soul?
 - Where do you go for spiritual fulfillment?
 - If religious:
 - Where do you experience God?*
 - How do you experience God?*

If the interviewee introduced religion or faith into the conversation, I asked additional questions (indicated with an asterisk) and used religious language to match theirs.

Interviews were recorded (with consent) for record-keeping purposes, and transcripts were generated by first uploading these recorded videos to the Notta.AI¹¹² transcription service, then editing the AI-generated transcript for style and content. Transcripts were loaded into NotebookLM¹¹³ and ATLAS.ti¹¹⁴ software systems to assist in identifying common themes.

Pilot Implementation of “Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life” Curriculum

Pilot Implementation Protocol

The pilot implementation of the “Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life” curriculum took place in the Walthour Library at the Cathedral of St. Philip (Atlanta, GA) from February 21, 2024, to March 20, 2024. No pre-registration was required for the workshop, and workshop participants were not required to be affiliated with the Cathedral through membership or any other formal relationship. Participants completed a paper consent form (see Appendix B) and a paper demographics survey (see Appendix D) at the beginning of their first class session. Three participants joined in Class 1, four additional participants joined in Class 2, and one additional participant joined in Class 4. Each class lasted approximately 60 minutes and followed the course outline (see Appendix F) as guided by handouts and presentation slides; this structure

¹¹² Notta.AI, accessed May 1, 2023, <https://www.notta.ai/en>.

¹¹³ NotebookLM, accessed February 28, 2024, <https://notebooklm.google/>.

¹¹⁴ ATLAS.ti, accessed February 28, 2024, <https://atlasti.com/>.

allowed flexibility for extended discussions. While not explicitly excluded from this workshop, there were no clergy in attendance on any date; all participants and the workshop leader (myself) are lay.

Recruiting Workshop Participants

The workshop was one of four offerings by the Cathedral to be offered on Wednesday evenings over a five-week period during the liturgical season of Lent, with a light supper option preceding classes and free childcare available to all participants.¹¹⁵ The Cathedral's marketing efforts for this series included weekly emails in the month preceding Lent and all throughout the five-week period, mentions on social media platforms, information listed on the website and in printed newsletters, signage in the physical space, and word of mouth. The following description was used in marketing efforts to describe this workshop:

“Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life” Workshop with Lindsey

Hardegree

Walthour Library

You may have sensed God's Presence at church, in nature, or doing outreach, but what about the rest of your life? Have you noticed the Holy Spirit at the office? In your running group? During game night with your friends? Join us for a five-week workshop to discern the ways the Holy Spirit is moving in your life and how your ordinary, everyday activities further God's mission.¹¹⁶

Curriculum Development

The materials in the curriculum result from my extensive reading and analysis of related literature as well as my own personal experiences and ethnographic research. Overarching course goals are outlined in my Theory/Theology of Change (see Appendix G). To aid in creating a

¹¹⁵ Cathedral of St. Philip, “Wednesday Evenings in Lent,” accessed February 6, 2024, <https://www.cathedralatl.org/education/lenten-program/>.

¹¹⁶ Cathedral of St. Philip.

concise and streamlined course outline, portions of the curriculum result from analyzing my extensive personal notes using the NotebookLM¹¹⁷ software system.

¹¹⁷ NotebookLM.

Appendix B: Consent Forms

This appendix includes copies of consent forms provided to research participants described in Appendix A. Consent forms were provided electronically for personal interviews and were provided in-person for workshop participants.

Exploring Spirituality

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. I hope to learn about the ways that different people experience their spirituality outside of a church environment. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you might participate in an activity which can be considered spiritual by some people.

If you decide to participate, Lindsey will ask you about your personal spirituality and spiritually meaningful experiences in your life. The interview can be as short or as long as you wish. You can exit the interview at any time without any alteration in your relationship with any member of the research team or any prejudice with your relationship with Emory University.

Your participation in this study will support the study of different ways that people experience spirituality. However, you will not personally receive any benefits from this research. While the risks associated with participation are negligible, there may be unknown risks related to participation that we cannot anticipate.

Any information that we obtain in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Should you choose not to remain anonymous, please see the second page addendum to waive anonymity.

For purposes of our own data gathering, the video and audio of your interview may be recorded and transcribed. Please indicate your consent to be recorded by signing the box below.

Consent to be recorded

Signature

Date

If you have questions about this study, you can contact researcher Lindsey Hardegree at 404.565.3813 or lindsey.hardegree@emory.edu.

Please indicate that you have been given a copy of this consent form by checking the box below.

I have been provided with a copy of this consent form.

Consent to participate in the study

Signature

Date

Printed name

Addendum: Waiver of Anonymity

While our commitment by default is to protect the anonymity of research subjects, we also acknowledge that for some the primary benefit of participation in this study will be the public promotion of their spiritual experiences and beliefs. Thus, this project allows for the waiver of anonymity. With this waiver, however, there are attendant risks. The primary risk that we can anticipate is reputational. You may choose to share sensitive information about experiences that you or others have participated in, and this information would be shared in published findings. The probability of this risk is negligible and the degree of potential harm is also low. If these risks would apply to you, however, it is advised that you do not waive your right to anonymity. If you agree to waive anonymity, please sign below.

Consent to waive anonymity

Signature

Date

Printed name

Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. I hope to learn about the ways that different people experience their spirituality outside of a church environment. You were selected as a possible participant in this study through your participation in the “Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life” workshop at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, GA held in February and March of 2024.

If you decide to participate in this workshop, Lindsey will ask you about your personal spirituality and spiritually meaningful experiences in your life. You can exit the workshop at any time without any alteration in your relationship with any member of the research team or any prejudice with your relationship with Emory University.

Your participation in this study will support the study of different ways that people experience spirituality. However, you will not personally receive any benefits from this research. While the risks associated with participation are negligible, there may be unknown risks related to participation that we cannot anticipate.

Any information that we obtain in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Should you choose not to remain anonymous, please see the second page addendum to waive anonymity.

Please indicate that you have been given a copy of this consent form by checking the box below.

I have been provided with a copy of this consent form.

Consent to participate in the study

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Addendum: Waiver of Anonymity

While our commitment by default is to protect the anonymity of research subjects, we also acknowledge that for some the primary benefit of participation in this study will be the public promotion of their spiritual experiences and beliefs. Thus, this project allows for the waiver of anonymity. With this waiver, however, there are attendant risks. The primary risk that we can anticipate is reputational. You may choose to share sensitive information about experiences that you or others have participated in, and this information would be shared in published findings. The probability of this risk is negligible and the degree of potential harm is also low. If these risks would apply to you, however, it is advised that you do not waive your right to anonymity. If you agree to waive anonymity, please sign below.

Consent to waive anonymity

Signature

Printed Name

Date

Appendix C: Demographics for Personal Interviews with Certified KonMari Consultants

This appendix includes questions from the demographics survey collected from interviewees described in Appendix A as well as a summary of the responses received. Interviewees were emailed a link to the Google Form of this demographics survey prior to their interview. They were told that the only required fields were their name and email address.

Demographics Survey Questions

Title: Demographics Survey for Research Interviews

Description: This survey is intended for participants in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. If you have questions about this survey you can contact Lindsey Hardegree at lindsey.hardegree@emory.edu.

- Email
- Your Name
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is your race/ethnicity?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- What is your relationship status?
 - Divorced
 - Married
 - Never Married
 - Separated
 - Widowed
 - Other: _____
- Do you have children?
- Are there other factors you consider important to your identity? If so, please detail below.
- How long have you worked with clients using the KonMari Method?
- Employment *Please check all that apply.*
 - Full-Time KonMari
 - Part-Time KonMari
 - Full-Time Employed (non-KonMari)
 - Part Time Employed (non-KonMari)
 - Other: _____
- Spirituality & Religion¹¹⁸

	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not At All
To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?				
To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?				
- When you were growing up, what was your religion, if any?
- What is your present religion, if any?
- Additional Comments

¹¹⁸ Selzler, Gonda, and Mohammed, "Study of Spirituality in the United States," 10.

Summary of Interviewee Demographics

The consultants I interviewed were all in their mid-30s to late 40s, and self-identified themselves as follows: Four identify their race as white, one identifies as black, and one identifies as Chinese. Five identify as women and one identifies as a man; they all identify as heterosexual. Half are married, one is divorced, and two have never been married. Two have children while the rest do not have children. They all reside in the United States, though one is an immigrant from Germany. All these respondents have worked as Certified KonMari Consultants for at least three years, with most of them working in this capacity for more than six years. Half of them consider this work to be their full-time employment; the others do this work part-time (with one of those people also full-time employed outside this field).

Before each interview, I asked respondents to evaluate their own levels of spirituality and religiosity. The responses on spirituality were heavily weighted towards participation, with two-thirds considering themselves to be very spiritual, one identifying as slightly spiritual, and one identifying as not at all spiritual. The responses on religiosity were more varied: one identified as very religious, two moderately religious, one slightly religious, and two not at all religious. I also asked what, if any, their religion was growing up. Half responded Catholic, one responded Baptist, one responded German Baptist, and one responded none.

Appendix D: Demographics for Pilot Implementation of Curriculum

This appendix includes questions from the demographics survey collected from workshop participants described in Appendix A as well as a summary of the responses received. Workshop participants were given a paper copy of this demographics survey at the beginning of their first class. They were told that the only required fields were their name and email address. Entries were later entered into an online Google Form for record-keeping purposes.

Demographics Survey Questions

Title: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life: Demographics Survey

Description: This survey is intended for participants in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. If you have questions about this survey you can contact Lindsey Hardegree at lindsey.hardegree@emory.edu.

- Your Name
- Your Email
- Demographics
 - What is your age?
 - What is your gender?
 - What is your race/ethnicity?
 - What is your sexual orientation?
 - What is your relationship status?
 - Divorced
 - Married
 - Never Married
 - Separated
 - Widowed
 - Other: _____
 - Do you have children? If so, what are their ages?
 - Are there other factors you consider important to your identity? If so, please detail below.
- Spirituality & Religion¹¹⁹

To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not At All
To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?				
To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?				

¹¹⁹ Selzler, Gonda, and Mohammed, 10.

- When you were growing up, what was your religion, if any?
- Where do you experience God?
- How do you experience God?
- Where do you go for spiritual fulfillment?
- What feeds your soul?
- How would you articulate your personal call or purpose with living into God's mission?
- Additional Thoughts/Comments/Questions

Summary of Participant Demographics

Figure D.1 Workshop Participant Self-Reported Demographics*

	<i>N</i>		<i>N</i>
Gender		Sexual Orientation	
Female	7	Heterosexual/Straight	7
Male	1	N/A	1
Age Generation		Relationship Status	
37-40 Millennials	3	Married	4
57 Generation X	3	Never Married	3
60-71 Baby Boomers	2	Widowed	1
Race/Ethnicity		Children	
Caucasian/White	7	Yes [^]	5
Black	1	No	1
		N/A	1
Childhood Religion		(no answer)	1
Baptist	1		
Catholic	1	Other Identity Factors:	
Episcopalian	2	caregiver, friend, mother,	
Lutheran	1	photographer, teacher, wife	
Presbyterian	2		
N/A	1		

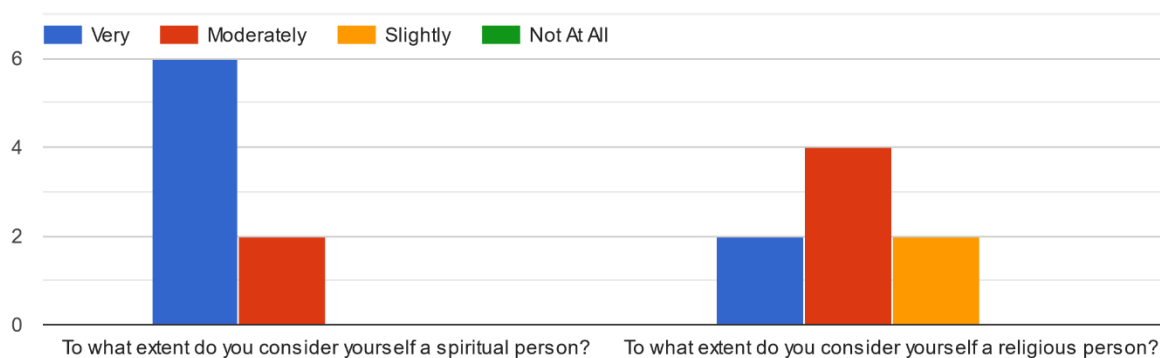
**N* = 8.

[^] *Children's ages range from 20-33.*

Source: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life: Demographics Survey

Figure D.2 Workshop Participant Self-Reported Spirituality/Religiosity*

Spirituality & Religion



* $N = 8$.

Source: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life: Demographics Survey

Summary of Participant Responses

In addition to providing demographic information, most workshop participants also responded to questions included on the Demographics Survey about spirituality. What follows is an abbreviated list of these responses (parenthetical numbers indicate multiple people provided the same or similar response):

- Where do you experience God?
 - everywhere (2), home, music (2), nature (2), other people, social groups/community (3), walking
- How do you experience God?
 - church, listening to/conversation with God (2), music, nature, other people, prayer (3), reading the Bible
- Where do you go for spiritual fulfillment?
 - books, church (3), music, nature, other people, podcasts, reading the Bible (3), retreats (2)
- What feeds your soul?
 - activities with loved ones, art, children (3), connection with God, music (3), nature (2), other people (4), walking

- How would you articulate your personal call or purpose with living into God's mission?
 - Language oriented towards God
 - “Spreading love of Jesus into the world”
 - “An alignment w/ God”
 - Language oriented towards others
 - “Kindergartner teacher . . . I can show them interaction w/ God is simple and every day”
 - “As a photographer . . . I capture [young people] in a real and honest way”
 - Uncertain
 - “Quite lost at the moment. I try and be a good person and give back when I can. I often think of God as the weeds in the crack of a sidewalk”
 - “I have no idea!”

Appendix E: Feedback Survey for Pilot Implementation of Curriculum

This appendix includes questions from the feedback survey collected from workshop participants described in Appendix A as well as a summary of the responses received. My original intention was to provide workshop participants with a paper copy of this feedback survey at the end of the fifth class. One participant knew they would be absent for the fifth class, so they were given the form at the end of the fourth class; this entry was later entered into an online Google Form for record-keeping purposes. Unfortunately, no one attended the fifth class, so I emailed an online Google Form to all the workshop participants requesting their responses (a copy of this email is below). The form was available through March 29, 2024, and one additional response was received. Participants were told that the only required fields were their name and email address.

Email to Workshop Participants Soliciting Feedback

Subject: Thank You! And A Quick Feedback Survey

Thank you so much for participating in the "Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life" workshop at the Cathedral of St. Philip! I know that several people requested that I email the handouts for lessons they missed, so the handouts for all five sessions are attached.

I would be so grateful if you would complete a quick feedback survey. Whether you attended one session or four, it will be super useful for me to have your feedback as I write up my materials to close out my doctoral research this week. There are just 4 questions: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeowoJGCdnB6ZGF-yG-108C0t9HOrL-6Cax7cixYftmNi8Lqg/viewform>

Again, thank you for your willingness to share and your vulnerability during our classes. I hope to stay in touch with y'all beyond this workshop!

[Attached: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life, Weeks 1-5.pdf]

Feedback Survey Questions

Title: Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life: Feedback Survey

Description: This survey is intended for participants in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. If you have questions about this survey you can contact Lindsey Hardegree at lindsey.hardegree@emory.edu.

- Your Email
- Your Name
- Where do you experience God/find spiritual meaning in your everyday life?
- What is your personal purpose?
- What activities & communities are you a part of where you can live out your purpose?
- Has this workshop helped you to identify how you might personally live into God's mission (*missio Dei*)?
- Additional Thoughts/Comments/Questions

Summary of Survey Results

Survey results were limited as only two participants submitted feedback; one of these respondents attended four of the five sessions, and the other attended three of the five sessions. What follows is a summarized list of these responses (parenthetical numbers indicate multiple people provided the same or similar response):

- Where do you experience God/find spiritual meaning in your everyday life?
 - celebration, interactions with other people (2), nature, prayer (2), service
- What is your personal purpose?
 - supporting and encouraging others/personal community
 - participating in activities with God-given talents
 - living intentionally
 - using resources of time and finances for service
 - (*uncertainty for how to answer the question*)
- What activities & communities are you a part of where you can live out your purpose?
 - alumni group, arts activities, book club, church groups, communication via phone, friends, neighborhood, school/work
- Has this workshop helped you to identify how you might personally live into God's mission (*missio Dei*)?
 - "Yes, enjoyed thinking how I can be intentional with my actions daily/monthly/annually to serve God & the world. Will take away how to put these in action."

- “Definitely making me think and identify”
- Additional Thoughts/Comments/Questions
 - “Last week we were working on charting daily, weekly etc of spiritual life. You said that a retreat would be an annual support for spiritual. I really like thinking of that. I do my yearly health check ups and now I’m doing my yearly spiritual check ups”

Appendix F: “Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life” Curriculum Materials

Workshop participants were provided with a paper handout for each class, and an accompanying PowerPoint presentation was shown on the screen. The course outline for this pilot implementation was as follows:

- Class 1: What does spirituality look like outside the church?
 - Can participants identify the areas of their own lives where they find spiritual meaning outside of church?
 - How do we identify secular communities where there is also spiritual engagement?
 - They’ll articulate and execute discernment practices to understand their own personal lay ministry.
 - Train lay people to identify areas of spiritual experience or connection in their mundane lives.
- Class 2: What is your unique call/purpose/vocation?
 - Do participants understand their own call/purpose/vocation?
 - They should be able to identify their own purpose, and how they’ll show up differently in their contexts with their purpose as a lay minister clearly defined.
- Class 3: What is *missio Dei*? How does it involve lay people?
 - Do participants understand their unique role in *missio Dei*?
- Class 4: How do we identify the ways we each live into *missio Dei*?
 - Can participants identify their own unique context which shapes how they engage in God’s mission?
 - Can participants identify their existing habits and activities which involve living into God’s mission?
 - Participants will map out both their existing practices as well as areas for future focus as a way to intentionally live into God’s mission at varying timescales (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
- Class 5: How do we live into *missio Dei* as a community/church?
 - Do participants understand how their participation in secular communities can help them further *missio Dei*?
 - Can participants identify the spaces and communities in which they are already involved which might be a context for ministry?

Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life

Week 1: Everyday Spirituality

- Introduction to the Workshop
- Group Introductions
- Discussion: Experiencing God's Presence
 - Where do you experience God?
 - How do you experience God?
 - What does your personal spirituality include?
- Discussion: Experiencing God's Presence in Mundane, Everyday Life
 - Where do you go for spiritual fulfillment?
 - How do you connect with other people in spiritually meaningful ways?
 - What communities or activities are you a part of where you feel God's Presence?

Workshop Outline*

- 2/21: What does everyday spirituality look like?
- 2/28: What is your unique call or purpose?
- 3/6: What is *missio Dei* (God's mission)? How does it involve lay people?
- 3/13: How do we further *missio Dei* in our everyday lives?
- 3/20: How do we prepare our church to embrace everyday spirituality and live into *missio Dei*?
**as of today – our topics may shift based on survey results (remember this is a pilot!)*

Handouts:

Sacred Design Lab. "How We Gather," April 11, 2017. <https://sacred.design/insights>.

Selzler, Veronica, Gillian Gonda, and Mohammed Mohammed. "Study of Spirituality in the United States." Fetzer Institute, September 2020. <https://spiritualitystudy.fetzer.org/>.

This workshop is intended for participants in a research study conducted by Lindsey Hardegree based at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. If you have questions about this study, contact Lindsey Hardegree at lindsey.hardegree@emory.edu.

PRACTICES

What activities do people engage in as part of their regular spiritual practice?



In the study, we found that people identify a wide range of activities as spiritual, and they are regularly engaging in those practices both within and outside religious institutions.

Descriptions of spirituality, self-identification, belief, and aspirations reflect people's personal reflection of what it means to be spiritual. But as we found in people's drawings and in conversation, spirituality for many constitutes both inner experience and outer action. People described all kinds of ways they regularly practice spirituality in their lives.

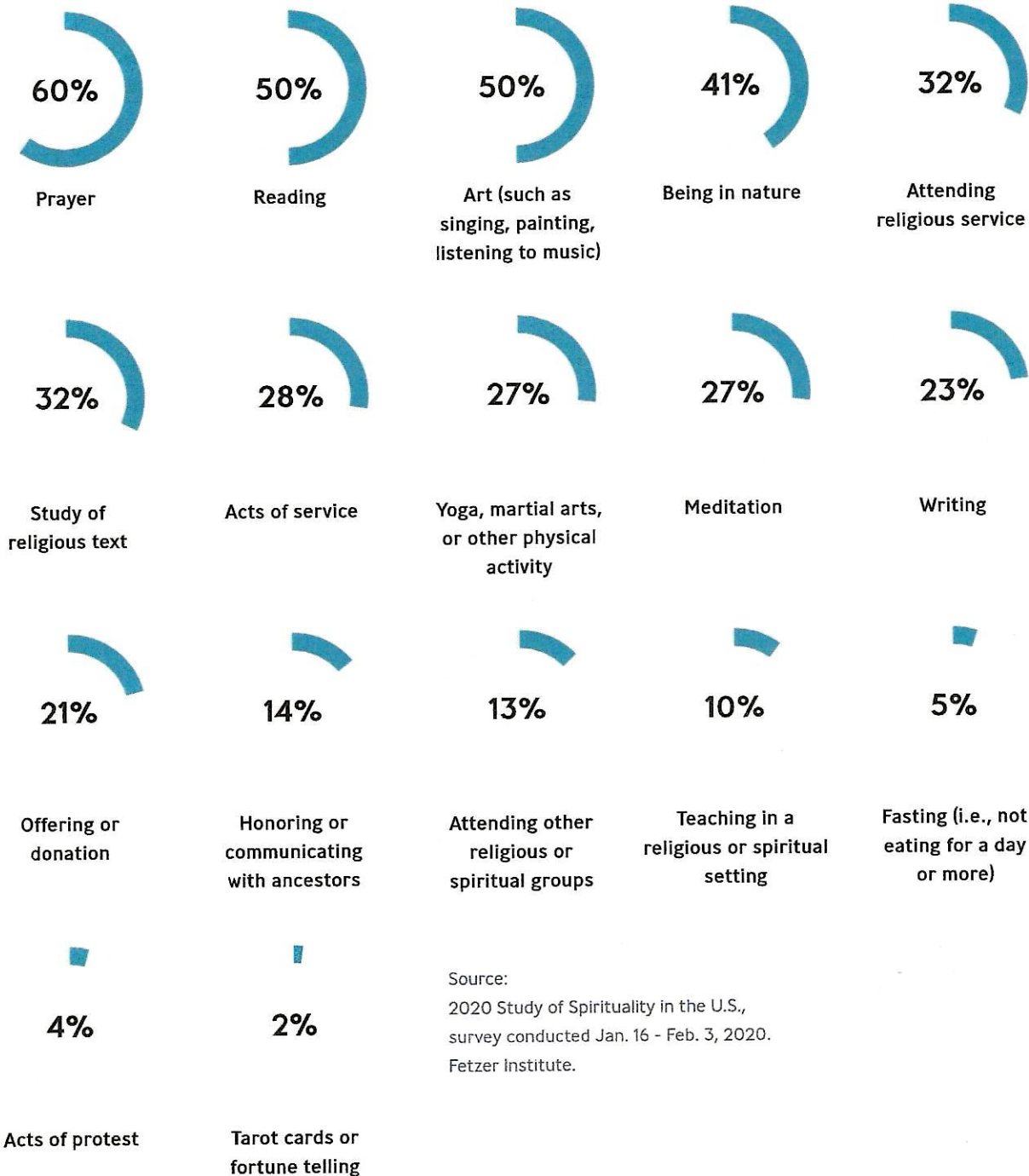
Survey respondents reviewed a list of seventeen activities generated from spiritual and religious practices shared by focus group and interview participants. When asked how often they engage in each of them as spiritual—and then as religious—activities, 88% said they engage in at least one spiritual or religious activity at least once a week.

People found spirituality in devotional practices such as prayer, study of religious text, and attending religious services; in experiential practices such as art, being in nature, writing, and reading; and in relational practices with others such as attending religious or spiritual groups, or teaching in a religious or spiritual setting.

In open-ended survey responses, people detailed other spiritual activities they practice. They shared activities that ranged from formal to informal, from personal to communal. Examples included talking with God, Jesus, other people, or animals; interacting with family and friends; acts of everyday kindness; taking care of their mental health; environmental stewardship; caring for animals; sexuality; drug use; Alcoholics Anonymous; and learning something new.

Respondents reported regularly engaging in many kinds of activities they identify as spiritual.

“How often do you engage in the following as spiritual activities?” (Weekly or more)



Source:
 2020 Study of Spirituality in the U.S.,
 survey conducted Jan. 16 - Feb. 3, 2020.
 Fetzer Institute.

SIX THEMES

We map six recurring themes in this report. They are found in mission statements, blog posts, and manifestos, and on the lips of leaders and participants. We highlight these themes not because there are no others, but because they best reveal the cultural DNA of these diverse initiatives, from which more can grow.



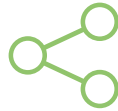
Community

Valuing and fostering deep relationships that center on service to others



Personal transformation

Making a conscious and dedicated effort to develop one's own body, mind and spirit



Social transformation

Pursuing justice and beauty in the world through the creation of networks for good



Purpose finding

Clarifying, articulating, and acting on one's personal mission in life



Creativity

Allowing time and space to activate the imagination and engage in play

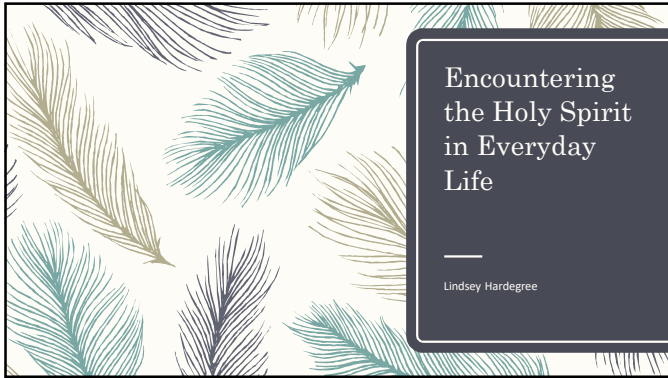


Accountability

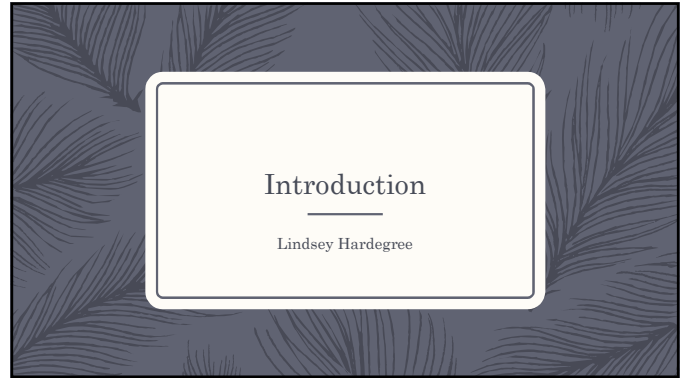
Holding oneself and others responsible for working toward defined goals

TEN CASE STUDIES

We have chosen to shine light on ten organizations. Whether consciously or unconsciously, each one descends from a lineage of ancestors and resembles siblings in the field, which are listed alongside it. These organizations also have cousins in the corporate world. We can only assume that brand consultants have long since monetized the millennial appreciation for values, empathy, and social responsibility. This ethos is marketable and, in a profit-driven context, shallow. But in the hands of these ten organizations, it is starting to go deep. We invite you to peruse the following cases and consider them for yourself.



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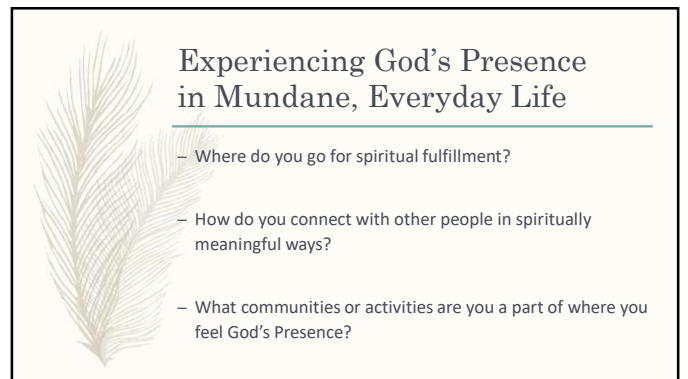
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What's Next?

**as of today – our topics may shift based on survey results
(remember this is a pilot!)*

- 2/21: What does everyday spirituality look like?
- 2/28: What is your unique call or purpose?
- 3/6: What is *missio Dei* (God's mission)? How does it involve lay people?
- 3/13: How do we further *missio Dei* in our everyday lives?
- 3/20: How do we prepare our church to embrace everyday spirituality and live into *missio Dei*?

Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life

Week 2: Understanding Calling/Purpose

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”
Frederick Buechner

- What does your heart desire?
 - *telos*: ultimate purpose; that thing that pulls us towards what we desire
 - “The *telos* for a Christian is to become mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28).” Roger Helland
 - What do our actions say about our individual *telos*?
- Exercise: Observing Your Rituals & Rhythms for Purpose
 - Pause.
 - Reflect on the rituals and rhythms of your life.
 - What are your daily/weekly/monthly/annual routines and activities?
 - What are the things that do something *to* you?
 - What vision of the “good life” is found in these activities?
 - What ultimate purpose do these activities point you towards?
- Proceeding with Intention
 - What does the life you want to lead look like?
 - How do you want to live your life (be specific)?
 - What do the rhythms of your life look like to support this vision?
- Discerning Your Purpose: Understanding what drives you, your *telos*, will help you to define your purpose.
 - **Reason:** How are you uniquely able to make a difference?
 - **Direction:** Where and how do you want to create impact?
 - **Intention:** How do you structure your life to support this?
 - **Orientation:** What does it look like to “achieve” your purpose? How does your purpose draw you closer to God?

What's Next?*

- 3/6: What is *missio Dei* (God's mission)? How does it involve lay people?
 - 3/13: How do we further *missio Dei* in our everyday lives?
 - 3/20: How do we prepare our church to embrace everyday spirituality and live into *missio Dei*?
- *subject to change - remember this is a pilot!

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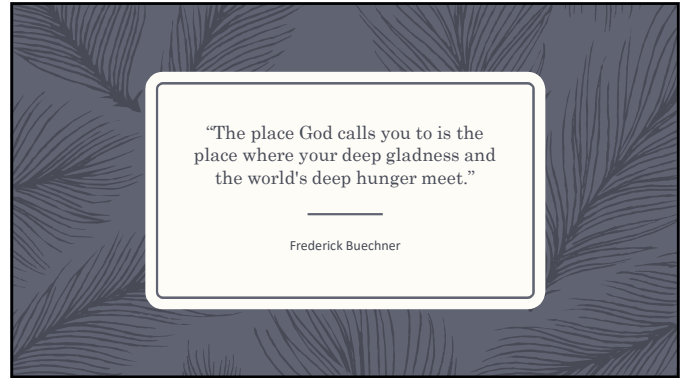
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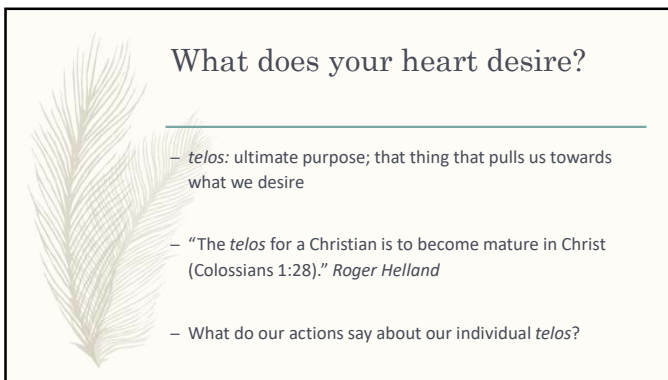
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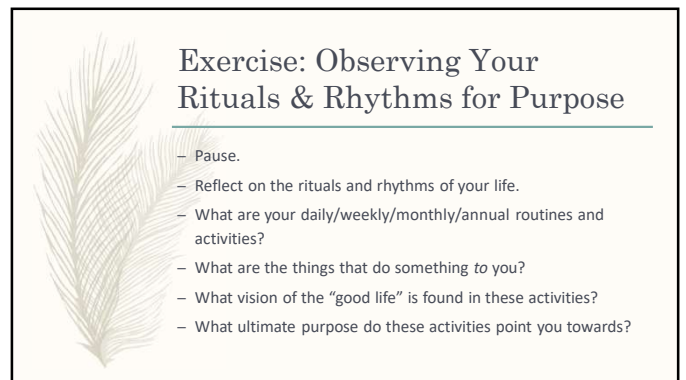
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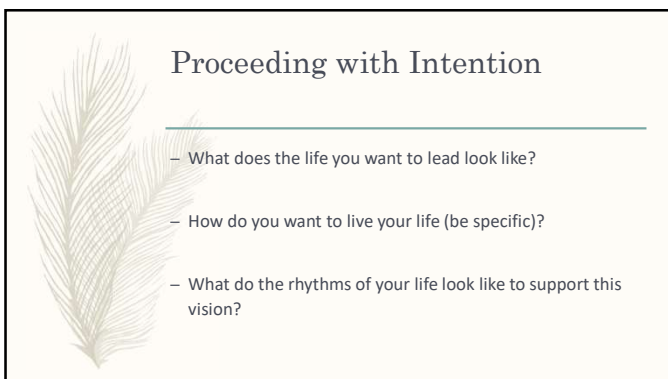
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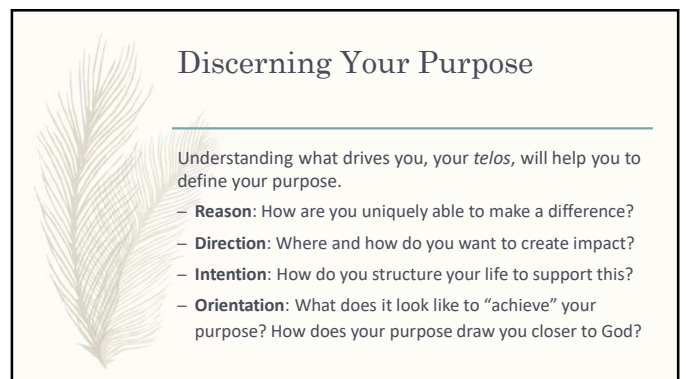
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Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life
Week 3: *missio Dei*: The Role of Lay People in God's Mission

- 4 Holy Orders of Ministry (Exercise)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.

- What is *missio Dei*?

- How do lay people live into God's mission?

- Forming Missional Spirituality in Your Life
 - **Practices of Discernment:** These practices help us to discern God's will and purpose for our lives and to identify the ways in which we can participate in His mission.

 - **Practices of Engagement:** These practices help us to engage with the world and with others in ways that embody God's love and compassion.

 - **Practices of Subversion and Challenge:** These practices challenge the injustices and oppressive structures of the world and work to transform them into more just and equitable structures.

What's Next?*

- 3/13: How do we further *missio Dei* in our everyday lives?
 - 3/20: How do we prepare our church to embrace everyday spirituality and live into *missio Dei*?
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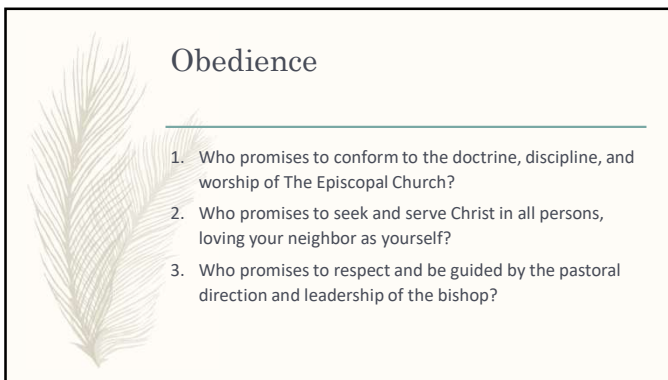
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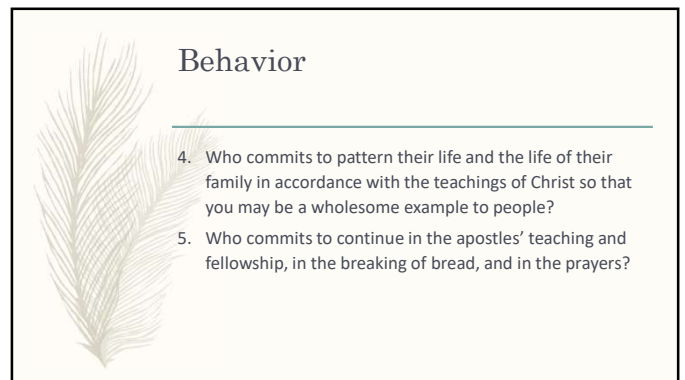
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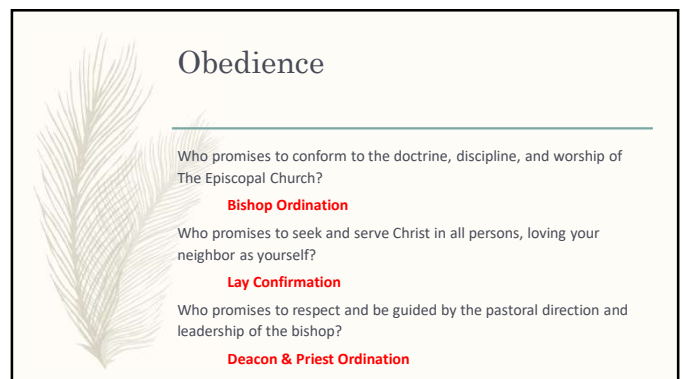
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Behavior


Who commits to pattern their life and the life of their family in accordance with the teachings of Christ so that you may be a wholesome example to people?

Deacon & Priest Ordination

Who commits to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Lay Confirmation

7



Evangelism

Who promises to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Lay Confirmation

Who promises to proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of God's people?

Bishop Ordination

8



missio Dei

- What is missio Dei?
- How do lay people live into God's mission
- Forming Missional Spirituality in Your Life

9

Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life
Week 4: Identifying How We Each Live Into God's Mission

Naming Your Unique Context (Exercise)

<u>Roles</u>	<u>Gifts</u>
<u>Desires</u>	<u>Purpose</u>

Identify Your Personal Habits & Activities (Exercise)

<u>God</u>	<u>Self</u>
<u>Others</u>	<u>World</u>

Get Intentional (Exercise)

	Spiritual	Self-Care	Relationships	Resources (Time & Finances)	Gifts & Talents
Daily (regularly)					
Weekly					
Monthly					
Quarterly (seasonally)					
Annually					

References:

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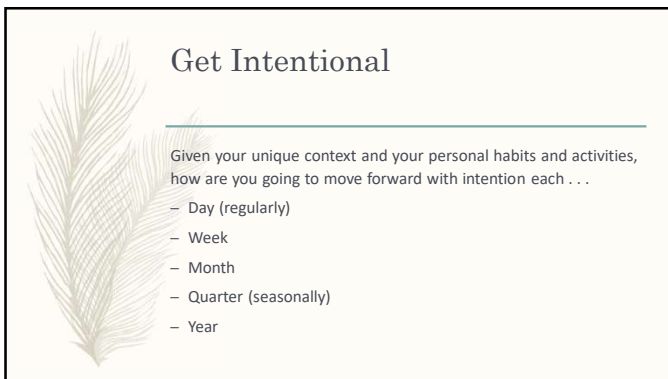
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Encountering the Holy Spirit in Everyday Life

Week 5: How do we live into *missio Dei* as a community/church?

- Identifying Communities Where You Live Out Your Spirituality (Exercise)
- Evaluate the above communities based on the “Six Themes” commonly found in communities where people are finding deeper spirituality.

<i>Your Communities</i>	Community	Personal Transformation	Social Transformation	Purpose Finding	Creativity	Accountability

- Are these activities & communities a way for you to live into God's Mission?
 - What *telos* (vision of the good life) does this activity imply?
 - What are rituals and practices that are a part of this activity?
 - What habits or routines are a part of this activity? Can they be used to deepen your relationship with God?
 - How do we reconcile the *telos* for this activity with the *telos* that leads to God's Kingdom?

• **Example:** Running can enhance our connection with God, others, ourselves, and creation through six practices:

1. Warm-Up: serves as invocation and intention-setting
2. Gratitude: provides a posture that is focused on integrating ourselves with God's mission
3. Attentiveness: sharpens our perception of God's Presence in our practice and to others around us
4. Breathing: a specific aspect of running; this represents that any practice will have specifics which may be used to underscore mindfulness in our practice
5. Playfulness: appreciates how we are created in the image of a playful God
6. Examen: provides an opportunity to reflect on the experience of our practice, further deepening our relationship with God through intentional attention to what has just occurred, "absorbing the benefits" of our practice

References:

Cronshaw, Darren, and Stephen Parker. "Embodied Spiritual Practices on the Run: Six Exercises for a Spirituality of Running." *Practical Theology* 12, no. 3 (May 27, 2019): 239–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2018.1540508>.
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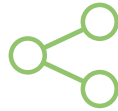
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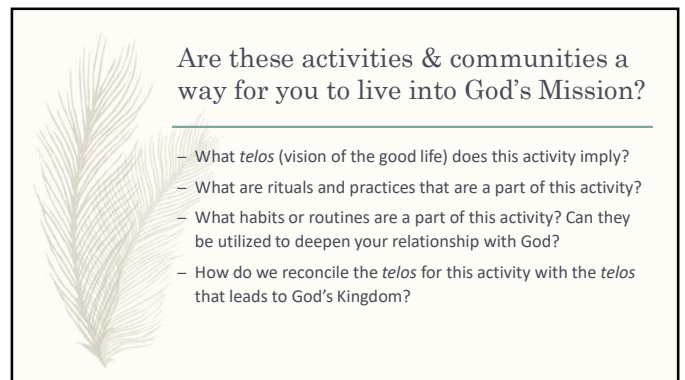
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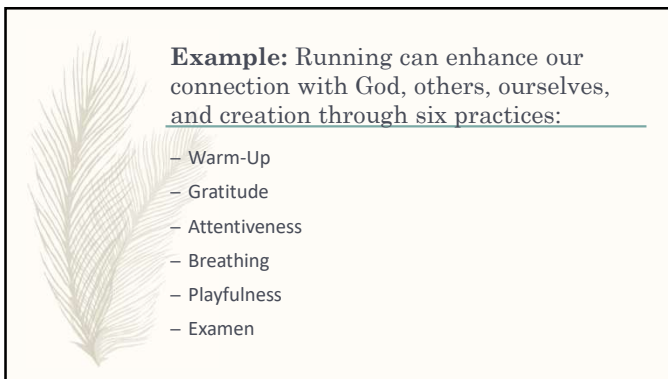
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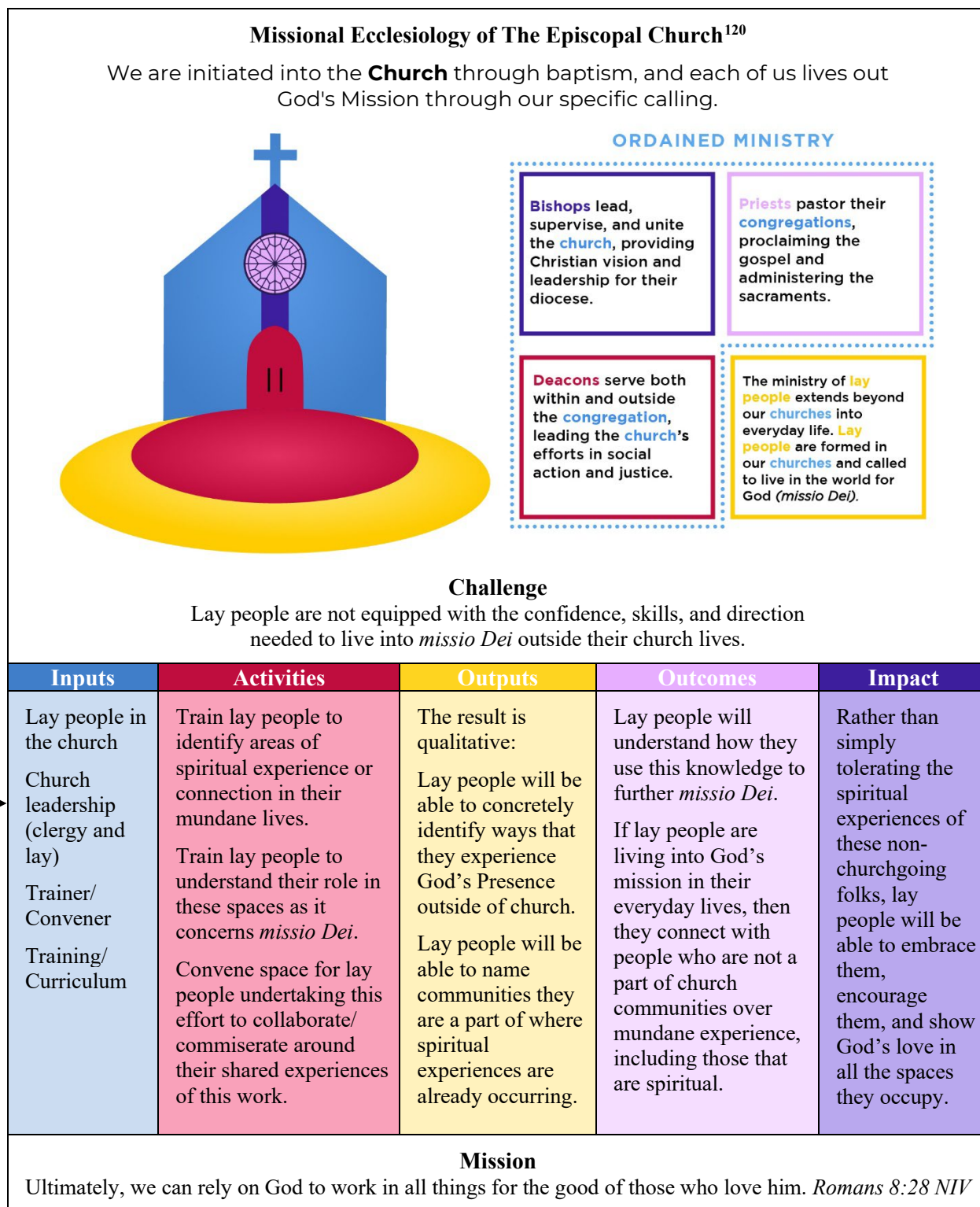


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Appendix G: Theory of Change



¹²⁰ Definitions provided by An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/>) and the Association for Episcopal Deacons (<https://www.episcopaldeacons.org/>).

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