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Creating a Liturgy of Life: Cultivating Thriving Elders

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Abstract

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The project was to create a class as a way to practice cultivating thriving elders in a large, protestant church. The class was built and led around Jesus' desire for all people to live lives of abundance in a way that glorifies God all their days. Considering traditional elements of worship, the class employed storytelling, story companionship, sharing music, and writing liturgy as ways to consider and articulate participant's life as worship and to strengthen their practice of corporate worship.

In the process of creating the class and the project, categories of elders were named, each with corresponding markers: Thriving Elders, Hidden Elders, Self-Serving Elders, and Embittered Elders. These fluid and permeable categories call for further consideration as the church seeks to cultivate and serve elders in the context of the church and the wider community.

Creating a Liturgy of Life:
Cultivating Thriving Elders

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Heretofore;
 Open the doors,
 Clean the floors,
 Call out the boars,
 Count the stores.
 Follow the ordo;
 bath
 word
 table.

Be and work together.
 And going forward, always going forward,
 Shore up the saints,
 More love lived out.
 Deplore evil.
 Ignore no one.
 Pay attention!
 The Lord is near, The Lord is here.¹

INTRODUCTION

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10)

We cannot change what we cannot see. Many would look at the church I serve, Palms Presbyterian Church and see a wealthy, white church comprised of mostly old people in a resort and retirement area. They would see a main-line Protestant church with traditional worship. There would be assumptions that would go along with what they saw and most of those assumptions would be correct. However, much would be missed in such a cursory glance.

This project is not based on a cursory glance. It is about the kind of seeing that takes time. This is a project about creating space² for the sacred to break in anew in the lives of individuals, the pastor, and the church. This is project that looks at a specific group of people in

¹ Written during the time of DMin713, this poem is meant to speak to the call of the church, individual members and pastor. In other words, “What it means to be.” It serves as a beginning for this project because central is “follow the ordo: bath word table”. This was the imaginative spark for the “Creating a Liturgy of Life” class. That the poem layout suggests a person was a surprise, just as this project contained surprises along the way.

² Creating space here means a number of things: choosing a meeting room that is open, configuring the seating, considering whether liturgical or everyday items should be present, selecting music and words, crafting questions, creating parameters for discussion, considering lighting needs, praying before participants arrive, being present to welcome participants.

the church, older adults, who possess particular gifts and challenges. It seeks to honor older adults who are thriving, even as it calls for the release of thoughts and behaviors which keep them from thriving. This project is based in worship, which is the common language and experience of the church.

If the incarnation of Jesus was to gift humanity with life abundant, then church should cultivate life abundant. To consider abundant life in the context of the church, we must see the people who seem to be living an abundant life, as well as those who do not. Who is thriving and who is not? The pastor, as leader, can envision a space into reality for church members to consider their ongoing call to life abundant. And, if a church has an abundance of older adults, life abundant would look like thriving older adults: thriving elders.

What are marks of thriving elders?³ Can space be created to cultivate thriving elders? The dynamic interplay of individuals, church and pastor can be fertile ground allowing for stories, imagination, movement and engagement which, in turn, can allow for the flourishing of more individuals, for the pastor and for the church. If abundant life of flourishing is the desire of The Holy⁴, then thriving at all ages should be the work of the individual, the pastor, and the church. If we consider our entire life and our everyday as opportunities to live into the life of abundance for which we are created, might we consider our life, liturgy⁵: an everyday embodiment of worship?

As Associate Pastor of thirteen hundred-member Palms Presbyterian Church (Palms), one of my responsibilities includes care of the congregation. In this role, most pastoral care hours include moving from hospital to hospice to assisted living facilities in response to health events

³A chart, Identified Markers in Elders is found on page 7 and a fuller discussion of Thriving Elders can be found on page 27.

⁴ The fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John describes a vine with many branches which is flourishing as evidenced by fruit that can be shared with others.

⁵ These were the initial questions, as I considered developing a course, which became “Creating a Liturgy of Life. The course design is discussed more fully on page 4 and going forward.

in the lives of elderly members. Most often, these are quick visits during times of crisis. These visits, while sharing compassion, do little to strengthen or build relationships between pastor and individual church members and do nothing to strengthen or build relationships between church members and each other. Perhaps there are moments where God's presence is felt in grace-filled ways, but a "quick prayer and out the door" approach is not always filled with loving intention on the part of this pastor; it is, rather, a task to be completed.

The apostle Paul, who himself was in the business of church development, charged communities to show love and compassion in an ongoing manner: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints."⁶ (Rom 12:9-13) The Bible testifies to communities built on love and mutual responsibility.⁷ The church, as a witness to the love and care of Jesus is called to live out the biblical mandate of love and mutual responsibility for people of all ages.

At Palms, older adults have both time in each day and years of life ahead. They often desire generativity and want their life to hold meaning in the world. They gather at a common sanctuary to worship and hold a common worship language. Many, but not all, come to worship seeking connection to God and others as they age.

Simultaneous to a booming, retired membership with an abundance of time and energy, Palms has three pastors who are stretched thin with many varied constraints on their time and

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated all Bible references in this project proposal are to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) "BibleGateway." *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) - Version Information - BibleGateway.com*, www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/.

⁷ Some of the many texts of this testimony include Psalms 133:1-3, Proverbs 17:17, Zechariah 7:9-11, Micah 6:8, Matthew 22:37-40, Acts 2:42-47, I Corinthians 12:25-27, Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 6:2, I Thessalonians 5, I Peter 4:8-11

energy. With a very large programming output, Pastors and church leaders desire life abundant for all church members. Might a communal space be created to cultivate individuals to grow in community, in love of God and love of self? Might stories, words, songs and images bear witness to God’s ongoing presence in the lives of older adults in a way that strengthens individuals, the pastor and the church?⁸

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The key question that stimulated this research is as follows: The biblical imperative of love and care is at odds with Palms’ current haphazard praxis of pastoral care with older adults and lacks a creative space to “give attentive reverence to the other and other’s stories”⁹. Can space be created to encourage elder members to flourish¹⁰ and to continue to thrive as they age? Can individuals, the pastor, and the church catch the air¹¹ in a way that fosters transformative interplay of the Spirit?

METHOD-APPROACH TO PROBLEM

To consider this question, I developed a course, “Creating a Liturgy of Life” based on question 1 of The Westminster Shorter Catechism¹² and the understanding that all life is worship. The class included narrative storytelling and spiritual companions as an experiment based on Scheib’s research around narrative storytelling.

⁸ Scheib, Karen. *Attend to Stories: How to Flourish in Ministry*. (Nashville: Wesley’s Foundry Books, 2018), pg. v. As I read Scheib’s book it sparked the question of this project: If storytelling can foster flourishing in ministry, can it play a role in flourishing in aging, as well?

⁹ Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 61.

¹⁰ The metaphor for flourish might include purchasing a field, tilling the ground, preparing the soil, planting, fertilizing, tending the plants, watering, pruning, plucking out insects, pulling weeds, removing what is dead. It also requires the realization that not all plants will flourish in any given locale. This metaphor is ripe for the church.

¹¹ Ellen Ott Marshall used the term “catch the air” in DMin 715 as she talked about mobiles as a metaphor for the Spirit moving, creating change and growth.

¹² In *the Westminster Catechism*. question one asks and answers: What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. In my class I adapted gender neutral language: What is the chief end of personhood? Our chief end is to Glorify God and to enjoy God forever.

The focus on life liturgy¹³ provided a way to consider life narrative through the lens of the common experience, language, and pattern of worship. The course was part of a larger program development for an Older Adult Ministry at Palms beginning in January of 2018, which included creating a data base system for tracking visitation and pastoral care needs, the creation of a part-time position of Older Adult Ministry Coordinator, and creation of a Steering Committee for Older Adult Ministry¹⁴. I will be presenting the findings of this project to our Seasoned Saints in the spring of 2019 and begin a new discussion: “How might thriving be cultivated among Seasoned Saints at Palms?”

This project includes demographic information from Palms Presbyterian Church, experience gleaned from twenty-one years of ordained ministry, insights from the field of human growth and development, work on storytelling as pastoral care, and work in and through the Doctor of Ministry program at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. There is a large volume of writing focused on aging well in our country. Although I reviewed many works, I only scratched the surface due to the limited scope and requirements of the project. Literature reviewed can be found in the bibliography.

“Creating a Liturgy of Life” was a weekly three-month class¹⁵ that led participants to consider their life as worship, how their stories shape their lives, their relationship with God, and their relationships with others. Participants were paired and became Story Companions with whom they shared both stories and meals.¹⁶ In addition, I interviewed participants mid-course and the participants completed initial and end of course questionnaires.

¹³ The idea of a Life Liturgy came out of classes on worship in the DMin program taught by Dr. Don Saliers and Dr. Steffen Losel and Dr. Edward Phillips in the 2017-18 academic year.

¹⁴ The Steering Committee, named the Older Adult Ministry, “Seasoned Saints”.

¹⁵ See Appendix 2: Creating a Liturgy of Life Class Outline.

¹⁶ Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 61-78.

Each class meeting was created to spur the spiritual imagination of participants and guide the class into discussions of faith and their understanding of God's guidance through their lives; past, present and future. The goal was not a sentimental remembering, but a safe space for discernment; for prayer and praise; for thanksgiving and lament; for confession and redemption. Central was the desire to help participants name God's grace at different points in their lives and now, and to cultivate relationships within the class.

Through "Creating a Liturgy of Life", a new way of being together at Palms was tested. Class participants created a life liturgy¹⁷ and entered in to a relationship with an individual who was their Spiritual Companion. In addition, participants practiced together the biblical mandate "love one another" (Jn 3:34) through listening to stories of others and sharing their own stories. Through the course, I developed the following categories of elders: Thriving Elders, Self-Serving Elders, Embittered Elders and Hidden Elders. Through the research of source material and my research of listening closely in the "Creating a Liturgy of Life" course and from years of attentiveness with pastoral care in older adults, I discerned the categories of elders shown in the table below:

¹⁷ Participants were given the opportunity to gather in worship with their Life Liturgies in January 2019.

Identified Markers in Elders	
<p><u>HIDDEN</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel life has already ended and are existing rather than living • World is small • Silent or silenced • Not generally in church unless someone brings • Question asked of church: “Do you know I exist?” 	<p><u>SELF-SERVING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort-based (“I’m fine”) pleasure-seeking (“bucket list”) existence • May be happy or unhappy with present circumstances • May be in church but are interested in what the church might do for them • Question asked of church: “How might you serve me?”
<p><u>EMBITTERED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel victimized by unhealed wounds and/or present circumstances • No hope for future beyond present reality • Vocal in public sphere • Not concerned with wounding others • Question asked of church: “Why don’t you see it and do it my way?” 	<p><u>THRIVING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel connected • Possess and share joy and wonder • Hold an ongoing life purpose • Active and vocal in public sphere • Question asked of church: “How can we serve, learn, grow and worship together?”

I am a student of Human Growth and Development for over 30 years. I studied Erickson, Kohlberg and Fowler as a student both in a M.A.Ed. program in College Student Personnel Services at Virginia Tech in the late 1980’s and as an M.T.S. student at Candler in the early 1990’s. The development of these categories of elders blends the understanding of human growth and development with my experience both as a pastor and from personal life. I have come to believe we are not necessarily “evolving” along a continuum, but move in and out of life stages, more or less successfully along a winding, sometimes circular, labyrinthian path.

The categories of elders are fluid and permeable and, as stated, are not on a continuum. It is my belief that both Self-Serving and Embittered Elders have possibilities of moving in to or toward the category of Thriving Elders. With a catastrophic health event or the need to become a

caretaker for a loved one, Thriving, Embittered and Self-Serving elders can all slip into the category of Hidden. Each of these categories holds implications for church and the larger society.

For the purpose of this project, Thriving Elders were the focus. I imagined Thriving Elders to be living into Jesus' desire for life abundant for everyone. Cultivating Thriving Elders became both the goal and what was both looked for and hoped for in the course, "Creating a Liturgy of Life". A brief description of each category follows, with a fuller discussion of Thriving Elders found beginning on page twenty-six.

Thriving Elders are easily identified in the church. These elders are present and vibrant, possessing joy and curiosity. They seek out people and activities and seem to lead rich, full lives. They may not have family members close by, but they are connected to others and are interested in those with whom they come in contact. Thriving Elders are generally positive people. They may have had deep grief and sorrow in their life but continue to believe that their life holds meaning and purpose.

Hidden Elders are known as "Shut-Ins" in traditional church language. Their hiddenness might be self-imposed due to depression, introversion or despair. They might have a physical mobility problem or a degenerative disease. Alternately, they might be hidden merely because their driver's license was taken away or relinquished. Hidden Elders are not generally active in the church but may come to worship if someone brings them. Their world is generally small, and they are quiet or have been silenced.

Self-Serving Elders, on the other hand, might be living a large life. Though they mostly feel their best days are behind them, they continue to seek out pleasure and/or comfort. Though they might voice concern for their immediate family or a few friends, they are generally inwardly focused. They may be in worship, but they want to know what the church can do for them. Self-

Serving Elders might be very active enjoying a wide-range of activities or might be content to read books or watch daytime TV: whatever makes them happy and content.

Embittered Elders often feel wronged or victimized in some way. They carry either anger, regret, guilt, fear, remorse or a combination of negative feelings. They are bitter about their present circumstances and have little or no hope for a better future. They are often vocal and in the public sphere, sharing their unhappiness with others. Embittered elders have little concern for whether they wound others.

The research raises suggestions for Palms for the ongoing development of the Seasoned Saints ministry and how Palms pastors might provide care for members and for individuals in each of these categories. There may be interest from the larger Church as pastors and congregations seek to understand older adults and people of all ages.

For the purpose of this project, I completed three tasks now considered in greater detail: Seeing, Creating and Naming.

Seeing: Participants of Vision

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”¹⁸

God is present before anything and God is noticing “something’s missing”. There is always creative possibility in noticing. In considering the Genesis creation narrative, it strikes me that a name for God could be Creative Possibility. God notices there is nothing where something should be. And the Spirit is sweeps over it all, stirring up possibilities.

Seeing is necessary before any project or program or ministry is created. What is seen? At Palms Presbyterian, I saw many older adults. Many churches have a predominance of older

¹⁸Gen 1:1-2

adults. Palms, however, is in a retirement destination with three large continuum of care communities nearby. Palms populates new member classes with older adults. I saw some elders were thriving and some seemed to be languishing. I had no definition of thriving or languishing at this point, but it was easy to see. Many were neither thriving or languishing but existing out of old habits and relationships and patterns of daily living. It was the thriving elders who piqued my interest most. What did they have in common? How were their lives different? Was it possible to name and pinpoint some common markers in thriving elders? What imaginative possibilities might be learned by focusing on thriving elders?

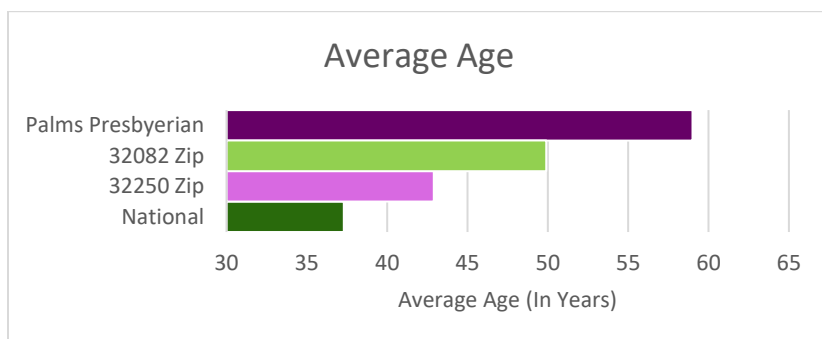
Seeing the Church

Palms is a large church in an area filled with miles of beaches, golf courses, restaurants, shopping. Palms is near excellent healthcare facilities with Mayo Clinic less than five miles away and other top-notch hospitals, doctors and healthcare facilities in the area. Nearby Jacksonville offers a symphony, plays, concerts, and large sporting events. People who already live in the area often stay for retirement. Many others choose to retire in northeast Florida. The church lies in Jacksonville Beach (Duval County), Florida, at the edge of Ponte Vedra Beach (St. John's County). Church membership is one thousand two hundred and ninety-one active members.

About half of church members live in Duval County and about half live in St. John's County. According to information from the website factfinder of the Census Bureau¹⁹, in 2014, in the Jacksonville Beach zip code (32250), over 23 percent of the population was over the age of 60 with an average age of 42.9. In our neighboring city Ponte Vedra Beach, (32082) 30.9

¹⁹ U.S. United States Census Bureau. *American Factfinder*. Rept. 2014. Accessed December 1, 2018. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

percent of the population was over the age of 60 with an average age of 49.9. The median age of the population is older than the national average of 37.3. See chart below.



The median age at Palms is well over all of those average ages, at 59 years old. Forty-one percent of the membership at Palms is over the age of 70. Six and a half percent of the membership is over the age of 90. And there are 31 church members over the age of 95.²⁰ In other words, Palms is old.²¹

Palms membership draws from three large continuum of care retirement communities (CCRC) and a Del Webb, 55+ retirement community. Each of these four communities and numerous additional senior living facilities attract retirees nationwide through nationwide marketing campaigns and word of mouth. Palms regularly has new residents from these communities in our new member classes.²² In December 2018, one hundred fifty-five disciples, or 12 percent of members lived in one of these four communities. Many of these new residents/new members come to the area knowing very few people. In the community, Palms is known as the church with a top-notch music program, traditional worship, a progressive,

²⁰ Church membership information from December 2018.

²¹ Palms is also whiter than the country and community, wealthier than the country and community and more well-educated than the country and the community. Since this project is focused on age, those statistics are not reviewed here.

²² This is what puts Palms in contrast to many mainline denominational churches who also have an aging membership. Palms is vibrant and holds its membership steady, renewing itself with new, older members.

theologically sound, talented and well-educated staff²³, and a focus on service. Palms attracts, retains, and replenishes its membership with older adults.

The biblical call from Jesus is to “Love one another.” (Jn 13:34-35) Palms will fail if the church fails to love, engage, and encourage older adults. In addition, older adults have gifts to offer including infectious energy, wisdom, time abundant and valuable life experience which can strengthen and uphold the larger church and the pastors of Palms.

In addition to the call to love, several more assumptions guided this work. First, individuals are created by God as gathered, worshipping beings. God is present throughout the lifespan God is calling us to life abundant and calling us to worship. Second, individuals have the capacity to grow and change through their entire lifespan. Third, thriving in elderhood is a desired state. Fourth, pastors and congregations can both create space and fertile ground for thriving and reap bountiful benefits if elders in the congregation are thriving.

In addition to assumptions, there are project limitations. Palms is rich in the resources of older adults, financial flexibility and talented staff. This project might feel different in a small church with declining membership, financial struggles, and pastoral leadership who is short in tenure. There is a recognition that it is type of luxury to consider thriving in elderhood because thriving assumes adequate food, shelter, and access to health care. In addition, this pastor/researcher has been serving the congregation for 11 years and has deep relationships, trust and love for, by, and in the congregation.

This project is context specific and though replication and the generation of imagination may be possible, different outcomes might be expected.

²³A progressive staff is not something that goes in the plus category for all “church shoppers’ in northeast Florida. However, it seems to be a draw to retired pastors and still working pastors who are employed outside of the church. At present, Palms Presbyterian has 22 pastors who regularly worship with and consider Palms their church home.

Seeing Thriving Elders

People are in specific contexts their entire life. Some are in healthy, thriving, loving families of origin, some are not. Some are recipients and participants in engaging, thoughtful, mind-expanding educational experiences, some are not. Some find fulfilling lines of work that uplift themselves and others in a fulfilling way, others do not. Health, race, sexuality, beliefs, body image all become part of the story of the individual over time. And so goes life, and so go people in congregations, and so go members of Palms. People move in to retirement and eldering with different experiences, stories, strengths, and limitations. Professor of English John Paul Eakin considered self-told stories of individuals (autobiography) saying, “We tend to think of autobiography as a literature of the first person, but the subject of the autobiography to which the pronoun ‘I’ refers is neither singular nor first, and we do well to demystify its claims. Because autobiography promotes an illusion of self-determinization: I write my story; I say who I am; I create myself. The myth of autonomy dies hard.”²⁴ Eakin states that “all identity is relational”²⁵ and includes the reminder that humans live relational lives, becoming “storied selves”²⁶ Eakin focuses on the past creating our present narrative. Years later, Eakin considered the role of memoried stories for creating future realities, saying, “My hunch is that much of the time we don’t quite see what (the) future might be, and that it is precisely by revisiting the past that the potential future comes into focus.”²⁷

²⁴ Paul John Eakin, *How our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999), 43.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 43.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 99-141. This chapter “Storied Selves: Identity through Self-Narration” asserts the importance of memory (which can be both selective and flawed) in ongoing identity formation.

²⁷ John Paul Eakin, *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 170.

If elders do not have personal stories that include God's love and redemption, then thriving requires God doing a new thing in their lives.²⁸ Perhaps, the pastor can suggest, it is time for a new or redeemed story. Mary McClintock Fulkerson names churches as places where redemption can occur through practices. She asserts, "no place is ever a fixed entity; a place is always in process."²⁹ In an attempt to explain this process of redemption, Fulkerson says:

Discourse about God is generated in a variety of ways. It can occur as a response to metaphysical questions about the world or about the structure of human being. Talk of God also takes form as thanksgiving and praise. More formally put, this latter form of discourse can occur as a knowledge or wisdom—traditionally called *theologia*—that accompanies a transformed life. That is to say that convictions about God occur as a response to human dilemmas, to suffering, fear and injustice, but importantly, to these situations as they are redemptively altered—where amelioration of human dilemmas and suffering takes place.³⁰

Fulkerson names worship and practices in the everyday, as places where God is at work redeeming and doing a new thing.

Author Kathleen Norris reiterates that everyday life is where individuals spend most of their hours and thus, is where both tedium and joy, despair and redemption might break in. Norris says, "It is a quotidian mystery that dailiness can lead to such despair and yet also be at the core of our salvation."³¹ The promise of redemption raises the question: What might be possible if individuals, pastors and church understood themselves in their everyday lives, as always in process of being redeemed and as part of God's ongoing work of redeeming creation?

²⁸ Providentially speaking (alternative language for "luckily") God is always about this work: "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isa 43:18-19).

²⁹ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 35.

³⁰ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 236.

³¹ Kathleen Norris, *The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work"* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 10.

Psychologist Daniel Kahneman, raises many issues about how people make meaning and the positive benefits of intentional, slowed down mental process. When considering elders as storied selves, issues are raised when shame, regret, unresolved anger continue to affect decisions and compromise the new stories that are lived out each day. Of regret, Kahneman says, “Regret is an emotion, and it is also a punishment that we administer to ourselves. The fear of regret is a factor in many of the decisions that people make, and the actual experience of regret is familiar. Regret is one of the counterfactual emotions that are triggered by the availability of alternatives to reality.”³²

One place where regret, fear, anger and other negative narratives can find a counternarrative is in worship. At Palms, worship is the common shared practice of each member. Individuals might or might not have other practices and places in their lives that support an understanding of God’s ongoing work of redemption and calling. However, worship is the space for intentionally living out the claim of God’s Good News of redemption and restorative justice through the love of Jesus Christ in community.

Worship as a space for shared practice and formation as we age, is reiterated by professor James K.A. Smith. If Kahneman raises the importance of our brain memory in creating storied reality, Smith takes it further stating that our whole body holds memory and story. Smith says, “(T)he body carries a kind of acquired, habituated knowledge or know-how that is irreducible and inarticulable, and yet fundamentally orienting for our being-in the world.”³³ The implications of bodily aging for Christians who profess, “For in Christ we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) cannot be missed. If bodies break down, how might our narrative of ourselves as children of God, moving freely and living fully, also change? Smith continues, saying:

³² Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 346.

³³ James K.A. Smith, *Imaging the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 45.

The way we move fundamentally shapes how we can and do experience our world. To appreciate the bodily basis of meaning is to appreciate the bodily conditions of meaning-making. There is a creational, almost incarnational impulse here: a desire to honor the finite (and good!) conditions of our being-in-the world—just those conditions to which God condescends in meeting us and revealing himself to us, and the same conditions by which the Spirit molds and (re)makes us.”³⁴

If church is the primary place for our being-in-the world, then it should be named as such.

Candler School of Theology Professor Don Saliers names worship as a place of “necessary remembering.”³⁵ Saliers names worship as a place of hope for the future saying worship is “a truthful recollection and a sharpened hope. In such times and places of awareness and recognition, a human future becomes possible.”³⁶ Saliers points to the role of individuals within the larger body of Christ, calling the gathered act of worship a “Christian liturgical remembering (that is) humble and self-corrective.”³⁷ Saliers’ voice serves as a faithful reminder that our entire life, including all our days, is a surrender. Saliers continues saying, “For all our life with God and unto God is a holy surrender of ourselves in union with Christ’s self-offering in obedience and love to God, who he calls ‘Abba,’ Father. Everything we have yet to discover about embodying a way of life, about our hope, our reason for being, and our responsibility, is grounded with Christ.”³⁸

Pastoral Care of Attentive Seeing and Hearing

At Palms, how might we understand and name God at work calling, redeeming, strengthening and cultivating elders? If stories and worship both form us and affect our very bodies and very lives, how might the pastor and church create space for God’s renewal in the lives of elders? As I began to consider how stories shape individuals alongside worship as a

³⁴ Ibid, 111.

³⁵ Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*, (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1996), 4.

³⁶ Ibid, 13.

³⁷ Ibid, 13.

³⁸ Don E. Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality* (Akron, OH: OSL Publications, 1996), 70.

space for God's redemption, Candler School of Theology Professor Karen Scheib's work became formative for this project. Scheib put words to my growing hopes for this project, as well as hopes for my ongoing ministry of care to Palms saying:

To enter into another's lifeworld is to enter a holy space. The practice of narrative pastoral care invites us to become story companions to one another, listening in the midst of suffering, listening as a life unfolds, listening for the presence of God. Story companions give attentive reverence to the other and the other's stories, and such companions open themselves to learn from the other."³⁹

Scheib's vision of the interplay of individuals, pastor and church began to intersect with my research in the areas of aging, narrative storytelling, and worship. In Scheib's work with older women, there is a call to the pastor and the church as a counter-reality to the invisibility older women often feel. At Palms, one look from the balcony, paired with the question, "Who do you see?" would elicit some answer that would include "lots of women with white and/or grey hair." Because of Scheib's reminder to challenge invisibility, the class was designed giving attention to encouraging all voices, experiences and stories.

Another contribution of Scheib's to the research was an introduction to the pastoral care practice of restorying. Scheib points to gerontology researchers William Randall and Elizabeth McKim from the field of gerontology. Randall and McKim assert that as individuals age they change: mind, body, spirit, the around you, economics, life understanding all change. Restorying calls upon individuals to re-read the story they have already written about themselves. In restorying, individuals literally rewrite their stories. In the field of pastoral care, restorying takes the form of telling the story with the understanding of God's arc of redemption. Randall and McKim explain restorying calls on individuals to "consider how aging itself inspires narrative

³⁹ Karen D. Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 61.

elaboration-or prompts what is conceivably its opposite: narrative foreclosure.”⁴⁰ Professor of pastoral theology Suzanne M. Coyle tells what restorying may entail, saying, “As people describe problems and dilemmas in their lives, they unfold in the form of stories that link the events of their lives in a theme over time. In re-authoring (restorying) people are invited to develop and tell stories about their lives and are helped to include the experiences that are ‘out of phase’ with their dominant storylines.”⁴¹

Note the word “restorying” is very close to “restoring”. If individuals restory in a way that brings restoration, God is at work in them, bringing them to that place of restoration. Again, our God is a God who redeems, who transforms. Lutheran pastor Herbert Anderson and Roman Catholic priest Edward Foley put the idea of redemptive interplay this way, saying, “Weaving together the human and the divine enables us to hear our own stories retold with clarity and new possibility. And when our own stories are retold, our lives are transformed in the telling.”⁴² Restoration and redemption brings the research alongside the premise that humans are created as co-creators by and with God.

Creating: Co-Creators in God’s Image

“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.”⁴³

God doesn’t only see, God creates. In God’s creation, “God created humans in God’s own image, in the image of God, they were created, male and female, created.”⁴⁴ Imago Dei

⁴⁰ William L. Randall and A. Elizabeth McKim *Reading Our Lives: The Poetics of Growing Old* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118.

⁴¹ Suzanne M. Coyle, *Uncovering Spiritual Narratives: Using Story in Pastoral Care and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 24.

⁴² Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 7.

⁴³ Gen 1:3-4

⁴⁴ Gen 1:27

becomes the ultimate blessing of humans, from which humans are to respond as co-creators in God's image. After seeing, the pastor/researcher moved to creating.

Based on what I saw, I wanted to hear stories of older adults who seemed to be living a life abundant⁴⁵. I sought a way to create space for participants to share stories where I could hear from them on a weekly basis.

The course "Creating a Liturgy of Life" was devised using the common experiences and practices of worship and storytelling. Participants were all Palms members who were regular worship attenders, selected by the pastor/researcher. An information meeting about the class was held and over forty people received a verbal and email invitation (Appendix 1), of whom twenty-seven attended. The course outline and goals (Appendix 2) were reviewed. A class covenant was reviewed (Appendix 3). Participants understood that this was not a regular church class, there would be outside work, meetings with a Spiritual Companion, questionnaires to complete and meetings with the pastor/researcher. They were informed that their stories and responses might be used in a Final Project of the Doctor of Ministry program at Candler School of Theology of Emory University. There were eighteen participants at the first class and by the end of the course there were sixteen.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the course, an Initial Class questionnaire (Appendix 4) was completed. At the end of the course, a last class questionnaire (Appendix 5) was completed. In addition, I held informal meetings around tables with individuals, a mid- course check in

⁴⁵ At this point, I had not attempted to define abundant life or thriving elders, I just knew that some elders, regardless of health or wealth, felt connected to others and sought out new experiences; they were interested in learning and they cared for others. These people are infectious and positive, and others want to be around them. For the purposes of my research, I assembled a group of these individuals.

⁴⁶ One class participant became very ill, one class participant left for travel and missed the last four weeks, one never seemed on-board with the class and came and went and was not an active participant. He was not present for the last class, but did, surprisingly, turn in his last class questionnaire. Not all participants turned in questionnaires or completed the mid-course check in.

(Appendix 6). For the mid-course check in, I met with individuals at the table of their choosing; some at restaurants, some in their homes, one at a beach club, one at a coffee shop, one for tea in my office. I recorded some notes from classes, mid-course check ins and additional interviews (Appendix 7).

The weekly class was designed as a worship experience, with each class focusing on a different liturgical movement in worship (call to worship, passing the peace, confessional section, etc.) Each class was constructed like Sunday worship at Palms with sections entitled “We Come Together as God’s People”, “We Praise God and Celebrate God’s Grace”, “We Hear God’s Word” and “We Respond to God’s Word”. The pastor/researcher prepared the space each week⁴⁷, chose music for a prelude and postlude that corresponded with the liturgical movement for the week, selected scripture and created open-ended questions created to evoke narrative storytelling both in class and out of class. A sample weekly lesson plan can be found in Appendix 8.

Naming

*“God called the light Day, and the darkness God called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning. The first day.”⁴⁸*

God sees, God creates, God names. God names people. God changes people’s names and God tells people what to name other people. People name places. People name other people. Naming is important. In this project, marks of thriving elders were named.⁴⁹ Thriving elders Feel Connected; See and Share Joy and Wonder; Hold an Ongoing Life Purpose. It would have been possible to name other markers, but these three seemed to name what needed to be named.

⁴⁷ Table coverings, candle, font, plate, vessels, etc. Each week was a bit different based on the class topic. The pastor researcher wanted participants to know that a place was prepared for them, the time and space was set aside and though we were in a regular church classroom, God was present with us.

⁴⁸ Gen 1:5

⁴⁹ See fuller description of Thriving Elders beginning on page 26.

Professor Kathleen A. Cahalan's framework for evaluation⁵⁰ is a tool that focused me to name what I saw and created, what my participants experienced and their responses, and what implications the findings have for individual, pastor and church. Cahalan is open to the language of faith as appropriate metrics of measurement, naming the categories of Stewardship: A Virtue of Caring, A Virtue of Seeing, and A Virtue of Taking Action.⁵¹ Cahalan's three-fold tools for evaluation hold gently the sacredness of the work the pastor/researcher undertakes walking in to people's lives.

To steward or to care for individuals, pastor and community should strive to be ever more Christ-like. Liberating and empowering realities require the close work of seeing and naming, which Cahalan calls discernment. "Prudence," says Cahalan, "helps guide our choices in discerning the right projects and the right size of those projects."⁵² In each of these areas this project was faithful. The course was carefully planned and stewarded from beginning to end. There was ongoing discernment, with care taken to hear and fully name both the obvious and the new, but also the surprises and the gifts made manifest. Restraint was shown by the pastor/researcher as the project veered from the initial desire to focus more clearly on storytelling. As the project focus moved to naming the marks of thriving elders, the pastor/researcher felt she was being faithful to the class and the participants and not imposing her own vision, hopes and dreams.

⁵⁰ Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Projects That Matter: Successful Planning and Evaluation for Religious Organizations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003), 86-95.

⁵¹ Initially, I had not made the connection that Cahalan's three categories for measurement (Caring, Seeing, Taking Action) so closely match this project's design: See, Create, Name.

⁵² Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Projects That Matter: Successful Planning and Evaluation for Religious Organizations*, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2003) 91.

In the forward to Cahalan's book, Craig Dykstra⁵³ talks of the care which should be taken as projects and programs are created, lived out and evaluated as we steward our lives and the life of the church together:

When religious organizations mount projects and programs, then what is at stake is the efficacy of love and care and service. What is at stake is how human beings engage with and relate to one another. What is at stake is how minds are illuminated, hearts are moved, burdens are lifted, wounds are healed.⁵⁴

Throughout the course, participants followed a pattern of seeing, creating and naming. They created, liturgical element by liturgical element, a liturgy of their life. Some participants turned in pieces of their liturgy. They crafted prayers, music, and litanies. They named formative scripture in and for their lives. They created and named their own charge and benediction.

Measuring the Named

"Projects are full of surprises,"⁵⁵ states researcher Kathleen A. Cahalan. This project was no different. With older adults as the target group, the project moved from a focus on Narrative Storytelling to a focus on Spiritual Companions to a focus on the Interplay of Individual, Pastor and Church, with emphasis on the congregation gathered for worship. In the final step of writing, it became clear that all along the project journey, the course, "Creating a Liturgy of Life" was primary and all the pieces named above were parts of the whole. Additional surprises came from the people gathered, stories shared, insights gleaned and moments of joy.

The course "Creating a Liturgy of Life" was designed to cultivate thriving in older adults. Participants were recruited for their 1) age 2) willingness to participate and 3) because the

⁵³ Craig Dykstra and his wife, Betsy, joined Palms in January 2019! Writer and Peacemaker John Paul Lederach would appreciate this serendipity.

⁵⁴ Craig Dykstra. "Forward." *Projects That Matter: Successful Planning and Evaluation for Religious Organizations*, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2003) ix.

⁵⁵ Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Projects That Matter: Successful Planning and Evaluation for Religious Organizations*, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2003) 72.

pastor/researcher considered them to be “successfully”⁵⁶ aging. The participants were informed they were helping me consider narrative storytelling and story companionship and that the creation of a liturgy of life was a means to an end; a bonus. As stated above, I began listening and compiling the findings it became clear that the process of creating a life liturgy, using narrative storytelling to consider their life as worship was the focus of the research.

In developing the course “Creating a Liturgy of Life” I was focused on 1) myself and the completion of my DMin project⁵⁷ and 2) providing a meaningful class for participants. However, there was a growing understanding that thriving in elderhood could both enhance and be enhanced by the interplay of the individual, pastor and church, which called for a larger and longer arc of measurement.

The individuals in the class were invited to consider their identity as worshipping beings in their everyday life. For most of them, even in their advanced age, this was a new idea which may remain with them for the rest of their lives. In response to the question “Did God surprise you through this class? If so, how?” on the last class questionnaire, one participant responded, “Yes. God inspired me so much that I was infatuated with each part of worship, spending hours upon hours researching and writing.” Another participant, responding to this same question, told the following story:

This time it (God’s surprise) has been my life liturgy and purpose/calling that constantly popped up in the most unexpected places. I could not escape our study!...I might turn on the radio/TV and hear a program or comment directly related to my liturgy. I am an avid reader and my biggest surprise was that *every* book I have read since the class began had insights concerning my or (my Spiritual Companion’s liturgy. This was so interesting that I found myself taking notes from the radio, TV, movies and plain old novels!

⁵⁶ The measure of successful aging, later to be named Thriving Elders, was a peripheral glance at the outset class, rather than a deep noticing and listening which occurred as the course was held.

⁵⁷ I note the irony that this would put me fully in the Self-Centered category for this goal.

The pastor/researcher as steward is wise to consider the important role she fills in some people's lives. Reading comments like the ones above, it becomes clear that while I was considering the class a "means to the end of the DMin project," the Spirit was about much more in the lives of the course participants. I was reminded that humility and care are of primary importance as I lead individuals down an unexamined path. M. Craig Barnes says the following about the role of pastor: "Pastors help people explore the mystery of their souls."⁵⁸ If this statement is true, the pastor is strengthened in and for ministry, even as individuals are strengthened in and for ministry.

If there is a reciprocal, positive, spiritual affectation between individuals and pastors, might the entire church be affected? There was ongoing interplay which took place in and through the course "Creating a Liturgy of Life". The individuals in the class were intricately woven throughout the congregation. They were: Choir members, a Stephen Ministry leader, in Presbyterian Women circles and leadership, a leader of a Caregiver Support Group, in small groups and small group leadership, in Centering Prayer group, in Christian Education classes, on Outreach teams, ordained deacons, past elders⁵⁹, and the current clerk of session. The convening of this class as a space for speculative imagination⁶⁰ around the topic of "Creating a Liturgy of Life" may ripple through the congregation even as it created movement in the lives of the participants. The tasks of gathering, storytelling, sharing meals and lives strengthens the pastor/individual relationship, but also the relationship with the larger body of Christ.

⁵⁸ M. Craig Barnes, "Poet in Residence: Listening for the Sacred Subtext," *The Christian Century*, February 10, 2009, 27.

⁵⁹ Elder in this case means the leadership role in the PC(USA).

⁶⁰ This is a "winked nod" to Cameron Barr who introduced our class to "pastor as convener" and Keck Mowry who introduced our class the practice of "speculative imagination".

In *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, Anderson and Foley name the community as a worshipping body as a central place for the pastor to link the stories of individuals and the community with God's story. They say,

We understand that the primary aim of pastoral care is to assist people in weaving the stories of their lives and God's stories as mediated through the community into a transformative narrative that will confirm their sense of belonging, strengthen them to live responsibly as disciples in the world, and liberate them from confinement.⁶¹

To steward, or to care for, individuals, self and community toward ever more Christ-like, liberating and empowering realities, requires the close work of seeing and naming, which Cahalan calls discernment.

The use of discernment as an evaluative measure requires the pastor/researcher to claim interest. As opposed to a scientific researcher, the pastor/researcher is intricately woven together with the individuals and the community she researches. In addition, the pastor/researcher has a broader understanding of the lives of individuals and the life of the congregation. Even as I named what I saw as "Marks of Thriving Elders", I hope that each of the research subjects lives in to these marks.

Thriving Elders Feel Connected

Considering connectedness, the important question is not to whom or what are thriving elders connected, but do they feel connected to someone(s) or something. Statements of connection include: I am connected to my family. I am connected to my faith community. I feel God's presence most every day. I enjoy spending time outside. People like to be with me, and I like to be around people.

⁶¹ Hebert Anderson and Edward Foley. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2001) 48.

Each of the participants in the Creating a Liturgy of Life course named connections.

Answering the question “To whom or what are you connected?” they included responses such as:

“my daughter, my music, animals, nature, meditation practice, my friends, far and near, my clients in therapeutic interventions, my home.” – Jo

“Feeling connected to (wife), children and grandchildren.” -Bob S.

“My husband, most of all; trusted friends, my adult children and grandchildren.” -Steffie

Family members are often the obvious connections named but looking closely there are pastoral noticings. For example, it was noted that Jo (above) has a son and a daughter, but only names her daughter while also naming clients, nature, and a practice of meditation. She does not indicate connectedness with her son. This raises a pastoral care question: “is there healing and possible re-connection that could occur between Jo and her son?” Alternately, Steffie’s note of “trusted friends” makes the pastor researcher consider whether Steffie feels she has some friends who may not be trusted.

Following, see the strong points of connection of Lacey, a single woman of 73 feels:

“The Holy Spirit, nature, cousins and their families, my sister-in-law and her family, my church family and activities, neighbors and friends, volunteer work for the less fortunate, my sister-in-law's dog and my neighbor's cat, my college roommate and her husband, my memories and stories.” Lacey’s response is a reminder that assumptions should not be made about who might or might not have strong feelings of connectedness. Note Lacey does not have pets of her own but holds feelings of connection with her sister-in-law’s dog and her neighbor’s cat! In fact, a number of participants named pets as points of connection.

Thriving Elders Possess and Share Joy and Wonder

Possessing and sharing joy and wonder is another mark of thriving elders. They are noticers and namers themselves and call on others to see the joy and wonder that they see.

Thriving can look back on their lives and name where joy and wonder were retrospectively, even during difficult times. This joy and wonder can be loud and exuberant or quiet and contemplative. Thriving Elders seem to not only possess joy and wonder, but also share joy and wonder with others. Joy and wonder are woven together and gain strength, creating a fabric of resilience and power. Thriving elder and Christian educator Parker Palmer envisions the image of weaving as “collecting threads” saying:

You must keep collecting threads—threads of meaning, threads of hope, threads of purpose, energy and will—along with all the knowledge, skill that every weaver needs. You must keep on weaving—stopping sometimes only to repair your broken loom— weave a cloak of warmth and light against the dark and cold, a cloak in which to wrap whoever comes to you in need—the word with all its suffering, those near at hand, yourself. And if you are lucky, you will find along the way the thread with which you can reweave your own tattered life, the thread that more than any other laces us with warmth and light, making both the weaver and the weaving true.”⁶²

Possessing and sharing joy and wonder overlap with being connected and having an ongoing life purpose. The overlap indicates how Thriving Elders piece together their past in a way that continue to strengthen and make meaning in their present and continue to give them hope for the future.

In response to the question “Where do you see and share joy and wonder” on the last class questionnaire (Appendix 5) there was a wide range of responses from family to nature, from the very specific to the general. Here, participant Ginny responds, saying, “Joy comes from connection to family; Joy comes from watching my son’s crazy socks videos; Joy comes from music; find wonder in nature – it’s immensity: mountain vistas, sunrises, sunsets, and its intricacies: flower petals, insect wings, feathers, leaves” The addition of “my son’s crazy sock’s

⁶² Parker Palmer, *On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity & Getting Old* (Oakland, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc. 2018), 51.

video” is an inside joke which the pastor/researcher holds as both sacred to the participant and as a future opportunity for a story.

Thriving Elders Hold an Ongoing Life Purpose

Thriving Elders do not feel that “my best years are behind me”. Thriving Elders understand themselves as learning and growing. As mentioned earlier, Thriving Elders remain curious. They do not think they have learned all there is to learn. They do understand what they have achieved in life, but a Thriving Elder might not hold the same definition for achievement as the larger society.

Vibrant ninety-three-year-old Jo took up the dulcimer at age 90. A retired Social Worker educator who founded the University of West Florida school of social work, Jo understands her life purpose at her advanced age in this way: “To unlearn my way back to the center of all purpose, from which many layers of life, time, experience have separated me. We all have this challenge, but I believe that growing older makes us freer and more committed to the search for God /our spiritual heritage, and for assurances that our destiny lies at the heart of oneness with our creator and with every part of the universe.” Jo just retired from leading a Caregivers Support Group at Palms. She continues to sing in the choir and attend worship and read psalms and prayers at Palms’ Wednesday evening prayer service. Jo’s presence and ongoing contributions of the gifts of herself strengthen the larger church and can give many a role model for aging. In addition, her positive spirit and willingness to learn and grow and try new things encourages the pastor and those around her.

Bob K., in his seventies, has a desire for an ongoing formative relationship with others and with God, saying this of his ongoing life purpose: “To pay attention to God’s presence in daily life. To watch for signs and wonders from God. To be open to where God wants me to go

next, whether for someone's need or my own growth (usually both). Oh, and to be grateful for every day as the supply of them begins to run out." The pastor/researcher notes the verbs Bob K. uses: pay attention, watch for, be open, be grateful. These are words of grace-filled attentiveness with the expectancy that if he pays attention, watches, is open and grateful, that God will be found.

Thriving Elders may possess all these marks or only some of them. Thriving Elders may have different times or situations which impede their ability to thrive. The importance of the church as a place of people, fellow travelers, who can hold individuals during difficult times and transitions, remains an ongoing need. Even as pastors and the church consider how to foster and encourage Thriving Elders, Non-Thriving Elders must not be forgotten: Hidden Elders, Egocentric Elders and Embittered Elders.⁶³

CONCLUDING IMPLICATIONS

The interplay of individuals, pastor and church indicates that there is work to be done by the church, pastor and individuals to help elders thrive. In addition, as more elders thrive, there are implications for the church, the pastor and individuals as they harvest the gifts of thriving elders.

Church

At Palms, this project, as mentioned earlier, is part of a new Older Adult Ministry. We will be sharing the findings of this project and talking about the marks of Thriving Elders, as well as encouraging individuals to consider what disciplines or behaviors they may choose to undertake to help them as they age.

⁶³ For a review of the categories of elders, refer to the chart on page 7 and the brief description of the categories in the discussion following the chart.

The church's new older adult group, Seasoned Saints, will also consider what milestones we might mark, what programs might help individuals thrive and what ways they might help connect individuals both to each other and intergenerationally throughout the church.

Consideration of Hidden Elders, Self-Serving Elders, and Embittered Elders should remain in the imagination of the entire church as we plan programs and opportunities for ongoing pastoral care.

Pastor

I will continue to look for ways to help people connect and remain connected one with each other. Understanding storytelling as central to both individuals understanding of self and a way to share of themselves and to strengthen the larger body, I will continue to seek ways for people to share in storytelling in worship, in classes and small groups, and in church programs. For example, the Seasoned Saints ministry just held a storytelling program around circle tables called "Sips, Sweets, and Stories"

In addition, I will refine the course "Creating a Liturgy of Life" and teach it a second time at Palms, using individuals from the first class as helpers. It is possible a small group might be equipped to teach the class to additional groups of older adults.

In the second teaching, "Creating a Liturgy of Life" will be adapted to a workshop format to hopefully be taught through Columbia Seminary's Older Adult Certificate program and possibly in a conference setting.

The marks of Thriving Elders will be refined and described to others, as I consider how to minister to older adults in our continuum of care communities located in our area. Might we offer "Creating a Liturgy of Life" at these locations? Might we add prayer services or regular

worship services at these locations? Might we organize older adults in these communities to minister to each other?

Just as I am excited about the possibilities for encouraging elders to thrive, she is equally concerned with entrenched Hidden Elders, Self-Serving Elders and Embittered Elders in the church and the larger community. These individuals are present in the body of Christ and in our communities. Though this project focused on cultivating Thriving Elders, persons in each of these categories deserve attention, through further research, pastoral care and outreach. Many elders live on the margins of society today and both the pastor and the church need to experiment with ways of bringing the love of Christ to them.

Individuals

Palms and the pastors of Palms can and will encourage, plan, offer, and implement wonder-filled, Spirit-led offerings, and theologically-sound worship. However, if individuals are not willing to step in to a place of connection, wonder, and ongoing life purpose, the offerings will fall flat.

Individuals at Palms are invited to consider their particular story as part of God's larger story of redemption. If their story needs restorying, if they need restoration, they should reach out to pastor, friend, family, counselor and come to points of healing as a way to move in to their future.

As elders consider their life as worship, they can be encouraged to take a hard look at and responsibility for places and moments where past experiences and stories do not support their current life. Where and when have they not represented God who created them as loving, worshipping beings? How are they now called to live in to the ongoing love and redemption of Jesus? What new stories are necessary to support a life that glorifies God? If our chief end of life

is “to glorify God and enjoy God forever”, what grace must be named and shared to make it so in our own lives and in the lives of others?

Appendix 1-Invitation to Informational Meeting for Creating a Liturgy of Life Course



Hello,

Pastor Laurie here. This summer, I have been preparing for this class which will be a piece of my DMin (Doctor of Ministry) project. I am very excited about both the class and the project and want to invite you to be a participant.

You are invited to be a part of class, Creating a Liturgy of Life, which will take place most Fridays in September, October and November at 11 am in the chapel at Palms.

Please come to the first class to learn more about it. After that class, you will have a good idea whether or not this is something of which you would like to be a part!

You are a select group receiving this invite and Laurie will tell more about that at the first class. It is not by any means an exclusive group, so you can bring a friend or a spouse, but please bring yourself!

If you have questions, please contact me at laurie.furr-vancini@palmschurch.org . I hope to see you on September 7th as we begin this journey together!

Peace, Laurie Furr-Vancini

Appendix 2 – Creating a Liturgy of Life Class Outline

Creating a Liturgy of Life Fridays at 11:00 in Room 203

Goals for class

- Learn practices of “story care through which we attend to our stories and revise them as needed to move toward greater well-being.”⁶⁴
- Create a Liturgy of Life worship service which includes stories from your past and present which guide you into your future and are strengthened and redeemed by God.
- Work alongside a Spiritual Companion as you create a community of two who walk alongside each other in the process of creating your Liturgy of Life.
- Learn about Narrative Storytelling, Life as Worship, Restorying, Meta Narrative and Worship Planning.
- Become connected in and with Palms Presbyterian in a new and imaginative way.
- Help Pastor Laurie in her work toward her DMin degree.

Date	Topic
9/7	Introduction
9/14	Call to Worship
9/21	Welcome, Announcements & Passing of the Peace
9/28	Confession and Pardon
10/5	Scripture and Story/Meditation/Sermon
10/12	Prayers
10/19, 26	Time with Spiritual Companion - Laurie will not be present on these Fridays, but will be available during these two weeks for individual meetings
11/2	Sacraments
11/9	Music
11/16	Offering, Charge and Benediction
12/30	Preparing for Worship

⁶⁴ Scheib, Karen. *Attend to Stories: How to Flourish in Ministry*. Wesley's Foundry Books, 2018, pg. v.

Further Considerations:

Confidentiality – Please respect the confidentiality of individual class members and your Spiritual Companion. Only share if you are told it is OK to share. Pastor Laurie may share things for the purpose of her DMin project, but your names will be changed. Your stories belong to you and they will only be shared at Palms with your name attached if you offer them for use.

Absences—To participate in this class, you need to covenant to be present if at all possible. That said, there are times when you are sick or out of town. It will be your responsibility to stay on task through the help of your Spiritual Companion or another class member.

Participation—This class will only work if you are willing to participate in the class discussions, the homework each week and the intentional time with your Spiritual Companion. In addition, you will be asked to participate in a survey and/or interview at the beginning of the course and the end of the course which will be crucial for Pastor Laurie’s DMin project completion.

Process/Product—Though you will learn things about yourself in this class and develop a Life Liturgy, this class is ultimately about listening and companioning. The Life Liturgy is the end product of the process of Spiritual Companioning and the group learning of the class rather than vice versa. As such, it will be important to pay attention to the ongoing process and relationship building and the attentive listening to God, other and self throughout the three months we will be together.

Commended Book – There will be reading through the course with the primary source being the Bible. However, I commend Karen Scheib’s book, [Attend to Stories: How to Flourish in Ministry](#), 2018. It costs \$24.99 on Amazon. It is written for pastors. Rather than tuning that part out, I commend you to consider yourself as called in to the priesthood of all believers, which is an important tenant of reformed theology.

Work of Healing—Sometimes difficult memories are brought to the surface in a class or setting like the one you will be undertaking. You may find others’ stories trigger difficult memories or stories in you. You may find that you are finally ready to share an untold story. Palms member, Dr. Barbara Bishop, LMFT, LMHC, CCMHC of Soul Focus Resources has agreed to be a consultant for this class and is willing to have members of the class referred to her. She will have a copy of our course syllabus and is familiar with narrative therapy and restorying.

Appendix 3-Class Covenant

Class Covenant

I agree:

- That I will seek to faithfully live out question 1 of the Westminster Catechism.
- To participate fully including reading and meeting with my Spiritual Companion.
- To only miss class in the event of illness or being out of town.
- To be present for at least 2/3 of the classes.
- To gather information missed (if you have to miss a class).
- To practice my best listening.
- To be as honest with myself and my Spiritual Companion as possible.
- To have bits of my story used by Laurie in her final project of the Doctor of Ministry program of Candler School of Theology at Emory University.
- To be in prayer for myself, my Spiritual Companion, others in the class and Laurie as she works on her project.
- To take each assignment seriously understanding that the process of recalling and telling narratives is more important than any written piece that may come from the assignment or the class.
- To remain open to where the Holy Spirit takes me in and through this process.
- To reach out to Laurie or Barbara Bishop for help if painful memories of experiences threaten to overtake me.⁶⁵

Signature

Date

⁶⁵ Laurie and your Spiritual Companion are not therapists.

Appendix 4- Initial Class Questionnaire Responses

What about having and being a Spiritual Companion intrigues you and gives you energy?

“I’m interested in gaining perspective from another Christian in a different life phase/journey. Not sure about the energy part and unsure about being a spiritual companion.” -Ginny

“I believe that we are created by relational and that the most spiritual and rewarding parts of life come in our inter-living with others (humans and animals). So, I am glad this class involves companionship with others. Sharing results in greater possibilities for growth and joy.” -Jo

“Since I serve as a Spiritual Director currently, I welcome the relational/community building and storytelling part of this companionship with a new-to-me friend.” -Martha

“My love for people and community is a reason I am committing to do this. To listen to someone’s story and to have someone listen to mine as we discern together the presence of the Spirit is a gift for which I am grateful.” -Meli

“Meeting someone from Palms. Making a new friend. Hearing his story.” -Bob K.

“learning their stories. I love hearing about people’s stories and their pasts. It really helps me understand them more fully. Also, people are wise (mostly) and I love learning from them.” -Robin

“Getting to know my Spiritual Companion better. Sharing and discussing all topics in this class – how has her faith helped her cope with life? Has her faith ever presented a problem in her life? Also sharing and discussing increase my knowledge, strengthen my faith and I become more spiritual.” -Susie

“different point of view” -Bob S.

“enjoyment of sharing thoughts, ideas” -Laura

“I am intrigued that (spiritual companion) and I who are good friends, might draw much closer to each other and to God by compassionately discussing, telling and retelling life stories and spiritual experiences. Perhaps we will recognize even more of God’s interventions.

Entering the senior stages of life, I’m energized to discover that coming new challenges and joys might be accompanied with a deeper faith and trust that ‘all will be well, and all will be well.’” -Lacey

What about having and being a Spiritual Companion or this class raises red flags or barriers for you?

“I am not a ‘personal sharer’ and felt that my spiritual life won’t be very beneficial to my companion. I’m much more the ‘pray in secret’ type.” – Ginny

“I don’t see any red flags. I do have some fears about being seen with all my flaws and needs showing but plan to try to roll with the expected vulnerability.” – Jo

“As I prepare to leave my home in the next year, my energy is moving toward that transition time. Investing time/energy in new relationships seems a bit difficult at the moment, and since I will be out of town some, I have a concern about not disappointing my companion or the larger group by my absences.” -Martha

“The challenge to dig deep and to be honest with myself and companion about where I am in life.” -Meli

“Hoping I can contribute as much as she does. Hope she will learn as much as I do. Hope we will build trust with each other. I do not feel any barriers between us.”

“Concern for the future of the relationship when the class ends.” -Bob K.

“That I hope I live up to my end of the bargain. That I stay committed to the work that is involved. And that I don’t have much to offer them.” -Robin

“will I really share?” -Jan

“mixed on this” -Bob S.

“not ready to share raw feelings-not confident-fear of companion not being confidential, lack of respect for confidentiality.” -Laura

“Perhaps my following comment is a hold-over, but I grew up with both sides of my family reserving intimate conversations for family only. I remain uncomfortable sharing outside the family, even with close friends.

Also, giving comfort gives me infinitely more comfort and joy than receiving comfort. My teenage prayer to spread peace and happiness wherever I am, remains my goal. For personal issues or just for pleasure, my way is more like the hymn, “In the Garden.” -Lacey

Why are you participating in this class (name as many reasons as come to mind)?:

“To help you and now that I have Jo as my Spiritual Companion – to get to know her. 😊” – Ginny

“happy to be asked” -Jan

“1. Because Laurie asked me to think about it and I felt honored and intrigued. 2. I like to read and study all kinds of things, especially at this age, spiritual things.” -Jo

“Because Laurie asked. Because I want to get to know people at Palms. Because I need accountability in my journey.” -Meli

“Improve listening skills and communicate better. Learn to tell a good life story. Learn all the parts and details of worship. Learn from others experience. Inspire others to be spiritual.” - Susie

“To meet others at Palms. To reflect on my life at this age. To be helpful to Laurie in her DMin project.” -Bob K.

“growth. To begin to journal my story. To help find meaning in my life. Because Laurie said I had to, LOL JK” -Robin

“raise the intellectual content of what is available in this locale” – Bob S

“Maybe Laurie would see I had something to offer-curious-maybe gain confidence in myself.” - Laura

“1. Maintain friendships with small group. 2. Expand on small group studies and conversations 3. Learn and practice something new as described in Goals for class handout, bullet points. 4. Support Palms and Laurie.” -Lacey

Jesus says, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” What does/would abundant life look and feel like for/to you?

“I’m honestly not sure – I have a lot of abundance in my life – family, wealth, health. I suppose abundant life would be an abundance of peace and purpose and using that to bring peace to others.” -Ginny

“It involves feeling assured every day that I continue in God’s love and care whatever transpires. This takes openness to it, and practice in keeping aware of it- worrying comes easily to me, but it needs to grow less and less controlling in my life.” -Jo

“Abundant life is to live each day in the full knowledge that in life and in death I belong to God. It’s easier for me to trust that ‘in death’ than ‘in life.’ Abundant life----real abundant life---

would mean a sense of dancing joyfully through all of the everyday tasks and relationships--- knowing that WE (self, family, community, world) belong to God no matter what.” -Meli

“In my later years I look to my church to give me support, love and knowledge. I look to good friends who will give care and support when needed (as I will do the same). I look for a safe environment to live where I can find peace and tranquility. I hope I can provide for myself and still give some to family, church and friends. I know that God will always be there for me.” - Susie

“To be a human being, a child of God, a brother of Jesus, fully alive and connected in non-judgmental love with others. To live every day with hope and faith and be in every present moment.” -Bob K.

“hmmm... for me it feels like being healthy and making healthy choices for myself would contribute to an abundant life. Healthy food choices, healthy use of time, self-care. And with these things comes freedom (for me) to then try and do new things, be less inhibited, say no more, say yes more! And because money has always been a place of fear for me, I would like to live into the things I learned about myself when working with a money coach a few years ago. I know this would allow more freedom and less fear. 😊” -Robin

“living my ‘better’ self; sometimes do decent job often hardest to do with those closest to me; easier to do a step (or more away) e.g. easier to facilitate small group than to be that same self with spouse” -Jan

“Don’t know. Looking forward to lean more in class.” -Bob S.

“Free of obstacles to fully enjoy and love, all humankind-daily bread – peace – beauty of the earth and all living creatures.” -Laura

“For me, abundant life is being surrounded by overlapping circles of friends from various walks of life and others whom I might have the opportunity to serve, anchored by the Trinity. As an introvert and lover of solitude, my abundant life requires abundant time to refresh through solitary activities, nature, reflection and prayer.” -Lacey

Appendix 5-Last Class Questionnaire Compiled Responses

What about having and being a Spiritual Companion was helpful and gave you energy?

“This has been the best part for me-I have loved getting to know my S.C. – we have many similar personality traits. My S.C. still questions & doubts which makes me feel better about my own” -Ginny

“I’ve found a new friend – someone who I probably wouldn’t have sought out, who comes from a very different place, who has different values, but with whom I have so much in common. This is the clearest ‘gift’ from being part of the group”. -Bob N.

“A new friendship with Bob Sellery was the best surprise of the class. We would not have met otherwise. A reminder that choosing a church may begin with personal belief or need but results in finding a supportive community of meaningful friendships.” -Bob K.

“It was wonderful to talk things over, ask each other questions, confide in each other. Even when you know someone, we learned more about each other.” -Susie

“The delight and surprise in find a new partner with whom I found much in common and who is struggling at 40 years younger with some issues I recognize. She is kind, loving and open to new learning which energizes me in my search for new ideas about spiritual things.” -Jo

My companion was sick for an extended time at the beginning of the class and did not continue the class. I appreciated our phone conversations, and the initial time of getting to know one another at the first class. It was good to meet with Laurie about my liturgy for life process, and then I felt frustrated that I became ill (for 3 weeks) and was unable to be present toward the end of the class. -Kathy

“Having a spiritual companion was helpful, gave me energy.” -Bob S.

“I’m afraid we were unable to connect as we had hoped because of schedule and distance. I surely enjoyed my time together with Robin when it happened and wish we could have spent more time together.” -Steffie

“I was surprised that I was able to express raw feelings to my companion. It felt good to share happy and sad times in our lives. We both seem to find joy in our daily living! Our time together was easy and relaxed.” -Laura

“Having a spiritual companion made me more accountable and better able to intertwine my life stories. During one conversation, I experienced an ah-ha, transformative, integrated story outlook rather than sorting through the scattered bits and pieces I have held of many stories. Having a companion broadened my understanding of our liturgy for life project.

I felt useful and gained from being a story companion as I listened and responded with interest. Often when not in conversation, I found myself leaning into her stories with thought and concern for her liturgy journey. Since we are near the same age, it was energizing and helpful to both of

us when we shared common experiences of our generation and recognized a number of mutual themes and experiences.” -Lacey

I’ve found a new friend – someone who I probably wouldn’t have sought out, who comes from a very different place, who has different values, but with whom I have so much in common. This is the clearest “gift” from being part of the group. -Bob N.

Nice to spend time and share stories and class work with a woman I did not know well. Not sure how deep the conversations went, but our lunches together were long and conversational. We trusted one another to share, and new conversations always give me energy -Barbara

Did God surprise you through this class? If so, how?

“God gave me the perfect Spiritual Companion” -Ginny

“Yes. He inspired me so much that I was infatuated with each part of worship, spending hours upon hours researching and writing.” -Susie

“I tend to be very structured, process-driven and goal oriented, but the class felt open and unstructured – forcing me to seek form and answers in new places. I found myself pushing to complete tasks and was frustrated when I couldn’t do them quickly in an allotted time slot. I couldn’t do it and finally realized that I needed to be quiet and listen to find answers. It was disturbing and gave me a new appreciation for the value of a more contemplative approach to my “to do” list.” -Bob N.

“I am not sure if it was really a surprise or rather a re-learning, that I need not be anxious, because I can let go of impediments, God will prove to have been with me all the time, as a loved child.” -Jo

“No surprises from God, although I am pleasantly surprised by God in other things.” -Bob S.

“Not sure on surprise. Interested to see (husband) engaged and enjoy (his spiritual companion) ...sort of a “god moment” for me on that score. True to my normal self I skated through whatever I could...that being said, the personal conversation/story shared with you (Laurie) was one that hasn’t been told in a long time and I was a little surprised at myself that I shared it.” - Barbara

“I designed worship in the past but always with the needs of others and the responsibility to honor denominational traditions in mind. The result was different here thinking of my worship desires and needs. God revealed that music, movement and silence can be real moments of transcendence.” -Bob K.

“During the first class, some ministry journey similarities w/ my spiritual companion were surprising and fun to discuss. Laurie’s music choices to begin/end each class with, were engaging and surprising and fit so well with the theme. I appreciated using some secular music to engage spiritual topics of our class...it’s sparked some “outside the box” imagination for me.

There were stories that people told in the class that were surprising – I appreciated people’s vulnerability in their storytelling.’ -Kathy

“I wish I could say that I felt God’s presence and yet, of course, God was with us!” -Steffie

“Looking back at the great times and the bad experiences, it seems that I was cared for by God’s love though others. I was never alone.” -Laura

“Yes, but in ways which are not unfamiliar to me. This time it has been my life liturgy and purpose/calling that constantly popped up in the most unexpected places. I could not escape our study!

For example, this morning I opened a roll of paper towels picked up from the Dollar Tree. Lo and behold, I was greeted with colorful words singing out to me on the sheet, "Good Morning, Beautiful." and "Let Your Light Shine". How did it know my calling??? Even little musical notes were there!

I might turn on the radio/TV and hear a program or comment directly related to my liturgy. I am an avid reader and my biggest surprise was that *every* book I have read since the class began had insights concerning my or Justine's liturgy... This was so interesting that I found myself taking notes from the radio, TV, movies and plain old novels! (I expected to hear a lot from the pulpit and was surprised only by how it seemed to relate so directly to me. This morning, Hope, Love, Compassion, Joy and "This little Light of Mine" was shouting at me.)” -Lacey

In your life, to whom or what do you feel connected?

“I am connected to my family-at the moment mostly with my daughter. I would like to be physically closer to them more often.” -Ginny

“my daughter, my music, animals, nature, meditation practice, my friends, far and near, my clients in therapeutic interventions, my home.” – Jo

“Feeling connected to (wife), children and grandchildren.” -Bob S.

“The over-arching piece I live with is God’s grace...confirmed in rough times...and undergirding the mundane of the everyday, often as blessing. If I don’t have a prayer idea to open my small group on Tuesday, I don’t fret. A little looking, a glance outside the windows, whatever, and the words seem to come and be appropriate.

I am deeply connected to my family, and that includes the “strays” we have gathered to us over the years. I live with the most generous man who out-does me on the caring end of things...and with whom I am deeply connected even when I could strangle him.

I am blessed more than I can ever say to be part of Palms. Northern girl finds home in the south via church. Not really a surprise to learn way back when that Palms began as an outreach of the northern branch of the denomination...thanks be to God. AMEN! Only time I “suffered” was the (interim pastor) time.” -Barbara

“My husband, most of all; trusted friends, my adult children and grandchildren.” -Steffie

“Wife, family, old friends, beauty, time passing and a mysterious God.” -Bob K.

“God, church (staff and church family), friends, community.” -Susie

My circle of connections is getting smaller in this season, as I seem to be having trouble maintaining previously larger circles of connection. Focus is on nuclear family, a few seminary students, a few spiritual directees, Presbytery responsibilities, supporting groups/congregations who seek my help with labyrinth ministries...and a shift away from frequent daily engagement with multiple groups of people. -Kathy

“I value the secure feeling I had as a child and that my parents nurtured me in a very loving way. Church involvement was a constant. I figured out who I was at church camp while in junior high. I continue to feel loved as well as needed. Throughout my adult life, I was encouraged to work in helping positions and was fortunate to meet and work with individuals with similar values as mine. Regular attendance at worship services is my anchor and reminder of God’s love and plan for me. The many opportunities to serve drew me to this church. Serving as a Stephen Minister is extremely rewarding.” -Laura

The Holy Spirit, nature, cousins and their families, my sister-in-law and her family, my church family and activities, neighbors and friends, volunteer work for the less fortunate, my sister-in-law's dog and my neighbor's cat, my college roommate and her husband, my memories and stories. -Lacey

In your life, where do find/see joy and wonder?

“Joy comes from connection to family

Joy comes from watching my son’s crazy socks videos

Joy comes from music; knowledge

I find wonder in nature – it’s immensity: mountain vistas, sunrises, sunsets, and its intricacies: flower petals, insect wings, feathers, leaves” -Ginny

“See joy with family gatherings, especially my 80th birthday in April, with children, grandchildren and spouses here for the event.” -Bob S.

“Each day I wake up and feel God’s presence and see his creations all around me.” -Susie

“In my 50-year relationship with Barbara who sometimes frustrates, but always elevates me to be so much more than I could otherwise be.

- In the stories of my children and grandchildren.
- In the wise instruction and counsel others who constantly open new doors and provide new opportunities for growth.

- In the faces of fellow residents at Vicar's Landing who are 10, 20 and even 30 years older than me and can still live amazing lives.
- As part of the Palms choir where I can join my limited talents with others to make music that impacts others in amazing ways. – Bob N.

“Same as above actually – relationships, music, pets (mine and others) meditation practices, physical activity (walking, bicycling, swimming) nature.” -Jo

As much as I don't want to write this, I am not experiencing/seeing very much joy and wonder at the moment. This feels like a dark-night-of-the soul time. I do think a new season will unfold, but for now there's discouragement and some fear, with a good number of unknowns, and not a lot of clarity. I have wonder as I plant and tend to plants in my back-yard garden.... it's a safe and peaceful space in which I find refuge, and often unexpected happenings ☺ -Kathy

“Love – spouse, kids and grandkids and a few friends who go back almost 50 years—sunrise and sunset, the ocean, (joy and wonder) can sometimes be found at Palms...” -Barbara

“Joy and wonder are occasional, unpredictable events, not for every moment, every day or even every week. Art and music lift my spirit. Reading brings revelations. A good conversation energizes. Sometimes in church on a Sunday. Most of all, a call from one of my adult kids. Wow.” -Bob K.

“I see joy and wonder in the faces of children and in the great outdoors (such as the beach). I love to listen to music and sing and feel joyful when I get together with friends.” -Steffie

“New babies-humans, puppies, kittens-all new life! Family life-any fun adventure!; The beauty of the earth-from the tiny flower to the vast land and water!; The love of God—His grace, His forgiveness!” -Laura

“Almost everywhere, every day. Recently, I was watching the beach renourishment in front of my house. A young man stood near me. We began chatting about the project and the beauty of the nor'easter churning the water. I commented, "How amazing that we can push back the ocean!" He looked at me with wide eyes and said, "Oh. You know, I never thought about that." This was a simple, but wonderful and joyous experience for both of us. After he walked on, I lingered for a long time just to feel the salt air and watch the big ocean being pushed back. Likewise, I was at my dental surgeon's office and picked up a fabulous coffee table book about the cosmos which reminded me of how great our universe is and yet, in another way, how great we tiny humans are as well. "How Great Thou Art!"” -Lacey

How would you state your current and future life purpose (I know this is a huge question!)

“current and future same as now – volunteer, consulting, personal time with (wife), watching waves at the beach, golf with son-in-law and friends.” -Bob S.

I am at an odd intersection of my life. My purpose as a stay-at-home mom has changed drastically with the kids in college and I'm struggling to figure out my new normal. I find that I look back too much on past choices and how those choices have affected where I am now. I still keenly feel the absence of my father (who died a year ago) who was my go-to for advice, reassurance and solace. I feel that I'm in a holding pattern for now. I hope the future will hold more peace and a clearer purpose for me – one where I'm successfully serving others, connected with family in closer proximity and more comfortable with myself. -Ginny

““don't worry, be happy.” So far I have good health, good relationships, great family, church family I also love. I am a good mom/grandparent/ and usually spouse. So, if I act on/with the side of my “better angels” I hope to just keep on being/doing. It's interesting to be noticeably “liberal”, because what I always thought was middle of the road is now liberal...and I like embracing that most of the time. I enjoy being part of the grants work of the Women's Giving Alliance...ever since it started...and that is my only “across the ditch”⁶⁶ engagement, but a valuable one. If I stay healthy...just keep doing.” -Barbara

As a business consultant, I've defined my purpose as helping companies, organizations and people identify and create value. I started out 50 years ago defining value as wealth creation - pushing changes to generate money-money-money for me and others. Over time I've tried (with mixed success) to shift toward less quantitative and more subjective values.

Building new relationships

Creating quiet spaces in my schedule

Listening intently to what others say – particularly when I don't like the message.

Seeking common ground – really trying to be empathetic.

Being less assertive in everything I do (very hard for me). -Bob N.

“To unlearn my way back to the center of all purpose, from which many layers of life, time, experience have separated me. We all have this challenge, but I believe that growing older makes us freer (?) and committed to the search for God /our spiritual heritage, and for assurances that our destiny lies at the heart of oneness with our creator and with every part of the universe.”
-Jo

“To pay attention to God's presence in daily life. To watch for signs and wonders from God. To be open to where God wants me to go next, whether for someone's need or my own growth (usually both). Oh, and to be grateful for every day as the supply of them begins to run out.” -
Bob K.

“Although I am getting older and cannot do as much as I would like, I plan to listen carefully for God's Word and see if He leads me to another calling or to increase the calling I feel I have. My purpose is to always lead the life He would want me to which continually makes me a joyous, happy person.” -Justine

⁶⁶ The term “across the ditch” is beach slang for “over the intercoastal waterway bridge”. There is a clear desire amongst many beach-dwellers to be self-sufficient islanders and to “not cross the ditch”.

“I’m thinking – at the moment that my future life purpose is to use the days I have left to serve others through volunteer work. That’s a short answer to a long list of opportunities. I am always happiest when I can do things for others. My volunteer work at schools, at hospice, and the hospital engaged me.” -Steffie

“Current Life Purpose:

- ~Physical, emotional and spiritual health
- ~Working toward wading into an unknown & unpredictable future
- ~Releasing oppressive expectations
- ~Restoring connections

Future Life Purpose:

I don’t know yet. It has something to do with Micah 6:8, caregiving for parent, grandchildren, nieces/nephews and and not disappearing into anxiety/depression, and accepting that my previously lofty aspirations may not come to pass....and being ok with that.” -Kathy

“I want my family to know their history, to feel loved and in turn, to show love to all mankind. I am a firm believer in traditions and rituals. I will always hold my family close and can see my husband and I hosting family dinners at our large dining table sharing our advice, love and Christian values.

Through my daily living, I will do my best to make a difference in our community and world by demonstrating God’s love and care for all. I expect every day to have meaning and joy! And I know meaning and joy do not just happen, but, I will look for them all the same.” -Laura

“To spread joy, love and happiness where ever I go. To live one day at a time, grateful for each new day, remembering it is the day the Lord has made, rejoicing and being glad in it. To reach out to others with an open, compassionate heart. To pray without ceasing, knowing God is with us always, strengthens us, uplifts us, and gives us a life of courage, peace and love.” -Lacey

Write your charge/benediction here:

“My friends, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He shows us love, kindness, forgiveness and mercy. Go and do likewise.” -Ginny

“How can I honor Your wonderful gifts to us? Only by passing them on – by being generous with our time and wealth and by trying our best to model your example. So, we are called to pass on the love, grace and treasures we have received – to live as examples of God’s light among us as you join with your family, those around you everywhere right now and in the hours, days and years to come. Amen – Bob N.

“If you felt blessed here, go be a blessing to others. If you felt loved here, go love someone today. If you felt joyful, lifted up, empowered as a beloved child of God, Jesus’ sister or brother, go be the light of Christ in others. Go repair and heal the world. Jesus said, ‘As you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” -Bob K.

“Each and every day of our lives, may the Eternal Lord and Healer help us live in the present, knowing His plan for us and that His love for us overcomes all. As we go into the world sharing our precious, individual gifts, may the Lord bless us and keep us with peace and love. Let Him take us by the hand and lead us on in a lifetime of song and dance. Amen.” -Lacey

“Now to the one who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of God’s glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and forever. Amen.” – Steffie

“May the love of life fill our hearts. May the love of earth bring joy to heaven. May the love of self deepen our souls. May the love of neighbor heal our world. As nations, as peoples, as families this day may the love of life heal our world. John Philip Newell

“Now may the Lord of Peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The lord be with all of you” 2 Thess. 3:16

Go in grace and peace. Amen.” -Barbara

What else do you want to say about this class, about God, about your Spiritual Companion experience, about storytelling, about Laurie, about the way the class was constructed, etc. etc.

I don’t know if I grasped the storytelling aspect very well. I’m afraid I’ve taken a more academic approach to the liturgy over the personal (which is typical of me). Maybe I’m not ready. The Spiritual Companion piece was awesome as I hit the jackpot there! Definitely the best part of the class for me and I will continue to engage with my S.C. I like the concept of life as worship as presented in the class and dissecting the order of worship/liturgy. The music at the beginning and end of each class was fun. I think you did a good job guiding the class each week and sticking with the day’s topic. Adding the time for sharing was good. -Ginny

“I recognize that my busy-ness has kept me from participating in the class as fully as I should have and would have liked to do.

By sharing my values and experiences with (Spiritual Companion), I’ve recognized the power of telling and listening to stories – how interesting and fun it is to do both. The sharing seems to build a bond faster than I would have expected.

I’m still struggling, and my faith seems to fade in and out like waves that respond to the situations I’m in and the people I’m with. Understanding that wherever I am is an OK place to be – as long as I keep moving forward.

(Wife) and I have talked about putting together a joint liturgy this month. It’s a busy time, so I can make excuses for not following through, but there seems to be something pulling us toward this next step.

Laurie, thanks for inviting us into this exercise and making us part of your journey.”– Bob N.

“Even conceiving of this class was a demonstration of Laurie’s amazing capacity for pulling together diverse elements—worship, human relationships, attention to aging and life stories, scripture, music, comparative liturgies and more—as a reflection of how each of us finds God in our lives and in the church! It was a big assignment, and she brought to it her characteristically high degree of pastoral caring for the participants.

I am a life-long ‘student’ and am very appreciative of having been included in this class. I am pretty certain that seeds have been sown for me that will further the personal and spiritual benefits.” -Jo

“Enjoyed meeting new people, including spiritual companion.” -Bob S.

“In some ways, I feel as though the class had just begun to connect, but I understand that it takes time for a group to bond and I’m not sure this happened.” -Steffie

“It was the best experience I have had so far at Palms. Laurie, as always, was a great leader. I appreciated that she gave us extra time before class, and she gave constructive comments on our work. She did not put any pressure on us and gave us so much leeway concerning our writings.”
-Susie

“Laurie’s structuring of each class session was well thought out, theologically sound and creative, and there was a reasonable amount of work requested for each session.

I appreciated Laurie’s attention to drawing each person out so that everybody had a chance to share some of their story, and that in each story she helped the class weave our understanding of worship as it connects to our stories/life liturgies.

Although my companion could not continue the class, there were a few moments of supportive recognition and appreciation of each other’s life journey’s as we had that first in-person conversation. Our subsequent emails and phone calls gave us a glimpse of each other’s lives (for ex. both of us have children who are pilots), and our awareness of being in a very transitional season of life and ministry.

There was a trusting atmosphere of safety in the class, such that people felt comfortable sharing their stories and being vulnerable, and I felt that people genuinely listened to one another.

It was fun to hear people engage around the components of worship...their ideas, questions, suggestions, new understandings and appreciation for how worship liturgy is chosen and experienced in worship.

Laurie honored the time of the class, was flexible when class wanted more storytelling time and so incorporated that into an optional “before class” time.

Having had some early time in ministry serving at Palms, being reconnected with a few folks who were instrumental in my first call there was meaningful to me.

This transitional season of life for me, in all its disjointed-ness and lack of clarity does feel like a pivotal place to examine my image and understanding of God, and to examine what God's call is in the midst of not-knowing, and not connecting in familiar ways with community, family and God." -Kathy

"I enjoyed the class! (I had perfect attendance.) I always worry that I talk too much when in this kind of setting and I am pretty careful to not reveal too many personal thoughts. So, having a spiritual companion was new and different for me. However, the experience was good.

The storytelling was a challenge and sometimes I felt like I was writing my obituary. I chose to 'write' my story by using music and quotes that were meaningful to me. Anyone who knows me would realize what my life reference was by the music selections.

I am old enough to be Laurie's mother, but I continue to learn from her. I appreciate her knowledge and authenticity. The intent of the class was intriguing. In fact, I would suggest a version be used as training for new elders and deacons! Thank you, Laurie, for inviting me to be part of your project! I appreciate learning more about the Presbyterian worship services!" -Laura

"I loved every minute of this. Thank you for the experience. I hope I've been of some help for your paper.

It has been very spiritually rewarding to have a better understanding of our Order of Worship. Over the years I have observed how well connected/organized our services are with the sermon, hymns, bible passages, etc. and I've been in awe you pastors about that. Yet as I've admitted before, to me Sunday services has been all about the sermon and children's time. I still have a lot to learn, but at least now, I am more tuned into the complete worship service.

Defining my own purpose/calling has been an amazing process. Not since college have I given this so much thought! It has reminded me of and made me focus on my ability and desire to be of service to those in need or who could use just a kind word or a smile.

Probably not many in our class were so ignorant about the order of worship as me, but for those of us in this pitiful condition, we might have used two weeks on each topic rather than one.

Also, I found that nailing down my purpose/calling/sermon was the central and hardest part, yet the core for the other parts of the order of worship. For example, picking the music, writing the confession, benediction, etc. seems to require knowing the sermon topic. I would have liked two overview lessons on the story/meditation/purpose at the beginning, rather than working on the September topics first. I think I could have done those easier and with more confidence if I had the meditation/core theme/my purpose in hand first.

(Story Companion) was a perfect story companion." -Lacey

Appendix 6-Mid Course Check in

Mid-Course check in

Name: _____ Date: _____

Open with Centering Quiet**Class Feedback, Thoughts, Writings****Conscious Eldering: Thriving Elders****Feel Connected**

I am connected to my family (including spouse, if applicable).

I am connected to my faith community.

I feel God's presence most every day.

I enjoy spending time outside.

People of different ages like to be with me, and I like to be around people of different ages.

Possess and Share Joy and Wonder

There is some joy in most every day.

I have wit and sense of humor.

I continue to have interests that spark my curiosity and imagination.

I do not live out of fear of the future for myself or others, but rather from hope for the future.

Hold an Ongoing Life Purpose

My life includes leaving a legacy based on the roles I have filled in the past.

I continue to make a difference in the lives of people around me.

I have a role model for eldering (aging).

I want to learn and grow my entire life.

What is Missing?

Appendix 7 Additional Notes from Classes, Mid-Course Check Ins, and Interviews

From Lacey:

- I feel God’s presence every day even though I do not talk to him all the time.
- Being connected definitely makes you feel more alive, the more you keep doing things.
- Today, I saw a whole formation of birds in a bright blue sky...that was a gift.
- My brother is the “successful one” but he says to me, “You’re the one who has so many friends.
- I want to stay in my house – I do the work myself. So, I spend time doing that. And I enjoy that: pulling weeds, that bamboo sawing keeps me healthy.

From Jo:

- You know there is a scriptural role of elders
- I remember being with my parents around an oyster roast fire in Brunswick. Singing. Singing. Music is something I never want to be without.
- (Jo is talking about leaving her role as a group leader for a caregiver support group): The group relates to this class. The backstory is the same thing. “You are the one who has to do it...but now that I need to let it go, the backstory is still there. Who will do it, and will they do it right? Because the backstory is YOU have to do it and it has to be RIGHT.
- You know at 93, you don’t necessarily know the outcome and you can’t manage it. Whatever it is.
- My Story Companion is at such a different place, but we are in a place together.
- I am in a different place now than 5 years ago. I devoted more time to what is the nature of mindfulness and Spirit. I’ve come closer to John Philip Newell, God puts Self in every heart.”
- When I was in the hospital last, I felt surrounded by love and support. That I was a loved child of God---too bad it took a bowel obstruction!
- Daytime calls me to prayer: 20 minutes of meditation, then intercession-30 minutes on a list of people I pray for everyday – every person on this church staff.

From Lacey:

- I read all the time. I read a number of books at a time and listen to them...historical fiction, plus plain novels, mysteries. I read all the time.
- I’m not a Pollyanna. I have a lot of baggage, but I share joy and I like to learn new things. Like this class.
- I feel a bit guilty for having such a (great) family—beyond the honors—all the gifts everyone has. It’s incredible.
- I’ve had a very dark time. Light and dark, but in the dark it was me but someone else. It was very dark and unhappy. I should have died three times 1) in a car accident 2) in a

flash flood and 3) in the slums of Rio but in body, God has always protected me. In mind, God has strengthened weaknesses and given me peace. In Spirit God is with me always—from youngest time God has been present with me. Faith is a slippery thing to grab hold of.

- I had a dream that scared the lard out of me, really jarred me. And I thought could be God. Could be evil. It was my blue period—the wilderness—12 years after I graduated from college in '66. I thought “Is this all there is?” The dream was “God will come to you, but it might take a while. I had to open my eyes. And when I did, what was there was “Rejoice in the Lord”
- I had childhood summers filled with my cousins. I remember a summer when I was 13 surrounded on the island—it was like a lifetime of love and understanding. I haven't forgotten this, but I had not remembered it in a long time.”

Bob N.

- The question is: Where is this taking me? Us? My Partner?
- When I was a consultant the question was always “What are the deliverables? Who is the client? What are the metrics? Who has an oar in” Now the questions are different?
- You have to live with uncertainty, pain, loss and failure as integral and valuable parts of the process. That is business and life.”

Kathy

- When I was chaplain (at Retirement Community) I noticed a window of time when people moved in where people either folded in or their imagination and their capacity to imagine anew was sparked. It was a period of vulnerability and a fertile time. A season.
- When I think about change it feels like stepping into a cloud of unknowing. I have an image of flying with my son and there were so many clouds we had to fly by the instruments only. You have to learn to trust. And after almost a whole day of flying in the clouds, we came out of the clouds and there was a full circular rainbow. I had never seen that before.

Bill

- Older people are always going to go through trying times. 5 things about me. 1) Be close to your brothers and sisters 2) always welcome a stranger 3) never give up 4) keep your faith 5) pray, pray, pray
- I was a single parent most of my life...a working dad to two daughters.
- I want to be more connected here. I want to do more at the church. (*Bill is in his first year of discipleship at Palms*)
- Yeah, there is joy in most every day. But some days you have to search for that joy. I try to start out every day with prayer. That helps.

- I'm always to reach out beyond myself.
- I don't care that I haven't achieved any great thing, but I'd like to be left with some people who love me! I try to make a difference in the lives of the people around me.
- (names a friend) did it right. He set a perfect example. He was active in the church. He was the one keeping up with other people. He wrote cards and took food to people's house. I cherish every card I got from him. He did things right. Always there to help others even when he was in worse shape than them.
- The main thing I want to do is grow. Mature more.
- One thing I can say after health trials, I wasn't supposed to make it. I needed a liver transplant and got one 12 years ago. That's why we moved here to be near Mayo to wait for the kidney. During that process I prayed a lot. When it came out, I had a match. God gave a liver that someone else turned down. I shouldn't even have had it. I was 63 years old at the time. It wasn't a moment, but it was a process. Later after I thought about how many hurtles. How fortunate I was to God for having gotten through it. I really did. I do all the time. I beg God to be by my side. Psalm 100, Psalm 121, 23rd Psalm – certainly thankful-with me all the way
- It's made me welcoming. Welcoming is the most important part of the worship service. If God put someone on our doorstep—shame on us if we don't welcome them.
- I too, start the morning with a time of prayer- certain things-starts day off on the right foot. I pray for my brother-we went through life and were touching base with each other periodically. But the last 3-4 years things came crashing down 0 cause us over the years to be not so close (*Bill's brother has addictions*)

Judee

- Joy doesn't just happen. You need to look for it each day. And look for it every day. There was a Dutch priest who said that.
- I've had an eye problem. It was an unexpected thing. We made intentional plans to cope with it because it's degenerative. We bought a very small house who no steps and we lit it very well. We prepared a space because we want to be ready for what might or might not come. Even in the small house the one thing I insisted on—family is extremely important. The Dining Room table had to have room for 12 to be seated around the table. That last dinner before everyone scatters to different homes (*most of her family lives in North Dakota*), that dinner time is like giving instructions. Everyone is included.
- My dad lived until age 98. He said “well, I'll have one more place to visit”
- I really enjoy being a deacon and serving communion. I have a vision problem so going up and down the steps (*to the chancel*) to get the elements is hard because of my depth perception. But I say, “If they can walk, they can do something.” What really interested me (*when we first came to Palms*) was all the possibilities of how we can serve.

Appendix 8: Complete Lesson Plan -Creating a Liturgy of Life

Creating a Liturgy of Life

9/7 Introduction

We Come Together as God's People

- Prelude Music of Our Lives: "I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry"⁶⁷
- Introductions

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- Life as Worship
 - Westminster Shorter Catechism – Question 1⁶⁸
 - *"Christian worship, we should recognize, is essentially a counter formation to those rival liturgies we are often immersed in, cultural practices that covertly capture our loves and longings, miscalibration them, orienting us to rival versions of the good life."*⁶⁹
- Liturgy
 - From the Greek meaning the work of the people; Christian liturgy came to mean the words and order of worship.
- Story Companionship

*"When people engage us in the important questions of their lives, they are inviting us to become pastoral story companions in the creative act of crafting a lifestory. Often the issues at the heart of the stories shared are themes of love and loss, joy and sorrow, despair and hope, joy and despair, and death and life, all of which are deeply theological themes whether or not explicitly religious language is used. To become a story companion is to accept an invitation to accompany another in the unfolding story of life and to witness to the interwoven threads of divine love."*⁷⁰
- How the class is structured
 - Discussion by mutual invitation
 - Structured like Palms worship
 - Assigning/choosing Spiritual Companions
- Laurie's project – YOU are a subject (and there is some paperwork)
 - My project where this class and where participants fit in
 - Class covenant
 - First Class Questionnaire

⁶⁷ John Ylvisaker, "I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry," June 15, 2013, music video, 2:50, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJ13NFT5T_c

⁶⁸ Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 1: "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to praise God forever."

⁶⁹ James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love, The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 25.

⁷⁰ Karen Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 77.

We Hear God's Word

- Isaiah 61
- 2 Corinthians 13:9-11

We Respond to God's Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude Music of Our Lives: The Cave by Mumford and Sons⁷¹
- Homework for 9/14:
 - Read John 17:1-26
 - Read Psalm 100

⁷¹ Mumford & Sons, "The Cave," August 17, 2011, music video, 4:27, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgDNCmGr-Q4>.

9/14 Call to Worship

We Come Together as God's People

- Prelude Music of Our Lives: All Creatures of Our God and King⁷²

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- *"We are called unto life, destiny uncertain,
Yet we offer thanks for what we know,
For health and healing, for labor and repose,
For renewal of beauty in earth and sky,
For that blend of human-holy-which inspires compassion,
For life, for health, for hope,
For beautiful, bountiful blessing,
All praise to the Source of Being."*⁷³
- *"One function of the invitation (Call to Worship) is to express welcome and hospitality. We worship in the joyful context of our renewed relationship with God in Christ. These words may be spoken with a gesture of open embrace and a genuine smile to convey the warmth of God's love.
Another function of the invitation is to call the community to the unique activity of worship. The primary activity of the worship service is for worshipers to participate in the gift exchange of worship itself, by hearing God's Word, by offering prayers and praise, and by receiving spiritual nourishment offered at the Lord's table. The call to worship establishes the unique purpose of the worship service and reinforces the 'vertical dimension' of worship—an encounter between God and the gathered congregation."*⁷⁴
- Storytelling
 - Think back to your earliest experiences of worship? When was it that you began to feel called to worship rather than brought to worship by your parents or others? How might being "called to worship" rather than "coming to church" change your understanding of what it means to worship?
 - Read closely the words to the hymn "All Creatures of Our God and King". What do you notice? Does this hymn resonate with you as a Call to Worship? Why or Why not?

⁷² Marantha!, "All Creatures of Our God and King," February 21, 2013, music video, 3:56, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d3gO6qDLNA>.

⁷³ Elyse D. Frishman, ed., *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur Weekdays, Shabbat, Festivals, and Other Occasions of Public Worship* (New York: CCAR Press, 2007), 2.

⁷⁴ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 48.

- As we listen to “Come and Find the Quiet Center”⁷⁵, hold yourself as a living prayer, a creature of worship before God. Ask God’s blessing on you as we begin this class together: as we have been called to worship. At the end of the song, take a moment to jot down what this offering of yourself felt like.

We Respond to God’s Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude – Music For Our Lives - I Am Moana⁷⁶
- Homework for 9/15-20:
 - Write a draft of your Call to Worship
 - Share a meal with your Spiritual Companion (this week of next); Share joys and concerns and what you foresee during the fall as we meet and craft our Life Liturgy; share your draft of your Call to Worship
 - Reading for preparation for class on 9/21:
 - Psalm 34:1-13
 - Hebrews 12:1-15

⁷⁵ Fran McKendree, “Come and Find the Quiet Center,” July 10, 2015, music video, 3:54, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQiv6eB09xw>.

⁷⁶ Rachel House and Auli’l Cravalho, “Moana,” November 18, 2016, music video, 2:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2Lm1-W0jow>.

9/21 Welcome, Announcements & Passing of the Peace

We Come Together as God's People

- Introit - Music of Our Lives: "One Love"⁷⁷

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- "God's words of greeting may be followed by a mutual greeting, in which worshipers extend God's blessing to each other with words such as "Christ's peace be with you."⁷⁸
- *"To enter into another's lifestory is to enter a holy space. As the poet William Carlos Williams reminds us, stories are all we have, all we are. The practice of narrative pastoral care invites us to become story companions to one another, listening in the midst of suffering, listening as a life unfolds, listening for the presence of God. Story companions give attentive reverence to the other and the other's stories, and such companions open themselves to learn from the other.*

The English word companion derives from the Latin com + panis, which literally means 'breadmates.' Companions are those with whom we break bread, sharing a substance that sustains our bodies. When we eat together, we talk, sharing events of the day, telling tales of the past and hopes for the future. Story companions have a substance that sustains our lives and our souls: the stories we have been, the stories we are, the stories we hope to become. Pastoral story companions pay particular attention to the story God is weaving through and in an unfolding life narrative, inviting and empowering growth in love. For story companions in the Christian tradition, the image of companions as bread mates has significant resonance in the sacrament of Communion or Eucharist. Together we break bread 'take and eat,' remembering, receiving healing, restoring, transforming, sustaining grace."⁷⁹

We Hear God's Word

- Psalm 34:1-13
- Hebrews 12:1-15
- Time for your story: The word peace in Hebrew is Shalom. It is fullness, completeness, fulfillment, happiness and contentment. Shalom includes a lack of fearful living. In Jewish practice it is both a greeting and a farewell.

As you think about this understanding of peace, think about a person or a time in your life or a story of Shalom being passed and you were either a witness or a recipient.

⁷⁷ Bob Marley, "One Love," April 20, 2010, music video, 2:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdB-8eLEW8g&list=RDvdB-8eLEW8g&index=>.

⁷⁸ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet, *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 59.

⁷⁹ Karen Scheib, *Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 61.

What did/does that feel like? What story can you tell about being a witness to the passing of peace or the recipient of peace?

Or perhaps you have been or are a passer of Shalom of peace. In what ways are you a passer of peace yourself in your day to day life? In what ways do you not pass peace?

We Respond to God's Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude - Music of Our Lives – “Let There Be Peace on Earth”⁸⁰
- Think about your Welcome, Announcements and how you will announce and think about your Passing of the Peace
- Homework for 9/22-27:
 - If you have not met with your Spiritual Companion and shared a meal, do so sharing the draft of your Call to Worship and your thoughts about being a Passer of Peace
 - Read:
 - Psalm 32
 - James 5:13-15

⁸⁰ Gladys Night, “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” May 28, 2008, music video, 3:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pF8oBdvvTVQ>.

9/28

Call to Confession, Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon**We Come Together as God's People**

- Introit - Music of Our Lives: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing⁸¹

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- Call to Confession
"The call to confession invites us to honest expression within the context of our covenant relationship with God. God's grace comes to us, creating a relationship with us in Christ in which honesty about our sin is welcome and safe. We confess our sin not in order for God to forgive us but because God has forgiven us in Christ. The call to confession, therefore, is a word of grace like the assurance of pardon, not an exercise that shames us into confession."⁸²
- Prayer of Confession
"The prayer of confession invites us to speak words that are remarkably honest about our own sin, words that do not come naturally in our relationship with God or with our fellow human beings. Such honesty, perhaps more than we could ever generate in our own strength, becomes remarkably liberating when we sense the immensity of God's grace. In this way we can think of the prayer of confession (and the assurance of pardon that follows) not as an onerous obligation but as a gift of grace.

A full prayer of confession acknowledges that our sin is more than an isolated example of bad judgment. We are sinful people, and we live in need of a Savior. Our confession also acknowledges that sin infects not just persons but also societies, institutions, and all of creation. Along with the confession of personal sins, we confess our participation in the structures and institutions in which evil persists.

Even while we confess our sin, we are claiming God's promises in Christ, which are sealed in our baptism. Many classical prayers of confession this feature a decisive turn from honest confession to explicit profession of faith and trust in Christ."⁸³

To be in confession requires humility and contrition. John Paul Lederach describes two "essences of humility. The first is acknowledgement that I am a small part of something

⁸¹ Mumford & Sons, "Come Thou Font of Every Blessing," July 9, 2011, music video, 4:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVHVY4oY-7c>.

⁸² Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 82.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 85-86.

really big....The second...is to understand that learning and truth seeking are life long adventures.”⁸⁴

- Assurance of Pardon

“The good news of the gospel is that in Christ we are forgiven! The announcement of this truth is one of the most beautiful moments in worship. Using scriptural words reinforces the truth that our assurance is based on God’s words of promise, not merely on our own hopes and desires.

Just as confession acknowledges both personal and corporate sin, so also assurance of pardon declares the sure promise that God’s grace in Christ redeems not only individuals but also the whole creation.”⁸⁵

We Hear God’s Word

- Psalm 35
- James 5:13-15
- Time for your story: What is your hardest story? Is there a story you have never told? (you will not be required to share it with the group...this is for you). Is there something you feel is unforgiveable that you have done or someone has done to you? Have you been a secret keeper of something to protect someone or something?

Or—what is it that you want to let go of once and for all (literally for all). Is there something that keeps you from being in full relationship with God and others? Perhaps feelings or physical realities you feel like you battle against? What is it you would like to release and what is the story behind it?

We Respond to God’s Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude - Music of Our Lives – “Alleluia, The Great Storm is Over”⁸⁶
- Homework for 9/29-10/4
 - Spend time working on your prayer of confession. First, write your personal prayer of confession. Make it as honest as possible. You may share it with someone you trust fully, or you may choose not. Second, take that same prayer of confession and re-write it so it could be said together as a corporate prayer of confession. For example: if you have carried shame and anger your first prayer should specifically name your shame and anger and be vivid in your description. In the second prayer it might read something like, “You desire for us to flourish, yet we work against our own life, carrying shame and anger for days, weeks, even decades.”

⁸⁴John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 106-107.

⁸⁵Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 115.

⁸⁶Bob Franke, “Alleluia, The Great Storm is Over,” December 18, 2012, music video, 3:08, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nE17KZSvYQ>.

- Either meet with your spiritual companion or schedule a meeting. Share your corporate prayer of confession. You might want to schedule a regular time to meet over the next few weeks, a set time weekly or every other week.
- Schedule a “mid-term” meeting with Laurie 😊
- Proverbs 10: 10-13; 20-23 and Romans 15:1-6

10/5 Scripture and Story/Meditation/Sermon

We Come Together as God’s People

- Introit - Music of Our Lives – “You Raise Me Up”⁸⁷

We Praise God and Celebrate God’s Grace

“The reading and preaching of God’s Word stands at the center of worship and constitutes one of the privileged moments of worship.”⁸⁸

How Worship Leaders Choose Scriptures and Write Sermons

- *Lectionary*
- *Sermon series*
- *Pick a topic/find a scripture*
- *Piecing together a sermon/meditation*

We Hear God’s Word

- Proverbs 10: 10-13; 20-23
- Romans 15:1-6
- Time for your story:
 - Can you think of a theme or metaphor that seems to speak of your life now or the life you hope for? Ideas where that theme or metaphor come from?
 - Is there a scripture that rings or sings in your head?
 - Is there a way you feel God is calling or challenging you? Or is there a scripture that challenges you with which you need to wrestle?
 - Is there a particular sermon that you remember from the past that has made meaning for you even in the present?

⁸⁷Josh Groban, “You Raise Me Up,” February 14, 2010, music video, 4:49,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnztMhtUF6o> .

⁸⁸ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 151.

We Respond to God's Word

- Homework for 10/6 -10/11:
 - Pick your scripture and do a close read of it; start taking notes/jotting down images and ideas around the scripture and your lifestory. How does your story and this scripture intersect? How does this scripture speak to you now and for the future?

 - For next week:
 - Jeremiah 29:4-14
 - Matthew 6:9-15
 - Philippians 4:4-7

- Music of Our Lives – “God is Trying Tell You Something” from the Color Purple⁸⁹

- Charge and Benediction

⁸⁹ Quincy Jones, composer. The Cast of The Color Purple, “God is Trying to Tell You Something,” August 3, 2008, music video, 4:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVxgCEgeh8g>.

10/12 Prayers – Prayer of Illumination, Prayers of the People

We Come Together as God’s People

- Music of Our Lives: “Down to the River to Pray”– Allison Kraus⁹⁰

We Praise God and Celebrate God’s Grace

“One of the central Acts of worship is the intercessory prayer. In some churches this is known as the “pastoral prayer,” but “congregational prayer” or “prayers of the people” is preferable. This prayer is spoken on behalf of the entire congregation. Calling it intercessory prayer is also helpful, of course, since that name calls to attention the prayer’s primary purpose.

In the intercessory prayer we address God in a special way as priestly intercessors for each other and for the world at large. We pray not just for our own congregation and for the people we know; we also intercede for those in authority, for those suffering oppression, for those who are poor, hungry, or sick, and so on. If this is the only prayer offered during a worship service, it can also appropriately include adoration, confession, and thanksgiving as well as intercession. If those elements are present in other parts of the service however, then it will usually be fitting for the prayers of the people to focus mainly on intercession.”⁹¹

“The prayer for illumination explicitly acknowledges the Spirit’s work in this part of worship by requesting God’s Spirit to act through the reading and preaching of Scripture. This prayer may also acknowledge that we all come to Scripture with varying degrees of faith, trust and knowledge. The prayer is offered for both the preacher and the listener, for both the speaking and the hearing of the Word.”⁹²

Praying by Mary Oliver

It doesn’t have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don’t try
to make them elaborate, this isn’t
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Alison Krauss, “Down to the River to Pray,” March 9, 2009, music video, 3:03, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSif77IVQdY>.

⁹¹ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 173.

⁹² Ibid, 139.

⁹³ Mary Oliver, *Thirst* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 37.

We Hear God's Word

- Jeremiah 29:4-14
- Matthew 6:9-15
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Time for Your Story

What calls you to prayer? What are the longings of your heart for the world? Can you name your hopes for the world? What might your prayers of the people include if you understood praying for the world as a responsibility you hold.

Some people feel the pain of the world in a deep way, it seems to be part of their God-given nature. It is a gift of deep feeling and empathy that can be difficult to bear, but it is a gift. Others have different gifts. Do you have this gift or know someone who does? What does the world feel like for you or for that person?

We have not talked a whole lot about the Holy Spirit moving in and through us. Can you think of a time that it was very clear that you were called to pray for or with someone? Remember as much as you can about that experience. Hold it in your memory and imagination.

Think about a Prayer of Illumination. What is it that you would like to ask clarity or illumination on? What has sparked your imagination? What makes you want to call to God for clarity and understanding?

We Respond to God's Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude Music of Our Lives: "What's Going On" – Marvin Gay⁹⁴
- Homework for next class:
 - Galatians 3:23-29
 - Luke 22: 14-20
 - Write a Prayer of Illumination and Prayers of the People
 - Meet with your Spiritual Companion. Share what you have been working on. If you are having a hard time starting or finishing a piece of your Liturgy of Life, talk about why that might be and ideas you have.

⁹⁴ Marvin Gay, "What's Goin' On," December 29, 2010, music video, 3:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-kA3UtBj4M>.

10/19, 26 Fall Break from Class - Catch Up Time with Spiritual Companion

Music of Our Lives: Find a “story song or hymn” that speaks to you and share it with your Spiritual Companion and email it to Laurie who will combine our music list for sharing.

Homework for 10/19-11/1:

- Share a meal with your Spiritual Companion. Share joys and concerns, including from our class and your Liturgy of Life project.
- Review all your drafts thus far. What can you say is now the finished form of your Liturgy of Life (knowing we are all and always in process)

11/2 Sacraments

We Come Together as God's People

- Music of Our Lives: "Wash, O God, Our Sons & Daughters"⁹⁵

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

"Baptism is a physical, ritual action, mandated by Jesus, through which God acts to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach and assure us. A richly symbolic action, the celebration of baptism stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly."⁹⁶

"The Lord's Supper is a physical, ritual action, mandated by Jesus, through which God acts to nourish, sustain, comfort, challenge, teach and assure us. A richly symbolic act, the celebration of the Lord's Supper nourishes our faith and stirs our imaginations to perceive the work of God and the contours of the gospel more clearly."⁹⁷

We Hear God's Word

- Galatians 3:23-29
- Luke 22: 14-20
- Time for your story:

Do you know the story of your baptism? Is there a physical record or picture? Is there a story of a baptism of another that hold special meaning for you?

Think about water. What are the ways you are made more alive through water? Think of a water story that is lifegiving or a story that includes water as central.

Describe a meal you wouldn't want to miss. Who is there? What is on the table? What is going on around the table. What are the smells and what do you taste? How do you feel?

We Respond to God's Word

- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude – The Music of Our Lives – The Family Table⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Oleta Adams, "Wash O God, Our Sons & Daughters," April 10, 2012, music video 3:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfPDFa8-Hjc> .

⁹⁶ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 249.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 305.

⁹⁸ The Zac Brown Band, "Family Table," April 8, 2017, music video, 3:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc9CqnOCcl4> .

- Homework for 11/3-8
 - 2 Samuel 6:1-5
 - Colossians 3
 - Consider your Liturgy of Life. Will you include Communion? Why or not? If you are going to include communion, write a communion prayer.
 - Will you include the renewal of baptismal vows? Why or why not? If you are going to include a renewal of baptismal vows, write a litany or prayer to include.
- Charge and Benediction

11/9 Music

We Come Together as God's People

- Introit - Music of Our Lives "How Can I Keep From Singing"⁹⁹

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- How Pastor's/Musicians choose music – class guest Dr. Ronn Cummings, Director of Music and Fine Arts
- Some of our classmate's music:

We Are One in the Spirit¹⁰⁰

Amazing Grace¹⁰¹

Jack of All Trades¹⁰²

I am Woman¹⁰³

We Hear God's Word

- Samuel 6:1-5
- Colossians 3
- Time for your story:
 - What is an early (or even earliest) hymn you remember singing or hearing?
 - Is there a specific hymn that comes in to your head on a regular basis? What is it? What are the words? Why do you imagine it stays with you through the years?
 - Is there non-church music or music style that sings the tune of your life? What is it?
 - What would definitely be included in the soundtrack of your life?

We Respond to God's Word

- Homework for 11/10-15:
- Look over the attached: Benedictions and Charges in the Bible
- Make 2 song lists: The Music of Your Life and 2-3 pieces that you would include in your worship service
- Postlude – Music of Our Lives – "Lift Every Voice and Sing"¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Audrey Assad, "How Can I Keep From Singing," March 6, 2016, music video, 4:22, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2hddmy63U> .

¹⁰⁰ King & Country, "We Are One In The Spirit," March 25, 2015, music video, 3:14, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9zoq3k-3K0> .

¹⁰¹ Celtic Woman, "Amazing Grace," November 28, 2009, music video, 5:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HsCp5LG_zNE .

¹⁰² Bruce Springsteen, "Jack of All Trades," February 20, 2012, music video, 6:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtGb5MPCMIg> .

¹⁰³ Helen Reddy, "I Am Woman," May 8, 2016, music video, 3:23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rptW7zOPX2E> .

Some Benedictions in Scripture

- “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Num. 6:24-26)
- “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 1:7)
- “The God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (Rom. 15:33)
- “Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.” (Eph. 6:23-24)
- “Now may the Lord of Peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. the Lord be with all of you.” (2 Thess. 3:16)
- “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” (1 Tim. 1:2)
- “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.” (2 Tim. 4:22)
- “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20-21)
- “Peace to all of you who are in Christ.” (1 Pet. 5:14)
- “Grace and peace be yours in abundance, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Pet. 1:2)
- “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first born from the dead, and the rulers of the kings of the earth.” (Rev. 1:4-5)

¹⁰⁴ Ray Charles, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” March 31, 2010, 3:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DX2nBHYkFeY>.

11/16 Offering, Charge and Benediction

We Come Together as God's People

- Introit - Music of Our Lives – “The Summons”¹⁰⁵

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

The Offering

“The offering is a vital part of our response to God and God’s Word. It helps us connect our adoration for God with our life of discipleship. The money given at the offering is a token and symbol of our desire to devote our whole selves to God’s service in response to God’s loving faithfulness to us. It is symbolic of the many other gifts we should return to the Lord: time, possessions, talents, insights, and concern for others. The word *offering* implies something freely given, something presented as a token of dedication or devotion. Everything we have is a gift from God, and our offerings are a way of acknowledging God as the giver. Take care not to refer to this act of worship as the “collection,” which can imply that it is gathering money to defray expenses. Quite the contrary, the purpose of the offering is to offer our first fruits to God, to render to God as a sacrifice of praise....

The offering may also include other forms of gifts, such as food, clothing, or supplies for a specific need. Congregations might keep a resource bank of members’ abilities and spiritual gifts; periodic updates could take place during the offering. Musicians may offer their musical gifts while the rest of the congregation offers monetary gifts. Children may also offer musical gifts or receive the offering or bring forward signs or symbols of their won gifts to God. Many worship leaders wrestle when to best make announcements regarding the congregational ministries. The time of offering can be appropriate for presenting such announcements about the life of the church, thus demonstrating that the work of the church is not for its own sake but is an offering to the Lord.”¹⁰⁶

Charge/Call to Service/Discipleship

“Worship does not end when we leave a worship service. A clear call to discipleship reminds us that our worship continues through obedient and grateful living. Like the offering, this call reminds us that our worship must bear fruit in our witness. Having come together to meet God as the children of God, we go out with the mandate to promote God’s rule in the world. This challenge can be given any of several names, such as exhortation, call to commitment, charge to the people, call to service, and commissioning. The call to discipleship should convey two important convictions:

¹⁰⁵ Bryan Field McFarland, “The Summons,” September 7, 2015, music video, 4:32

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYiwApKKz14> .

¹⁰⁶ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 235-236.

- That we live in faithful service not so that God will love us, but because God has loved us first.
- That we live by the power of the Spirit and thus do not need to rely on our own strength.”

Because of these convictions, a call to service should always be followed by a blessing.”¹⁰⁷

We Hear God’s Word

- Time for your story:

Can you think of someone in your life who “charged you” – meaning they pointed out certain gifts you possess which pointed you in a certain direction. How did that play out? Were you receptive? Did you go in the direction they pointed, or did you resist? If you went down that path, does that person know the role they played in your life?

Have you charged another/others? What did that look like/feel like?

We Respond to God’s Word

- Homework for 11/17-30:
 - Share a meal with your Spiritual Companion. Share joys and concerns, including from our class and your Liturgy of Life project
 - Write your call to the offering and your charge – are they one in the same? If there is a surprise in your offering and charge.
 - Write your offering and charge down and pass it on to Laurie for the next class and share with your Spiritual Companion.
 - Thanksgiving Homework – Listen to God and craft your benediction. The benediction comes from a place of thanksgiving. It is a statement of faith that God has put in to you to share with others. Write your benediction down.
- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude – Music of Our Lives – Kate Campbell “The House You Live In”¹⁰⁸

11/23 THANKSGIVING BREAK

¹⁰⁷ Emily R. Brink and John D. Witvliet. *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2013), 351-352.

¹⁰⁸ Kate Campbell, “The House You Live In,” December 1, 2014, music video, 3:33, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQaRMO3FU8k>.

11/30 **Preparing for Worship - Order of Worship, Space, Use of Liturgical Colors, Paraments, Art, Participation, Bulletin, Worship Leadership Assignments**

We Come Together as God's People

- Music of Our Lives: "O Worship the King, All Glorious Above"¹⁰⁹

We Praise God and Celebrate God's Grace

- Psalm 86

We Hear God's Word

- Time for your story:
 - Think about a worship space from your past. What do you see? What do you hear? Are there colors? Who is there? What else do you notice?
 - What roles (if any) have you played in worship leadership at Palms or in the past? What are some ways worship is different if you are a worship leader than if you sit in the pew? What would you tell someone the pros and cons of being a worship leader are?
 - If you were to describe Palms sanctuary or chapel to someone without sight, what would you describe?

We Respond to God's Word

- Complete and turn in your Last Class Questionnaire (if you haven't)
- Homework for 11/10-15:
 - Finish "fleshing out" your Liturgy of Life. Laurie will provide a worksheet to help you think through the Preparations (details) of your Liturgy of Life.
 - Have a last meal with your Spiritual Companion. Share a liturgy of thanksgiving (either one Laurie will provide or create one together).
 - Schedule (on signup sheet) to meet with Pastor Laurie sometime in the month of December to discuss your Liturgy of Life and your experience in and with this class.
- Charge and Benediction
- Postlude: Music of Our Lives: "The Prayer"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Kwa-Thema SDA Kodisang Church Ensemble, "O Worship the King All Glorious Above," August 2, 2016, music video, 1:41 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hjjh-ROnXfU> .

¹¹⁰ Celine Dion and Josh Groban, "The Prayer," March 10, 2009, music video, 7:26 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbviXG_56ss .

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