Quarterly Review
A Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry

practicing pastoral counseling in the United Methodist Mode
A Note to Subscribers

Dear Friends,

For many years, Quarterly Review has been produced and distributed with the participation of both the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) and The United Methodist Publishing House. Because of changes at GBHEM, its participation in this joint work is being phased out.

The publisher has considered a variety of possibilities for a future incarnation of Quarterly Review, but none of these considerations have borne fruit; and, as the publication is not self-sustaining through subscription income, it must be discontinued. Therefore, the Winter 2005 issue of Quarterly Review will be the last issue of this magazine. Subscribers will receive a credit that is prorated to cover any remaining issues if the original subscription was charged to a Cokesbury account and we will issue a refund that is prorated to cover any remaining issues to subscribers who submitted payment for the current subscription order.

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Extending the Witness and Service of Christ in the World

HENRIK R. PIETERSE

The Book of Discipline describes the labor of United Methodist elders and deacons in extension ministries as "extending the ministry of the United Methodist church" (¶ 343.3) in "the witness and service of Christ's love and justice" in the world (¶ 343.1; cf. 331.3). This final issue of Quarterly Review focuses on one particular form of extension ministry, namely, pastoral counseling. The articles introduce readers to the rich panoply of care, scholarship, and service that constitutes the practice of pastoral counseling in The United Methodist Church. In the opening essay, Donald Houts chronicles the history of United Methodist pastoral counseling in the context of the emergence of the Pastoral Counseling movement and places three issues on the denomination's agenda for ongoing discussion: the changing priorities of clergy; the paucity of pastoral counseling and cognate courses in seminary curricula; and the place of extension ministries in the life of the church.

Theodore Runyon explores the Wesleyan roots of pastoral care and counseling. He uses Wesley's exposition of the restoration of the image of God in the journey of faith as theological context for a discussion of pastoral counseling in a Wesleyan mode. For Wesley, grace operates in different ways—prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying—at different stages in the journey of faith. Runyon shows how these ways "significantly parallel both the stages of salvation and the stages of counseling."

Emmanuel Lartey points out the challenges of practicing pastoral counseling in our increasingly multicultural, multifaith, pluralistic world. For Lartey, this emerging context challenges pastoral counseling to transcend parochially conceived denominational and faith identities; be "at home with" and recognize the holy in both sacred and secular expressions;
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enable respectful dialogue with and between religious and nonreligious persons; emphasize relationship over "technique" and "belief"; balance "disease" and "health and strength" models in an approach that integrates spirituality, moral education, and pastoral counseling; be theologically astute; and take persons and contexts seriously.

Michael Potts examines the relationship of the professional pastoral counselor to the overall ministry of the church. He helpfully argues that pastoral care and counseling should be seen as on a continuum that begins, on the one end, with the biblical mandate for all baptized Christians to care for one another and extends, on the other end, to the professional pastoral counselor, authorized and equipped by the community of faith to perform "a specialized type of pastoral care" on its behalf.

In the final article, three United Methodist pastoral counselors in active practice reflect on the question, "What are the most important challenges and opportunities you experience as a United Methodist pastoral counselor in our world today?" Not surprisingly, a central theme in their responses corresponds with a key refrain in the previous essays: United Methodist pastoral counselors need to attend to the issue of how to understand and navigate their professional identity and practice in the midst of swirling rapids of ethnic, demographic, theological, and cultural change.

As mentioned earlier, this installment is the final issue of Quarterly Review, and with it my tenure as its editor comes to a close. It has been a profound privilege to guide the conversation in these pages over the past six years as the journal sought to stimulate and nurture theological discourse at the intersection of scholarship and ministry.

I pray that United Methodists, like their eighteenth-century progenitor in the faith, will face the momentous challenges of our day with an identity borne of sustained intellectual reflection, passionate spiritual commitment, and courageous social engagement.

Hendrik R. Pieterse is the editor of Quarterly Review.
This issue of Quarterly Review celebrates the place of pastoral counseling in the United Methodist tradition. As one of the varieties of gifts, services, and activities being practiced within our faith tradition, it is our privilege as authors in this issue to sketch historic continuities, unique emphases, and current realities in the developing specialty of pastoral counseling.

The generic basis of pastoral-counseling practice in the church is well established. Pastoral counselors are those so designated by their gifts, commitments, priorities, training, and certification. Pastoral counseling is the particular practice of this calling under the umbrella of the reconciling, healing, sustaining, and guiding ministries of the church. Pastoral counseling may be practiced with faithful members of the church, with persons who are outside the circle of the faithful, or with those who are part of the church but suffer from guilt, self-doubt, childhood trauma, relational failure, or personal alienation. Pastoral counseling may start with any crisis but may ultimately lead toward conversion, reconciliation, remediation, forgiveness, renunciation, or even a sense of new birth.

Pastoral counseling is a specialized ministry within pastoral care and is often more time consuming, more in touch with current psychological and therapeutic understandings, and more stringent in its requirements regarding ethical guidelines, realistic goals, and collaboration with other sources of preferred help. Pastoral counseling may take place within the context of the local church or under the community umbrella of faith-based clinicians who share common standards of care. In any case, the
pastoral counselor uniquely represents the authority, commitment, and character of the faith community.

The current directory of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors lists some 468 United Methodists—one out of six of the total interfaith membership of 2,937. Of the 468 United Methodists, 338 are male and 130 female. The number would be considerably greater were United Methodists within the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and the Christian Association of Psychological Studies and Pastoral Counseling to be included. While some overlap of membership exists, the number of United Methodists who identify themselves with the Pastoral Counseling movement is certainly greater than the above figures would indicate were we able accurately to count the pastors trained in this field but serving in parishes and other venues.

However, the importance of the movement in the life of the church cannot be measured by numbers of specialized clergy or by the consistency of support and appreciation within the denomination alone. In this article, I tell the story of pastoral counseling in United Methodism in the context of the development of the Pastoral Counseling movement in the United States in order to encourage a dialogue about this United Methodist history and about issues relevant to the future.

Pastoral Counseling: Ancient Antecedents

While the Pastoral Counseling movement got its start only in the twentieth century, the Christian church has cared for the souls of the faithful since the beginning. Indeed, this preoccupation has both religious and secular roots. In his landmark book *A History of the Cure of Souls*, John T. McNeill writes about the “Guides of Israel,” who were wise men, scribes, and rabbis. He traces the record of Greek philosophers as “physicians of the soul” and points to the spiritual direction within Asian faiths. He also sees a pattern of discipline and consolation inherited from the early church fathers of Christendom.

McNeill notes that in the beginning of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus drew large crowds to witness his miracles and hear his teaching. Again and again, Jesus seemed to prefer to minister to a few at a time and frequently withdrew from the crowds. Indeed, Jesus instructs the leper he cleanses to tell no one. One is reminded that the origin of private acts of confession in the history of the church and the counsel of Jesus to humility—even secrecy—
about our acts of charity are consonant with contemporary practice of pastoral counseling.\(^1\)

Clebsch and Jaekle delineate four basic functions in the history of the Christian church: healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconcileing.\(^2\) "Guiding" encompasses the purpose of pastoral counseling, which should be "to help a person mobilize his/her inner resources for handling a crisis; for making a difficult decision; for adjusting constructively to an unalterable problem; or for improving his/her interpersonal relationships, including his/her relationship with God."\(^3\)

This purpose is deeply imbedded in the ethos and history of Methodism. Take John Wesley. In *A History of the Care of Souls*, McNeill gives considerable attention to the ministry of John Wesley.

Wesley, like Luther and Calvin and in accordance with the *Book of Common Prayer*, approved confession of sins "to a spiritual guide for disburdening of the conscience." But he held that to make it obligatory for all "is to make of what may be a useful means, a dangerous snare." Under this limitation he was, in effect, father confessor to very many. \(\ldots\) Even when he writes of administrative problems, the dominant note is that of meeting the spiritual needs of men and women. This meant not merely bringing them into a religious life by the experience of conversion, but also holding them on the right way and reclaiming those who lapsed from it.\(^4\)

Liston Mills characterizes Wesley's influence on the modern pastoral counseling movement as follows:

Wesley was himself a model for his followers. He talked constantly to the anxious, perplexed, and distressed, visited the sick, and attended prisoners condemned to death. His correspondence was voluminous but its constant theme was the spiritual needs of persons. He wanted conversion, to be sure, but he was equally concerned to encourage the pursuit of holiness and to reclaim the lapsed.\(^5\)

**The Pastoral Counseling Movement: Explicit Beginnings**

A whole new field of interest developed within theological circles in the twentieth century. William James had just published his book *The Varieties*
of Religious Experience (1902). James's work, along with that of G. Stanley Hall and James Leuba, began to raise the issue of an intersection between science and theology. Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy, Boston University School of Theology, and the University of Chicago—all began to offer courses in the psychology of religion.

However, as E. Brooks Holifield notes in his careful analysis of pastoral care in America, pastors were not happy simply with courses on the psychology of religion.

Ministers complained that most seminaries had failed to teach them how to apply their theology, analyze the soul, understand their parishioners, or give counsel and, in short, how to minister to congregations with new expectations.

In 1925, Anton Boisen, a clergyman who struggled with mental illness during his own lifetime, began to train theological students in what came to be known as "clinical pastoral education." This ushered in a new era in theological education. The needs of seminary students to understand psychological dynamics and to experience supervision of their actual ministry began to take shape and to have a growing significance in the history of theological education. The clinical training movement became influential in the 1930s; and by the 1950s, many theological schools supported departments in pastoral care and counseling, often related to the clinical experiences for students. Faculty members in this field were heavily influenced by the notion of studying "the human documents," as Boisen called them. New courses in "practical theology" began to emerge and became increasingly popular among students, although not uniformly supported by other faculty members.

By 1963, a group of concerned teachers and practitioners in the field met in New York to discuss the urgent need for a stronger cohesiveness among those dedicated to the field of pastoral counseling. In 1964, the first formal gathering of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) took place in Grace Cathedral, St. Louis. Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., was elected as the first president. Carroll A. Wise became the association's third president in 1967. These early teachers and practitioners served with distinction within the pastoral counseling movement.

Five other United Methodists (Clinebell and Wise were both United
Methodists have served as presidents of AAPC so far: John H. Patton, Donald C. Houts, James C. Wyrtzen, Gerald J. DeSobe, and Anne Ross Stewart. Other United Methodists honored by the Association for their contributions through the years include Paul E. Johnson, Quentin L. Hand, Robert C. Leslie, Merle R. Jordan, and Bonnie J. Niswander. Orlo Strunk has served for many years with distinction as editor of The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling.

The ranks of regional and national committees of pastoral counseling and the positions of responsibility within pastoral counseling centers also boast many United Methodist pastoral counselors. The direction and standards of the association certainly have profited from the theological commitments, intellectual honesty, and creativity of many who have represented United Methodism powerfully and with distinction. Likewise, the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists has profited repeatedly from the work of United Methodist pastoral counselors.

In recent years, the pastoral counseling movement has begun to take on a more international flavor. In the early 1980s, the AAPC began to train pastors and theological students from across the world in the field of pastoral counseling. After coming to the United States for training, two of these persons were supported by the association in building new pastoral counseling programs within their own countries—Olgierd C. Benedyktoicz in Warsaw, Poland, and Philip del Rosario in Cabanatuan City, Philippines. At the present time, nine additional United Methodists are listed in overseas settings, including James Farris in Sao Paulo, Brazil; John C. Blair in Australia; Christine Kayte in England; Shui-Man Kwan in Hong Kong; Soo-Young Kwaon in South Korea; and Elizabeth K. Mtimkulu and Nduumuland Mutombu in the Republic of South Africa.

The extensive travels of Howard Clinebell and other leaders to teach in overseas settings have influenced the adaptation of American pastoral counseling methods. In recent years, a number of articles have appeared by pastoral counselors with a deep understanding of cultural differences relevant to the practice of pastoral counseling. Also recently, a number of other pastoral counselors have provided leadership in short-term overseas programs.

Certainly the advent of many more women and people of color into this field has brought changes and improvements in earlier forms of training and therapeutic processes. They have provided challenges to
gender and racial bias and have effectively broadened both the thinking and the practice of pastoral counseling in our day. Such sensibilities are increasingly vital in a worldwide church and an international movement of practitioners.

The Unique Impact of Pastoral Counseling on United Methodism

One of the most unique influences of the development of pastoral counseling within United Methodism has been the development of a series of annual conference and area programs in pastoral care and counseling. As early as 1957, Bishop Richard Raines supported the development of a pastoral counseling center in the North Indiana Conference. James Doty was the director for the first nine years, followed by Foster W. Williams, who continued that direction from 1966 through 1986. It is noteworthy that, before being elected bishop, Richard Raines served as senior minister at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church in Minneapolis. Carroll Wise served on staff as a pastoral counselor and subsequently took a position at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary.

In 1961, Bishop Hazen Werner helped initiate an area program in Ohio. David Chamberlain was the first director. In 1969, the Ohio program became two conference programs. Paul Schurman, Sam L. Slack, Howard K. Humphress, and Terry Dalton have led the Ohio East Conference program ever since, while Robert M. Collie was in charge of the Ohio West program until 1978. Subsequently, Louis Hoyer continued the program for more than twenty years.

In 1966, Bishop Kenneth Pope worked with the North and Central Texas annual conferences in establishing an area program, with DeForest Wiksten as its director. This program continued under his leadership until 1973, when it evolved into a series of pastoral counseling resources. In 1972, the Baltimore Conference began a program under Bishop John Wesley Lord, with Leroy Graham as its first director. In later years, Berkely Hathorne and Bruno Heidik gave leadership as directors.

The Holston Conference began its program in 1972 under Bishop L. Scott Allen, with William H. Balle as director. At present, the program is led by Gary Mauldin. The Iowa area started a program in 1973 under Bishop James Thomas, directed by Larry W. Sonner. On his retirement,
Mary L. Fraser took over the reins. In 1974, the Illinois area, under Bishop Lance Webb, launched a program, with Donald C. Houts as director. Upon his retirement, Daniel C. Henderson has continued the program.

The North Alabama Conference began its program in 1974 under the leadership of Bishop Kenneth Goodson. William Clements was director for a short time, followed by Charles F. Alexander, who was later assisted by John G. Gallaway and Rachel Julian. That program is continuing to this day.

Bishop Edward L. Tullis led the South Georgia Conference in starting a program in 1974 under the direction of Robert Hudspeth, followed by Andrew Summers. The Missouri area, under Robert Goodrich, instituted a program in 1976, with James T. Walker as director. The most recent program was begun in 2001 in the North Carolina Conference under Bishop J. Lawrence McCleskey, with Jane C. Norman as director.

Most of these United Methodist programs began as direct services to clergy and their families by competent and certified directors of pastoral care. A number of them developed training for clergy within the bounds of the program and began to use other competent clinicians and teachers to assist. Some combined the direct pastoral counseling services with satellite centers to minimize the problem of travel distance for clients. Others emphasized the continuing education of clergy in small groups and workshops related to such varied subjects as marriage counseling, grief and bereavement, conflict management, peer supervision, as well as ongoing support groups and other clergy-oriented programs. All of these programs continued to serve clergy and respond to their needs. For example, they offered "transition seminars" for clergy who are changing appointments and retreats for the children of clergy.

Since 1974, area and annual conference directors have met annually for mutual support, enrichment, and sharing of pilot projects. It is to the credit of these directors that their record shows consistent, faithful service to the church. Clergy and their families have long needed a place to go where they would not be judged and where they could count on receiving help at moderate cost.

It needs to be said that in most of these programs, boards of ordained ministry have offered strong support. These boards quickly began to appreciate the quality of care available to clergy families and the new range of options to assist clergy in their growth and professional development.

One of the key characteristics of the more successful and continuing
area and annual conference programs has been the ability of conference leaders to free area directors from reporting specifics of therapeutic contacts to ecclesiastical superiors. Fear of losing their protected confidentiality has always been a factor in programs for clergy. Trust in our pastoral counseling leadership by church superiors is an obvious prerequisite for effective and continuing programs. Where there has been mutual trust, the programs have succeeded in a dependable and predictable manner.

At a time when annual conferences face skyrocketing health insurance costs and other emerging concerns, it remains to be seen how these programs and other potential new programs can remain viable. Some programs have begun to charge small fees for their services, while several others have benefited from large gifts of charitable foundations to supplement their budget needs. The creative and supportive function of these programs continues to be worth any reasonable cost and it would be difficult to devise alternative programs that would be more effective.

In summary, I believe this experiment, quite unique to United Methodist polity, has served and is serving the church very well. Clergy from other denominational and faith groups have often remarked about the paucity of resources available to them for personal spiritual growth. They also speak of feeling lonely and fearful in recognizing that they are without the advocacy offered by a pastoral counseling service. These feelings often cloud their effectiveness and joy in ministry. Bishop Raines’s vision and the support of many individuals and annual conferences mark the area and annual-conference pastoral counseling programs as United Methodism’s unique contribution to more effective clergy support.

A second major impact of pastoral counseling on The United Methodist Church is in the prevention of sexual abuse by clergy. Any annual conference that has experienced the public trial of a clergyperson will know the terrible price that comes from sexual abuse of even one victim. Having experienced only one such trial in nineteen years of practice, I have become convinced that the church must work proactively to assure that such instances are very few and are never glossed over.

In the early 1980s, Marie Fortune was almost alone in her campaign to call attention to issues of clergy sexual abuse. Through retreats and educational programs aimed at challenging clergy and judicatories alike, she has helped to provide patterns for change. Thanks to her pioneering work and to the early efforts of others to speak to these issues, a few programs were
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developed for assisting judicatories to respond effectively and preemptively. One such resource, the Extension Division of the University of Wisconsin, developed the first in a series of videotaped resources, set within a context of training for clergy. When these materials became available there seemed little excuse not to use them extensively.

The first and most extensive use of such programs was largely within United Methodism. Scores of annual conferences not only worked on relevant codes of sexual ethics but also planned and carried out mandatory programs that reached a very high percentage of clergy. There is no way to know exactly how effective these programs have been in preventing sexual abuse by individual clergy members; but certainly they have begun to sensitize many clergy to the importance of the issue and have portrayed a wide variety of relevant situations. In our denomination, these sexual prevention programs have consistently used male-female leadership teams.

At about the same time, the church was beginning to identify therapeutic resources. Minnesota, Kansas, and other places launched pilot treatment programs for perpetrators. Conference policies were developed for those who would teach in church schools or supervise in youth summer camps. Trained pastoral counselors helped develop and expedite such education.

In 1993, the entire United Methodist Council of Bishops underwent training programs similar to those carried out with many of their clergy. To our knowledge, no other denomination has been as dedicated, consistent, and thorough in its attempts to deal with this problem. While the work that has been done to date is less than uniform, each annual conference has been challenged to delineate a commitment both to protecting vulnerable persons and to enabling clergy to understand the processes of harassment and victimization.

Overall, The United Methodist Church has made substantial progress in the ongoing fight for safety and sensitivity in our relationships with others. It is time for all conference leaders who have not done so yet to follow suit.

The official positions of the church on peace and justice have not always been preached and pursued with vigor. One of the most ambitious and effective voices of faith groups has been the Interfaith Pastoral Counselors for Social Responsibility. For a generation, it has been a steady and vocal factor within pastoral counseling professional meetings. As one
of its founders, Howard Clinebell was again ahead of his church and his fellow pastoral counselors in seeing the relevance of social justice, fair trade, and ecology as commitments toward world peace. Thus, the Pastoral Counseling movement has supported the goals of global missions and world peace through its international scope and its effective networking across the globe.

Continuing Questions for Discussion

The aim of this paper has been to open dialogue about the history of pastoral counseling within United Methodism and about issues relevant to the future. Three such issues come to mind: the changing priorities of parish clergy, seminary curriculum, and appointments to extension ministries in The United Methodist Church.

Changing Priorities of Clergy

In the past generation, theologians such as Daniel Day Williams, Albert C. Outler, and Henri Nouwen have sought to find common language for classical theologians and behavioral scientists to converse and thoughtfully discuss important faith issues. As early as 1950, David Roberts published *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man*. Roberts argued that acquaintance with psychotherapeutic theory would enrich theologians' interpretation of Christian doctrine. Within the Pastoral Counseling movement, theologians such as Seward Hiltner consistently tried to emphasize the importance of keeping the movement close to the church.

Prior to the AAPC's first gathering in 1964, Carroll Wise required all of his graduate students to attend the meeting to assure that the movement saw its place as a ministry of the church. I was one of those students and have never forgotten Wise's concern. As early as 1980, AAPC's annual programs balanced clinical presentations with theological papers and theological discussions with clinically relevant discussion. In my view, this attempt to find meaningful common ground between theology and pastoral psychology has become a productive and comfortable ground for most pastoral counselors.

Recently, there appears to be a widespread shift in the priorities of seminary graduates with regard to how they spend their time and energy. In my experience, younger pastors consistently are less interested in spending significant time in visiting within the parish. To be sure, in some
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Cases, there are reasonable explanations: both spouses work or parishes have less-discrete geographical boundaries. However, a more subtle reason underlying the rejection of this role may be that many of these pastors are not comfortable visiting parishioners, particularly if it involves a member who is experiencing acute stress. For some, fear of sexual temptation in the face of marked anxiety about boundary issues may play a role.

John Wesley never relinquished the priority of knowing persons as individuals. His desire to be where people were in their pain and to share in their struggles and sense of “lostness” was constant and uncompromising. Pastors have always been tempted to avoid unpleasant or difficult activities. In the past, some have sought relief through alcohol, drugs, or television. Nowadays, the Internet may offer escape. Until we are able once again to translate our concern for evangelism and new life to face-to-face relationships, I fear many of our clergy will continue to shun this central task of traditional Methodism—the “care of souls.”

Seminary Curriculum

This change in priority among younger pastors has been gradual in coming, but the review of United Methodist seminary catalogues tends to bolster this observation. While most of our seminaries give credit for clinical pastoral education, it is listed in the catalogue as an elective; and the number of United Methodist theological students who enroll in clinical pastoral education courses has gradually fallen. Likewise, the current catalogues of all of our United Methodist seminaries list clinical pastoral counseling as one required course of two or three semester hours or offer electives that include a choice between two or three courses in Christian Education, Evangelism, Pastoral Care and Counseling, or Worship. Some catalogues continue to list additional electives in the field but appear not to offer enough faculty time to make those courses available, given the wide variety of elective courses and the apparent increase of curriculum requirements in Bible, Church History, and Theology. Few seminary graduates today can be assumed to have special skills in pastoral counseling.

Extension Ministries

Paragraphs 343-344 of the Book of Discipline list a wide variety of ministries approved by the general church as potentially appropriate appointments. We take for granted that a good number of appointments to extension ministry will take place. However, the shortage of parish clergy in many
annual conferences creates the temptation for bishops to treat appointments beyond the local church as peripheral and in some sense regrettable.

The Discipline makes it very clear that the itinerant ministry supercedes the needs of extension ministries whenever deemed advisable by the bishop.

Elders in appointments extending the ministry of the local United Methodist church are full participants in the itinerant system. Therefore, a conference member in an appointment beyond the local United Methodist church must be willing upon consultation to receive an appointment in a pastoral charge.9

Whether or not this "consultation" is a two-way communication or simply a conference to indicate a decision by the bishop is not clear to me. While I have no evidence to indicate how commonly such appointments are made, I have heard anecdotal reports that in some conferences it has become a frequent occurrence. Nonetheless, it is clear that The United Methodist Church functions most effectively on the basis of a fully itinerant system regarding appointive practice. In commenting on this issue, John H. Patton says:

Pastoral Care and other specialized ministers simply don't fit in denominational structures such as geographical Annual Conferences, presbyteries, or associations organized to facilitate congregational or parochial ministry.10

Fortunately, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has a time-honored tradition of support for those of us who have become specialists in particular areas of ministry such as pastoral counseling. From early days, staff members have tended their flock of people in extension ministries. They function as primary links to the larger church for many of us in a variety of special appointments.

UMEA has also been helpful in taking on the certification process for the board. It has carefully carried out the intent of the General Conference in paying attention to standards for and personal development of clergy in extension ministries. Hopefully, the history of the past generation has justified the continuing confidence of the larger church in the competence, loyalty, and unique contributions of her clergy in extension appointments.
Conclusion

It is not easy to summarize the issues in pastoral counseling over the past one-hundred years or the unique relationship of the field to United Methodism. Perhaps others will be able to use these comments in helpful ways to insure that the church is continually proud of the work that we do in pastoral counseling. Methodists in John Wesley's day worked in cottage, mine, and slum. While the settings and qualifications may be different today, the overall witness and overarching concern for the task of "going on to perfection" will never be without witness and power.

Liston O. Mills summarizes his historical view of the Pastoral Counseling movement as follows:

Thus pastoral care seeks its roots in a theological world view at the same time that it comes to terms with the forces and contending voices of the contemporary scene. What is reflected in these more recent enterprises is a continuation of a long and honorable tradition. For the commitment to persons which pastoral care's history reveals and the effort to discern the meaning of life in relation to God remain as fundamental ideals in those who would care for souls.  

We commit ourselves to this continuing challenge.

Endnotes


7. I dedicate this article to these Methodist pioneers. Clinebell was a long-time friend, colleague, and mentor; and Wise a profoundly influential teacher and example.

8. While we have attempted to retrieve this information with accuracy, there may be some omissions or actual errors. We included all these programs, because at the present time there is no public record of the history and impact of these trailblazing programs.


Is there a distinctively Wesleyan approach to pastoral care and counseling—a characteristic theological grounding that may prove useful to those seeking resources in the founder of Methodism for their own practice of pastoral care? To be sure, John Wesley has not provided us with the kind of case studies that Seward Hiltner found in the nineteenth-century Brooklyn pastor Ichabod Spencer, whose cases appeared in *A Pastor's Sketches*, published in 1851—cases that Hiltner drew on extensively in his classic *Preface to Pastoral Theology*. But Wesley, writing 100 years earlier than Spencer, did provide a richly nuanced soteriology that offers resources for developing a theology of pastoral care surprisingly relevant to today's needs.

Every theology of pastoral care presupposes an anthropology: assumptions about who human beings are, their high calling and their limitations, and their capabilities and foibles. And a Wesleyan starting point for counseling is no exception. Humans are created in the image of God. This is Wesley’s foundational anthropological assertion. Their Creator intends for them to stand in a role and relationship for which they are equipped with special gifts and the accompanying responsibilities. In defining the image of God Wesley differentiates between the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. Under the natural image he includes the gifts of reason, will, and freedom. These are the basic capacities necessary for humans to be in conscious relationship with their Creator. With regard to human reason Wesley's view was functional and pragmatic, geared to the world that was emerging at the beginning of the eighteenth century through Locke and empiricism rather than the intuitive capabilities that had been ascribed to reason by Descartes, the Cambridge Platonists, and the Deists. Reason receives sense data and grasps how things work together. It discerns order and relationships that make possible right judgments. The gift of will enables humans to exercise agency, sort out priorities, make commitments, and execute responsibilities. The gift of freedom
gives to reason and will the power to choose the good and resist evil. These were Enlightenment values, which Wesley shared.

The political image reflects the way in which humanity "images" on the finite level God's ordering of the universe. In Genesis humanity is described as having "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (1:28). Humanity thus has a place of special responsibility for the care of the earth and its creatures. Wesley notes, "So . . . man was God's vicegerent [manager] upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world, and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures." We are the stewards of a world entrusted to us.

The moral image is the most strategic mark of the human imaging of God, for it is the one on which the other two depend. It consists of a relationship in which the creature receives continuously from the Creator and mediates further what is received. "God is love: accordingly man at his creation was full of love, which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of the Creator." The image in its relation to its Source images and transmits further those qualities it receives from beyond itself. This relationship Wesley terms "spiritual respiration":

God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God: a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God; an unceasing presence of God, the loving pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice unto God in Christ Jesus.

What Wesley is describing is theosis as it is understood in the Eastern Church—God's participation in our lives by the power of the Spirit and our participation by the same Spirit in the life of God. What is necessary for this participation, however, is "the absolute necessity of this re-action of the soul (whatever it be called) in order to the continuance of the divine life therein. For it plainly appears God does not continue to act upon the soul unless the soul re-acts upon God." It is clear to Wesley that humans have failed to "re-react," faithfully to image God as participants in the divine life.
The result is that the components in the natural image have become distorted. They have been turned in a direction opposite from the purpose for which they were given, so that our reason is now used to excuse and rationalize, our will is turned to serve egocentric purposes, and our freedom becomes bondage as we pursue false goals that, once chosen, do not allow us to choose what we know to be better. In the familiar words of Paul, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom. 7:18-19). Thus we retain the characteristics of reason, will, and freedom: but they no longer function in the way intended, and often we are unable to do anything about it.

The political image is also distorted. As the steward, we have not been faithful in the care of the world placed in our hands. We think not of future generations but only of our present needs and desires. The earth suffers from our exploitation. While we retain our role of "prince and governor," we mismanage that over which we have been made stewards and exploit it to satisfy our selfish, excessive consumption.

If the natural image and political image have become distorted, it is the moral image that has broken down most completely; for we have lost the ability to transmit to others the justice, mercy, truth, and love that we have received from our Maker. We no longer react to God's action. We have become desensitized to grace that flows from the divine Source. Therefore, we do not fulfill our calling of sharing that grace with others.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Wesley's doctrine of salvation focuses on the fundamental human need for the renewal of the image of God. This is his most frequent way to describe salvation. "You know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, ... [and] all that stops short of this ... is no other than a poor farce and a mere mockery of God." Therefore, it is God's intention to "create us anew" in the 'image of God, wherein we were first created." And it is this renewal that is the goal of pastoral care and counseling insofar as it is consciously grounded in the Wesleyan tradition. How does this renewal take place?

Wesley sets out for us a kind of template of the factors involved that mark the developmental stages in the journey of faith. Undergirding this soteriology is the conviction that salvation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process of divine grace operative in human experience that Wesley describes in terms broader than those often assumed by his contemporaries. "What is salvation?" he asks. It is "not what is frequently
understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness . . . . It is not a blessing which lies on the other side of death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world.” Referring to Eph. 2:8, he comments,

The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question. ‘Ye are saved.’ It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing, a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of . . . . So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory.9

This grace nurtures the person through ever-greater maturation. Basic to this soteriology is therefore the concept of divine grace: the kindness, mercy, blessing, and “outgoingness” of God toward humanity given expression in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the activity of the Spirit. Grace is a gift undeserved by humans but overflowing out of the generosity of the Creator. It is the means by which God seeks to overcome the estrangement that has distorted the relationship between the creatures, their Maker, and one another. And it is the divine caring that surrounds and sustains everything that has breath. It is this grace that is a chief presupposition of pastoral counseling in a Wesleyan mode, for it can be presupposed even when it is not obvious to the counselor and even when it is not evident to the counselee. The presupposition is that the Spirit is already at work in the life of every person who seeks out counsel. This is the objective presence of grace in any counseling relationship.

Because grace is the trinitarian God’s good will toward us, it is of one piece and cannot be divided, whether it comes from the Father, the Son, or the Spirit. But for purposes of explanation and analysis, Wesley can see grace operating in different ways at different stages in the journey of faith—ways that significantly parallel both the stages of salvation and the stages of counseling. These ways are prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace.

Prevenient Grace

The first stage in the template is prevenient grace. This is, so to say, the porch by which one first approaches the house of faith, health, and whole-ness. According to Wesley, this is often the most subtle form of grace. It is “the first dawning of grace in the soul.”
the first dawn of light concerning [God's] will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and things of God.\textsuperscript{10}

These promptings of prevenient grace may cause a person to seek out counseling, for persons often cannot clearly identify why they have come and have difficulty saying what it is that is troubling them and causing their uneasiness, their "dis-ease." But they sense that a pastoral counselor will be able to assist them in getting to the root of the problem. From Wesley's standpoint they have rightly identified the role of a pastor, for "the religion of Jesus Christ ... is \textit{therapeia psyches} [soul therapy], God's method of healing a soul which is thus diseased."\textsuperscript{11}

This identification of salvation with therapy, or \textit{healing}, is our clue to the fact that Wesley benefitted from the understanding of salvation characteristic of the early Eastern Fathers, whom Wesley with his colleagues in the Holy Club at Oxford studied in the original Greek. His favorites were Macarius and Ephrem Syrus, who could describe sin as an illness and salvation as overcoming illness and bringing about health. Christ is the Great Physician who has come to heal the lame, the blind, and the possessed. This is in contrast to the predominant Western definition of sin as a criminal offense, a breaking of the Law. In the West, the scene is a courtroom and the sinner appears before the Judge, who could rightly condemn the guilty were it not that the Son intervenes. The judgment that should fall on us falls instead on him. He bears the burden of our guilt, pays the price for our crime, and sets us free. Wesley could call upon this tradition as well, and in describing Christ's atoning action he often employs the motifs of substitution, satisfaction, and sacrifice. However, the point is that he explicitly utilized the Eastern tradition and its emphasis upon the healing arts. This may be due to what he describes as his long-term interest in medicine, which he studied at Oxford in preparation for his mission in colonial Georgia, where "I imagined I might be of some service to those who had no regular Physician among them."\textsuperscript{10} He continued his interest in anatomy and medicine, reading extensively in the field. And later, at his London headquarters, the Foundery, he opened a clinic and apothecary for the treatment of the poor, enlisting the help of physicians and pharmacists who volunteered their services. Consulting the medical texts of the time, he published
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a medical tract in 1745 titled *A Collection of Receipts for the Use of the Poor*. In 1747, Wesley revised the tract to make it a comprehensive self-help book of diagnoses and remedies for some 250 maladies and published it under the title *Primitive Physick: An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*. The book carefully marked those cures Wesley had tried himself and approved. It was the most popular of Wesley's publications and went through twenty-three editions during his lifetime. Most of the cures have in the meantime proved to be if not beneficial then at least harmless.

Prevenient grace is evident in the phenomenon of conscience, says Wesley. "No man living is entirely destitute of what is [commonly] called 'natural conscience.' But this is not natural: it is more properly termed 'preventing [i.e., prevenient] grace.' Every man has a greater or less measure of this." This is testified to by the impulses that strike every human breast.

Everyone has . . . good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later . . . enlightens every man that cometh into the world . . . Everyone . . . feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace he hath.

This implied positive view of conscience helps to clarify the differences between Wesley and the Lutheran and Calvinistic approaches. For Luther, the conscience can condemn; it joins the Law in accusing the sinner before God. The role of grace is to free from the condemnation of conscience. To be sure, Wesley warns against an overly "scrupulous conscience," which he terms "a sore evil" that requires correction by scriptural authority. There are some, he says, "who fear where no fear is, who are continually condemning themselves without cause: imagining some things to be sinful which the Scripture nowhere condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty which the Scripture nowhere enjoins." Yet he accords a more positive role to conscience, perhaps because he detects prevenient grace at work in the lives of the poor who, though untutored and unlettered, testify to the authentic voice of conscience within. This he felt was grounded in Christ, the unknown companion of every human being.
It is not nature but the Son of God that is "the true light, which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world." So that we may say to every human creature, "He," not nature, "hath shown thee, O man, what is good." And it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.  

The contrast with Calvin's approach has to do more with Wesley's emphasis upon human freedom in appropriating grace. Wesley scholar Albert Outler observed that the Calvinists "stressed the Father's elective will" which, before the worlds began, was the first cause of everything that was to follow. The absoluteness of divine sovereignty was therefore the characteristic way in which God's grace was conceived. The immutable divine will is the source of all the gracious benefits for the elect and, because that will is immutable, the grace that results is necessarily viewed as irresistible. Wesley's therapeutic approach shifts the emphasis to the third person of the Trinity. Because it is not an eternal decree but a healing power that is the guiding motif, and because there must be a willing cooperation if grace is to be effective, this grace of the Spirit can be resisted by humans too threatened by the implications of grace for change. While not disagreeing with the Calvinist contention that God is sovereign Lord and therefore able to intervene directly and put things right by fiat, Wesley asserts that this would defeat God's purpose to restore humanity to the image of God, which includes human freedom. The Almighty could, of course, act irresistibly, and the thing is done; yea, with just the same ease as when "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." But then man would be man no longer; his inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the sun or the wind, as he would no longer be endowed with liberty, a power of choosing or self-determination. Consequently he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or punishment.  

Like his mentors among the Eastern Fathers, Wesley understands divine grace as cooperant. It invites into partnership. This partnership cannot be imposed but instead opens up a greater degree of genuine freedom.
You know how God wrought in your own soul when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God." . . . He did not take away your understanding, but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty, your power of choosing good or evil; he did not force you: but being assisted by his grace you, like Mary, chose the better part.  

Freedom is necessary in order to ensure synergy, the cooperative working together of the human and the divine at every step in the process of salvation. Synergy is generally attributed to the Eastern Fathers, although Wesley quotes a Western Father, St. Augustine, to make the point: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." (Wesley admits, however, that with regard to human freedom Augustine "is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine."  

Wesley was criticized by his Calvinist opponents for defending synergism, which they considered Pelagian and taking away from the glory of God. It is true that Wesley defended Pelagius and felt he was misrepresented by Augustine; but the version of synergism that he espoused attributed all the initiative to God's grace and was, in the tradition of the Eastern church, perfectly orthodox.  

Synergy is an important presupposition of pastoral counseling. The counselor may have his or her assumptions about the diagnosis of the counselee's issues and possible avenues of resolution but knows that his or her solutions, if imposed, are no solution at all. What is required is a mutual process of exploration and discovery freely entered into and contributed to by the counselee. For it is in him or her that understanding and change must take place. The counselor's role is to reinforce the gentle nudgings of the Spirit in prevenient grace.

Justifying Grace

The next stage in the process of salvation in Wesley's theological template is justifying grace. If prevenient grace is the porch leading to the house of faith, then justifying grace is the door by which we are brought in. Prevenient grace is God's good will toward all humankind, and we can assume it is operative in the lives of all. "It is found, at least in some small degree, in every child of man. . . . not only in all Christians. . . ." Just as the pastoral counselor must therefore presuppose the operation of prevenient
grace in all of his or her clients, justifying grace is analogous to the break­throughs that occur in the counseling process itself, especially if those breakthroughs bring not just insights for the individual but reconciliation in relationships.

To use the term in a way familiar to us from computer language, justifi­cation is the way our relationship to God is realigned, rectified, restored, and renewed. This begins with the admission that something has gone wrong; that the gifts and talents we have been given have not proved suffi­cient or have been distorted; that our reason, will, and freedom have not always served us well and have often led to self-deception, misunder­sstanding, and bondage. The first step out of this predicament is dissatisfac­tion and frustration, a desire to be reoriented and to turn things around. Theologically, this is described as repentance. Yet this is not something we can accomplish by ourselves. We need an “other” to help us sort things out and come to terms with our situation. This is where the pastor, counselor, or therapist comes in. It is not the therapist’s job to make repentance easy; for what is necessary is an utterly realistic look at all the factors involved in our quandary. Wesley describes repentance as a “kind of self-knowledge,” but a knowledge which can best be facilitated by another. “Why is it that it is often easier to confess our sins to God than to a brother?” writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer. “We must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession of sin to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution.” But when we repent in the presence of another person, we “experience the presence of God in the reality of the other person.” The role of the counselor is to be that other person and to mediate divine grace. The counselor accepts the counselee as he or she is. The counselor does not require that the individual first meet any criteria for insight into him- or herself or his or her situation but opens up by his or her warmth and expertise the possibility for candid exchange. Both the interpersonal warmth and the professional expertise are necessary because, to be authentic, grace involves not just acceptance but also the ability to arouse trust so that the counselee can in turn drop defenses. The word of forgiveness, whether communicated verbally, or nonverbally in atti­tude, comes from beyond and assures pardon and reconciliation.

Justification is often identified with a sudden breakthrough and this event of forgiveness and reconciliation. Things fall into place and the client
or parishioner sees him- or herself in a new light. They know themselves to be accepted by that which is infinite. In Wesley's terms, they have experienced "assurance"; they have been affirmed by the ultimate. "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Things are now aligned differently than before and the relationship to God is reestablished. Leading up to this realignment, however, is a dialogical process in which the counselor guides toward greater insight. Is the result enlightenment or conversion? On the intellectual level, it could be called enlightenment; but if it is undergirded by the acceptance that communicates divine grace, it brings the counselee into a relation with the divine that can be read as conversion. Usually it is not a one-time conversion, however, because it is often followed by further insights and breakthroughs.

Persons frequently testify to the sense of freedom and release that accompanies these breakthroughs. Therapists may be cautious about such experiences, because they know these can be followed by periods of depression. Wesley was convinced, however, that grace is perceptible—that it can be sensed and experienced so that we become conscious of it. In this he differed from the usual church position that grace is forensic; i.e., it is declared and dispensed through the officially authorized administrators of grace—the clergy—in an event that takes place, for example, in the sacraments, whether the recipient is aware of it or not. Wesley felt that God was reaching out precisely in the Eucharist to bring the knowledge of the heart of God to human hearts. And that involves experiential knowledge.

Feelings are an important factor in counseling—indeed, often the most memorable factor. Nevertheless, Wesley did not advocate an uncritical attitude toward feelings. He recognized that they could mislead and be misinformed. Therefore, Scripture remains the standard by which feelings are to be judged as to their consistency with the truth of the gospel, and feelings are not in any sense to be taken as absolute in themselves. But the healing power of feelings often contributes to the nurturing process introduced by justification.

Sanctifying Grace

The final piece Wesley offers us in the theological template for use in the ministry of counseling is sanctifying grace. As we have seen, Wesley identifies salvation as a healing process, a *therapeia* that is ongoing. If prevenient grace is the porch and justifying grace the door, then sanctifying grace
invites healing into all of the rooms of the house. The healing power generally does not accomplish everything at once but makes its way into the various rooms of a life one by one, bringing the reconciliation that has been discovered in justification to the various aspects of the individual's life and the network of relationships in which he or she is involved. Some are relationships to kindred, others to friends and colleagues, and yet others to the larger society of which we are a part.

As Thomas Oden points out, Jesus came into conflict with the religious authorities because he practiced healing on the Sabbath. They thought the Sabbath should be reserved for religious observances only. When Jesus responded that the Sabbath was made for human beings and not human beings for the Sabbath, he extended the limits of what constituted service to God into the secular arena. "He offered therapeia on the Sabbath as a sign of the emerging reign of God, thus intruding upon the holy day with his ministry to sick bodies and souls and erasing the strict boundary between sacred and secular functions." Just as healing was needed for the religious and social structures of Jesus' time, so healing is needed today, especially in the sanctifying of humanity as the political image of God.

The healing process requires nurturing that usually takes time and commitment, on the part of both the pastor-counselor and the counselee, for "human freedom is nurtured even amid the conditions of estrangement." Wesley was well aware of this need for a nurturing environment and so he developed within his societies smaller groups—classes and bands—in which members came together weekly for Bible study, prayer, and sharing of the issues they faced in their own lives. They had no professional training in therapy; but often class leaders began the sessions by confessing their own temptations and problems and were adept at drawing out from the ten or twelve persons in the group the issues with which they had been confronted during the previous week—a process not unlike therapy groups today. Wesley was convinced that human beings were social creatures meant to be fulfilled in social relationships and he reacted against those who argued that true piety was cultivated only by withdrawal from society. The quietists and mystics advocated, "To the desert! to the desert! and God will build you up." Wesley countered,

Directly opposite to this is the gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. "Holy solitaries" is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel...
than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social, no holiness but social holiness.31

The goal of counseling, therefore, is to strengthen persons so that they can play a creative and engaged social role, sharing the healing in which they have participated in all of their social relationships.

Ye "are the salt of the earth." It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine savour which is in you to spread to whatsoever you touch, to diffuse itself on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others.32

Although sanctification includes disciplines of spiritual renewal, it means not withdrawal but active involvement that draws a person out of preoccupation with self into a life of concern for others. "Faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6) was Wesley’s favorite description of sanctification. And it could well serve as the goal of the empowering that takes place through any pastoral counseling relationship.

This is the template that Wesley suggests can make us open and sensitive to the action of grace at every stage of the counseling process, whether in prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

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3. Ibid., 2:440.
4. Ibid., 2:188.
5. Ibid., 1:442.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 2:185.
9. Ibid., 2:156.
10. Ibid., 3:203f.
11. Ibid., 2:184.
12. The Works of John Wesley (Jackson edition) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1872), 8:264 (hereafter Works [Jackson]).
15. Works, 3:207.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 3:487.
18. Ibid., 5:452.
21. Ibid., 2:489.
22. Ibid., 3:208.
25. Ibid., 4:163.
30. Ibid., 77.
32. Ibid., 1:537.
Pastoral Counseling as Faithful Practice amid Liminality, Uncertainty, and Multiplicity

EMMANUEL Y. LARTEY

As a result of their practice being closely related to people's everyday life experience, pastoral counselors have historically had to invoke cultural analytical skills. John Wesley, in his *ad populum* manner of speech and practice, became very adept at this, relating his theological insights to the experiences of ordinary folk. Wesley's "practical divinity" involved making life-giving connections between Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience and doing so in ways that communicated clearly with the "ordinary" person.

Pastoral counselors still face this challenge today but with the added realization of the particular issues facing the multicultural and multifaith world in which we now increasingly live. Of course, the world has always been multicultural and pluralistic. However, it is only now, as a result of rapid technological developments and the realities of the movement of people across national and cultural borders, that we are able to face squarely the challenges and opportunities of this reality.

The world of today throws people of very different social, cultural, economic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds into close proximity with one another in very many places. The challenges of communication across linguistic and cultural barriers face us all the time. Moreover, people of different cultures who are in contact influence one another in subtle and, at times, overt ways. The power of the media is considerable in this regard. The influence of a radio in a remote village community can be phenomenal. Political and even national revolutions have been traced to the power of the media either in sowing seeds or else in giving the oxygen of publicity to little-known causes. We no longer live, anywhere in the world, in communities that are completely closed or impenetrable. Computer technology invades even the most inaccessible terrain.

We can no longer assume that our neighbors speak the same language...
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as we or share our beliefs. What makes the task even more intractable is that we not only have to deal with varieties of experience, background, culture, and faith but also are called upon to respond to these baffling differences while they too are in a state of change through interaction and influence.

How are we to proceed with pastoral counseling in this situation? What does Christian pastoral counseling mean in today’s circumstances? How are Christian pastoral counselors to relate to Muslim or Sikh clients? What happens when the chaplain available in the hospital at the crucial moment of critical care is Buddhist or Hindu and the patient is Muslim or Christian? How do different religious faiths come into play in pastoral counseling? How are Christian pastoral counselors to counsel persons of Generation X or the New Millennials, for whom postmodernism is already beginning to become outdated?

Multiplicity and Plurality

We live increasingly in contexts in which the premodern, modern, and postmodern (and what is already beginning to be described as the post-postmodern) are juxtaposed. These three are no longer historical epochs separable from each other. They exist together and are in constant interactive relationship. The postmodern disillusionment with ambitious total explanations such as offered by science, religion, and economic or political ideologies is already fracturing into extremism, on the one hand, and nihilism, on the other. Violence against self and others born of religious fundamentalism and desperation stalks the world. “Cutting” and other forms of self-injury, teenage suicide, retreats into the fantasy world of drugs, altered states of consciousness and nihilistic self-absorption—all are commonplace. At the same time, and often in the same neighborhoods, it is possible to find people with “affluenza” in close proximity with those suffering the effects of poverty and disease. While many have access to computers and the Internet, others can barely read and write.

Varieties of religious faith and practice are now taken for granted in many places. Interfaith dialogue and respect were on the increase until September 11, 2001. In some places, 9/11 spurred on these efforts. In many other places, interfaith dialogue has given way to mutual suspicion and recrimination. This is a very fragile and turbulent time for people who believe in peace, ecumenism, coexistence, tolerance, and good neighborli-
Atrocities committed against members of other religions in "ethnic cleansing" operations are coming to light in Europe and other unexpected locations. Targeted killings of high-profile persons who appear in the eyes of some radical fundamentalists to have in some way violated their sacred faith are chilling reminders of the lengths to which some will go in defense of their religious values.

Following widespread disenchantment with first civilian and then military regimes in various African and other so-called "Third World" countries that promised independence, freedom, redemption, liberation, revolution, and progress, postcolonial discourses are increasingly critical of the neocolonialist governments and societies that emerged. Civil society continues to be nonpartisan if not completely apolitical and deeply skeptical of calls for "democracy" and "freedom," especially when they emanate from powerful, militaristic forces.

The need for renewed forms of pastoral counseling that embody values of communal as well as personal well-being is clear. The characteristics of such new forms of pastoral counseling are contained in a description of pastoral care I first wrote in 1993 and revised slightly in 2003. The description is as follows:

Pastoral care consists of helping activities, participated in by people who recognize a transcendent dimension to human life, which, by the use of verbal and non-verbal, direct or indirect, literal or symbolic modes of communication aim at preventing stress, relieving anxiety or facilitating persons coping with anxieties. Pastoral care seeks to foster people's growth as full human beings together with the development of ecologically and socio-politically holistic communities in which all persons may live humane lives.1

In my view, pastoral counseling, which in essence involves intensive psychotherapeutic and theological attention to individuals and small groups, needs to be set within a framework of such pastoral care. Pastoral counseling can be compared to surgical intervention, while pastoral care functions as community healthcare. Pastoral counseling is an intensifying and focusing of the general skills and aims of pastoral care upon an individual or small group of persons-in-relation. Pastoral counseling, then, needs to be related to the wider ministry of pastoral care as framework and context. Pastoral counseling is premised upon a recognition of transe-
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dence, which is a way of affirming that it has to do with spirituality, signifi-
cance, structures of meaning, and faith. In exploring this further it is
instructive to pay attention to different ways in which the adjective pastoral
is used to qualify and illuminate the nature of the counseling that is on
offer through pastoral counseling.

In spite of protests from practitioners and teachers, by far the most
common understanding that seems to be evoked by the expression is that
it is counseling of or by ordained clergypersons. Here pastoral counseling
means counseling of pastors or, simply put, talking with pastors to help
them with their problems. Along similar lines it is understood as coun-
seling by pastors, or pastors talking with persons about their personal,
family, or relational problems. Howard Clinebell describes pastoral coun-
seling as “the utilization by clergy of counseling and psychotherapeutic
methods to enable individuals, couples and families to handle their
personal crises and problems in living constructively.” In this way of
understanding pastoral counseling, the focus is on the one who receives or
else gives the counseling, namely, the pastor. This “clerical” paradigm
continues to shape the practice of pastoral counseling in many places.

Such pastoral counseling takes religious issues seriously. Exploring and
analyzing faith development, taking religious histories, and gauging theolog-
ical acuity are important features of it. For some pastoral counselors, reli-
gious verbiage indicates the pathological or transferential material that is the
focus of therapeutic work. That is to say, religion has a place in the trans-
ference and countertransference between counselor and client, the exploration
of which is crucial for effective therapy. For others, faith-talk, when properly
and directly attended to, can help the therapeutic process move forward in
helpful ways. In either case, though in very different ways, issues of faith are
not dismissed. Instead, there is a serious engagement and attempt to inte-
grate theology with psychology, both in diagnosis and in treatment.

However, religion not only is notoriously difficult to define but also
hard to categorize. As such, some who wish to retain the designation
pastoral counseling as demarcating a religious interest seek to include within
it any matters of faith or ultimate concern and not merely religious affilia-
tion. This approach seeks to address the fact that many who “believe do
not belong” to any religious community. Moreover, various participants in
communities of faith hold what may be described as unconventional or
unorthodox beliefs. Pastoral counseling on these terms would include any
and all matters of faith and ultimate concern, or "spirituality," however defined or described. In general, the clerical paradigm has been criticized as being overly individualistic and not sufficiently in tune with the pluriformity and unofficial nature of much pastoral counseling.

Another way of looking at pastoral counseling is to see it as arising out of and occurring within a community of faith. In this view, pastoral counseling is community counseling that is engaged in, by, and within community. The whole community is the counselor and individual counselors see themselves as representatives of the community. Here teamwork and collaboration are vital. Different persons have different forms of expertise within the community, and they offer these skills in concert and with consultation. A great example of this from Methodist practice is the "class meeting," which was and remains a significant hallmark of Methodist faith and practice. In fact, for Wesley, membership of the Methodist society was to be established by one's name being present in a current class book. Class meetings capture crucial elements of early church Christianity, such as personal growth through and within the context of loving fellowship, accountability for Christian stewardship and discipleship, "bear[ing] one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2), and "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Wesley made these communal groups the touchstone of faithful service, and they became the venues of much nurture and pastoral counseling within the Methodist scheme. Class meetings, then, with faithful leadership and committed membership, are examples of pastoral counseling within communities of faith. Recapturing the spirit of community within the practice of pastoral counseling, as early Methodism did, is a contemporary challenge well worth attending to.

Faithful through Liminality and Uncertainty

Two other approaches to pastoral counseling seem to me to offer much of value to faithful practice in the midst of the liminality, uncertainty, and multiplicity of our times.

In the first approach pastoral counseling is envisaged and practiced as counseling for the whole person-in-community. The passion of pastoral counselors who envision their practice in these terms is for what I call "relational holism." The aim of their charge is not the isolated, tough, self-directed, self-regulated individual of Enlightenment rationalism but rather emotionally intelligent persons who are in touch with themselves, relate...
effectively and compassionately with others, and seek the well-being of whole communities. The genius is learning to relate well with self and others. These counselors do not work in isolation. They respectfully engage the expertise and practice of other healthcare professionals and expect also in these teams to be treated in the same way. Matters of faith and belief are important to them not as impositions from without but as emanations from within persons in relation with a self-giving and responsive God. Matters of faith are not solely the preserve of active participants in communities of faith. Whoever wishes to ponder their life circumstances through lenses of significance may find help and support from pastoral counselors. The desire is to help persons find internal and interpersonal wholeness. In this day and age many people seek this wholeness but do not find it because almost everyone is trying to sell them a product with their own stamp on it. Pastoral counseling that aims at promoting relational holism eschews any attempts to make people after our own image. Rather, the skills acquired by the counselor enable her or him to accompany persons on their own journeys in quest of personal wholeness.

Here an important distinction between "individual" and "person" may be helpful. The term individual derives from the idea that there exists a unit-of-life substance (e.g., the atom) that cannot be subdivided. In society, the individual is that unit—the smallest unit of society. On the other hand, the meaning of person derives from relationship. The Zulu saying "A person is a person by reason of other persons" captures this sense beautifully. We become persons from before the time of our birth through an interactive process with other persons. No one achieves holistic development without the challenges and joys of interpersonal interaction. As such, unlike individual, person is a relational term. Many pastoral counselors have found a combination of the psychodynamic Object Relations Theories, the socially engaged theories of Family Systems therapies, and the sociohistorical ideas of Narrative Therapy useful in responding to realities and challenges of our social nature as persons.

Pastoral counseling that aims at facilitating the growth of whole communities does so through journeying with persons as they navigate the deep waters of internalized oppression, societal devaluing, and cultural denigration. Pastoral counseling in quest of relational holism develops out of models of illness, disease, and deprivation but also draws from the wells of wisdom, strength, and courage found in communities that have under-
gone trauma and hardship. Wholeness and holiness go together. For Wesley, holiness is a social concept, not merely a narrowly individual achievement. An important shift is taking place in psychotherapeutic and psychological studies from an exclusive focus on pathology to more study of human strengths and virtues. In the end, there needs to be more balance so that we benefit from both. As Daniel Schipani has argued, "As providers of a special form of pastoral care, pastoral counselors are primarily concerned with helping people live more wisely in the light of God as they face life challenges and struggles."

In Great Britain there is a decidedly secular usage of the term pastoral counseling, which may seem strange but which offers much in the climate we have been describing. The term is used within educational circles. Pastoral Care as used in schools in Britain attends to four dimensions of students' lives:

- Discipline and order
- Welfare and personal well-being
- Curriculum and academic achievement
- Administration and organization

Though it may deal with "spirituality," pastoral care in this setting has nothing overtly to do with religion or religious belief. Teachers, tutors, guidance and career counselors, academic advisors, and supervisors, all have, among other things, a "pastoral" responsibility toward their students. It is significant that the term pastoral has been retained, allowing it to be reframed so that its essential functional referent is brought out. Pastoral refers not so much to "who is doing it" but to "what is done and how." On this view, pastoral counseling is counseling that promotes or enables well-being, good order, disciplined living, and achieving of potential in a well-structured environment.

There is something of deep theological, contextual, and operational significance in these last two approaches to pastoral counseling that I want to explore further:

First, the concerns of pastoral counseling need not be narrowly parochial. In this day and age, pastoral counseling needs to rise above being merely an inner dialogue between persons of the same faith or attempts to recruit along faith lines. Anyone, regardless of religious tradition or the lack of it, should find some benefit from the careful, thoughtful, practice of pastoral counseling. This means that pastoral counselors need a
multifaith orientation that is familiar with different faiths in a nontreathening, nondefensive manner. Pastoral counselors need to be able to be respectful of all faiths no matter how different they may be. A story is told of a zealous Methodist dragging a young lady to Mr. Wesley for wearing bracelets and other fine jewelry on her hands. His expectation was that Wesley, known for his fiery preaching against excessive self-decoration and flowery adornments, would have a word of censure for this woman. We are told that Wesley looked down from his horse at the young lady and observed, "What beautiful hands you have!"

Second, pastoral counseling in this context lends itself both to the sacred, or religious, and the secular—the unexpectedly sacred as well as the "holy" secular. Pastoral counseling in the current environment needs to be at home with and recognize transcendence in various forms. An age of multiplicity needs the flexibility of a faith that recognizes God in unexpected spaces and places. Taking faith seriously requires attention to theology and how it has developed in particular people's experience. It also means attention to unconventional and uncharted forms of religious experience—and secular experience that is invested with sacred value. The expertise that pastoral counselors bring will be that of exploring the significance of conscious and unconscious ideas, images, and relationships. These will include overtly religious symbols as well as nonreligious and secular ones.

Third, the forms of pastoral counseling that will be relevant in our current context will make respectful dialogue with and between a wide range of religious and nonreligious persons possible. I have gained much through studying and living closely with persons of Islamic faith. The wisdom of mystics like Khalil Gibran, Rabindranath Tagore, and the Dalai Lama, among others, have illuminated my own journey as well as those of many other Christians. In the quest for wise living, we must acknowledge that persons from many different religious faiths have made very significant contributions. A rich and broad literature of the wisdom of the ages drawn from many different religious faiths could enrich the theory and practice of pastoral counseling, if the practitioners could rise above exclusive weddedness to particular psychologies, theologies, and traditions. Pastoral counseling needs an interfaith orientation of respect and interaction.

It is instructive that the Gospels portray Jesus as having much to say in commendation of the faith of non-Jews, even of despised Samaritans and Romans (e.g., the Canaanite woman in Matt. 15:21-28; the Roman centurion...
in Luke 7:1-10; the Samaritan leper in Luke 17:11-19, who was the only one of the ten who returned thanks for his healing). Jesus' sharpest rebukes were reserved for those of his own faith (the Scribes and Pharisees) who refused to recognize God outside of their own narrow schemes.

Fourth, pastoral counseling now must continue to emphasize relationality above technique and belief. Along with a theological rediscovery of the richness of the doctrine of the Trinity has been a realization that a more adequate way of talking of the "Persons" of the Godhead is to talk of "relations." God the Blessed Trinity is a movement of relations that interpenetrate and interact within and among each other. The language of relations is very dear to the heart of pastoral counselors because so much of our practice has to do with exploring the impact of past and present significant relationships upon our emotional and psychological health and well-being today. There is thus much to be gained by exploring what is meant by relations within God for learning about relations among and within human beings created in the image of God. A hallmark of pastoral counseling in our new circumstances today must be a deeper and more thoughtful theological analysis. Pastoral counseling cannot and must not merely be a sprinkling of a psychological baby with cold theological water or the overlaying of a thin veneer of shallow theology upon a psychological product.

Fifth, pastoral counseling now has to be oriented toward a balance between a "disease" model and a "health and strength" model. So much of the discipline of pastoral counseling has followed the disease model embedded in medical practice. As with psychology the main interest has been in diagnosis and treatment of pathology. While this has clearly been valuable and will continue to be so, there is growing recognition of the importance of the more "positive psychology" that studies strength, virtue, and ability. The cultivation of virtues and strengths has long been a practice associated with spiritual direction. Spirituality has tended in the direction of the practices that empower and enhance strengthened relations with the divine. As Len Sperry has argued in *Transforming Self and Community*, much of value could result from an integrative approach that draws together the practices of spiritual direction, moral education, and pastoral counseling.

Sixth, pastoral counseling as argued above increasingly draws upon a rich and varied theological heritage. Pastoral counseling needs to be theologically astute in attempting consciously and unconsciously to mirror God's presence in the world, which is framed in Christian understanding.
as self-giving (kenotic), self-effacing, unobtrusive, nonthreatening, and life-giving. "Secular" pastoral counseling in particular holds potential for such mirroring. In recognition of the God who, though self-disclosing, invites all humans to "search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27), pastoral counseling may by its very practice engage in such invitational practice. God's presence in the world is subtle and often unrecognized or inadequately celebrated. Similarly, the most effective forms of care and counseling are unannounced. It seems to be the way of the Holy Spirit to woo and lure rather than to overwhelm and compel. The God "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) does not seem anxious to constantly make her presence felt overtly. In Christ God gives God's self to humanity in faith and trust that the divine self-giving will eventually be discovered. Pastoral counseling mirrors such self-giving love.

Seventh, now more than ever pastoral counseling needs to take persons and contexts seriously. As we learn just how much we are impacted by the contexts in which we live and grow, we recognize the need for pastoral counselors to be cultural analysts if our practice is to be of any significance for the persons and communities in which we practice. It is as pastoral counselors become aware of and sensitive to the changing cultural circumstances at work within and around our clients that we become better able to be authentically present with them. The world, as it were, is closing in on us in the global village. As the West has influenced others with language and cultural products, so are we now subject to the influences that exist and arise from different regions of the world. Potentially we are humanized by empathic relations with all humankind, no matter how different culturally and ethnically. As it was for Wesley, the world indeed is our parish, where we both teach and learn.

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Endnotes

2. Howard Clinebell, "Pastoral Counselling," in A Dictionary of Pastoral Care, ed.


Professional Pastoral Counseling in the United Methodist Mode

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A discussion of professional pastoral counseling in the United Methodist mode needs to begin with an understanding of the biblical and historical context out of which pastoral care and pastoral counseling as we have come to know them have evolved. The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* defines pastoral care as "the ministry of oversight and nurture offered by a religious community to its members, including acts of discipline, support, comfort and celebration." Pastoral Counseling (upper case P, upper case C) is defined as "a specialized type of pastoral care offered in response to individuals, couples or families." For purposes of this article, Pastoral Counseling is defined as a particular type of pastoral care offered by the community of faith through designated persons to a specific segment of the community.

Pastoral Care and Counseling in Historical Perspective

The biblical mandate to care for one another as a ministry of oversight and nurture derives from the Hebrew Scriptures and reflects the Semitic tradition to care for the stranger by treating the other as one would want to be treated. For Israel, failing to care for the stranger, the widow, the orphan, or the poor was considered a violation of both societal expectations and Israel's covenant with Yahweh, thus forfeiting an essential quality of their uniqueness as God's chosen people. Israel must know that their God is "Lord of lords... who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers" (Deut. 10:17-18). More than an act of altruistic reciprocity, showing love and mercy to the other was part of what it means to be the Chosen People, who care for those who suffer. In fact, for the prophets, one of the reasons for Israel's suffering was the loss of their unique identity, shown by their selfishness and their reluctance to care for one another.

The love and care that God required was the kind of love and care that God provided for the people of Israel from the beginning of time. The
Psalmist likens this divine caring to a good shepherd who cares for his flock (Psalm 23). The adjective pastoral in pastoral counseling derives from this metaphor of a shepherd caring for his flock.

In the Hebrew Bible, pastoral care is seen as a mandate from God to the people of God to be like good shepherds to the stranger and the less fortunate in the same way that God shepherds Israel. This is part of the covenant between God and the people and is a characteristic of what it means to be God’s people. Failure to care breaks the covenant and negative consequences follow.

The New Testament perspective on pastoral care is both transcendent and incarnational. The New Testament continues Old Testament notions that caring, or love (agape), originates from God and that to love another is of God. The Johannine corpus states repeatedly that we should love one another as God has loved us. “Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:12). For the Apostle Paul, this love is transcendent, calling us not only to love those in our own communities but also, like Christ, to be willing to enter into the suffering of all who "are weary and are carrying heavy burdens" (Matt. 11:28).

Pastoral care in the New Testament is incarnational in that human suffering and even death are seen not as God’s punishment or abandonment of human beings but as the common denominator of the human condition into which God in Christ entered as a willing act of compassion to redeem the world and its suffering. Thus, Paul could exclaim,

> Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:35,37-39)

The New Testament provides a further dimension to what it means to care from a "pastoral" perspective. One must be in a position of oversight or leadership within the community in order to offer care and counsel from a pastoral perspective. Jesus described himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). The resurrected Jesus instructs Peter to “feed my sheep”
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(John 21:17). Since a shepherd is not one of the sheep, these instructions imply that Jesus has set apart Peter and given him the responsibility and authority for oversight and nurture.

This same act of intentionally setting apart certain leaders for pastoral care is evident in Acts 6. Here the community sets apart Stephen and others to oversee the daily distribution of food to the widows. They were to be "of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Clearly, caring for others in need had become an accepted and expected function of the community of faith. Leaders were to be set apart for overseeing the care and ensuring that it was done in an intentionally pastoral manner.

Another implication from Jesus' injunction to Peter and the disciples is that pastoral care requires intentionality. It was understood that all baptized Christians are brought into the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ and are thereby to be caring toward others as Jesus himself was. Members of the community are expected to engage in everyday acts of kindness and caring. However, caring from a pastoral perspective requires an additional intentionality and willingness to enter into the suffering of another for the sake and well-being of the other by someone who represents the community of faith as well as the presence of Christ. Pastoral care is more than acts of kindness or sharing in the common suffering of others. It is a willingness to enter into the suffering of another with the same intentionality as that of Jesus. Furthermore, it is to enter into the sufferings of others from the perspective of a shepherd of the flock who has been given a position of leadership by the community of faith.

By the third century, the church had become more centralized and pastoral care fell more and more to the clergy. "Pastoral ministry was delegated by the bishop to deacons, and, subsequently, to presbyters, whose task became that of gathering the flock, keeping it unified, and protecting its members from threat." During the next several centuries, the church assimilated the prevailing culture and increasingly became more diverse in its membership. Concern for clarity, orthodoxy, and right thinking became the focus of the church. Pastoral care became largely instructional and didactic. Caring from a pastoral perspective came to include teaching or "counseling" others in right religious practices and guiding them in right moral behavior.

Over the centuries, the function of pastoral care and counseling in the life of the church became known as cura animarium, or "care/care of the
soul.” The phrase care of the soul sums up the work of the office of the priest, which includes leading worship, preaching, visiting, and organizing parish life. All acts of ministry (including pastoral care and counseling) have as their ultimate aim the salvation and perfection of persons under God.1

The Reformation began as a pastoral-care movement in response to the overly didactic rigidity of the medieval Roman Church. Influenced by both the humanism of the Renaissance and his internal struggle with his own righteousness, Martin Luther was disturbed by the excesses he experienced on a trip to Rome. His identification with and compassion for the poor and disenfranchised moved him to pen his famous Ninety-Five Theses. For Luther, salvation is not a result of right thinking or religious practices. Rather, Christ becomes present to us in and through the relationships constituting the community of faith—a view that is close to the relational notion of pastoral care found in the New Testament. John McNeill notes that the German Reformation had its beginning in “matters concerning the cure of souls.”4 Indeed, it is from the Lutheran tradition that we have retained the word pastor as descriptive of the clergy.

Like Luther, John Calvin began with a profound concern for the people. He opens his magisterial Institutes of the Christian Religion with these words: “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.”5 While sharing Luther’s relational perspective on salvation, Calvin approaches pastoral care and counseling more in the traditional way of “cure of the soul,” in which right thinking and practice were codified as doctrine and practices necessary to salvation.

The Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling summarizes the influences of the Reformation on pastoral care and counseling as follows:

The confessional as institution was abandoned and the pastor emerged as a central figure. However, the pastor’s ordination did not set him apart (as it did for the Roman Catholic priest). A married clergyman emphasized his identification at every point with his people. Moreover, though the primary acts of care were preaching and the communion, the message of reconciliation symbolized in these events was felt to be central to the life of the entire community. Pastors and laypersons alike were mutually to comfort, correct, and sustain each other.6

Thus, over the centuries, the biblical mandate to care for one another
became what we today call “pastoral care and counseling.” This same practice also has deep roots in Methodism, beginning with John Wesley.

It could be said that John Wesley was to the Anglican Church of his time what Martin Luther was to the Roman Catholic Church of the sixteenth century. Both Luther and Wesley were driven by their own search for holiness and were sensitized to the suffering of others through their own experiences of suffering. Neither sought to start a new church; they strove only to be faithful to God and to care for the needs of God’s people. In this sense, the Methodist movement, much like Luther’s, began as a pastoral-care concern for the poor and disenfranchised, motivated out of compassion born of pain.

To understand what Pastoral Counseling in the United Methodist mode might look like, it helps to start with John Wesley’s life experience and his role in the emerging Methodist movement in England. In John Wesley and the Methodists, Cyril Davey recounts an event in the life of the young Wesley that was pivotal to his self-understanding and his approach to ministry, including his practice of pastoral care.

When he was five there was a near-tragedy. The rectory caught fire and, though the rest of the family managed to escape, John was unable to get down the burning staircase from the top storey. He dragged a chair to the window, climbed on it, called for help and waited calmly until he was lifted down. For once his mother’s austerity broke down, as they all prayed thankfully together in the farmyard. Turning to Scripture for the right phrase, she thanked God for the “brand plucked from the burning” and assured the small boy that God had saved him “for a purpose.”

This was arguably a transforming event for John Wesley. Throughout his life Wesley had a passion—almost an obsession—to make the most of his life as God intended. At the same time, he had compassion, born of his own pain, for those who suffered. We know that people who have gone through traumatic, life-threatening experiences have an urgency about their lives. On the one side, they become more focused and intentional about the direction of their lives, many times to the point of being obsessive. On the other side, this kind of experience can lead to identification with those who suffer.

Wesley’s concern and compassion for the disenfranchised, the poor,
the sick, and the prisoner, while at the same time seeking after holiness, can be seen in his involvement with the Holy Club during his days at Oxford. Wesley regularly met with a group of like-minded friends for Bible study, but the group also visited the poor, cared for the sick, organized classes for poor children, visited prisons, and stood with the criminals when they were hanged.

From the beginning, then, Wesley saw that the pursuit of the holy life required a community that would offer support, accountability, and a space for self-reflection. It was here that he first learned what would later become one of the principal qualities of Pastoral Counseling in the United Methodist mode, namely, a community of faith found in small groups dedicated to seeking holiness.

John Wesley’s genius lies in his unique combination of passion, compassion, and pragmatism. His passion for holiness and his pastoral compassion for others were firmly grounded in the biblical notion that God is the originator and initiator of all care and compassion. Wesley’s understanding of salvation as a process allowed for his pastoral compassion to be both transcendent and incarnational. He maintained the dignity of the individual by insisting that no one is beyond the grace of God and that each person has a part to play in his or her own salvation. For Wesley, we are participants with God through Christ in the process of salvation. Wesley’s pragmatism is reflected in his focus on the process toward holiness, not only the content of belief. Therefore, we could move beyond the walls of the church into the world to meet the people where they were on their journey of faith, regardless of the circumstance.

Pragmatically adapting from his own experience, Wesley knew that it was in the context of a relationship that an act of care becomes “holy ground” where the transcendent God becomes manifest in the here-and-now. It is the community of faith that incarnates the transcendent God through relationships in which the divine encounter can occur. For Wesley, compassion for others was the essence of community. Caring for another was not an option. Not to care was to violate the very purpose for the community’s existence. Thus, for followers of Wesley, there can be no pastoral care or counseling apart from a community of faith.

Much of Wesley’s later ministry was about equipping and setting apart leadership for his movement. Wesley understood that the community of faith not only was to be a safe, supportive space for his followers but also
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had the responsibility to provide and equip those who had the gifts and grace to go into the world to "offer them Christ." Much like Acts 6, Wesley's leaders were approved by the community to be of good character, "going on to perfection," and intentional about going into the world to meet the needs of God's people.

Professional Pastoral Counseling and the Church

The United Methodist mode of practicing Pastoral Counseling embodies Wesley's pragmatic compassion in four respects. (1) An act of pastoral compassion is at the same time both transcendent and incarnational. (2) An act of pastoral compassion is uniquely a function of the community of faith. (3) An act of pastoral compassion is a function of ministry directed to those outside the community of faith who are less fortunate and are alienated from society. (4) Pastoral care and counseling are practiced intentionally by the equipping and authorizing persons to perform acts of compassion on behalf of the community.

The "professional" Pastoral Care and Counseling movement in the United States began with Anton Boisen (1876–1965) who in 1925 brought ministers and theological students into the mental hospitals to provide pastoral care to the mentally ill. In so doing, Boisen applied the clinical (or case-study) method of learning developed in medicine and social work so as to learn the art of ministry from "living human documents." An act of pastoral care was recorded by each student and then shared in a group of peers to be reflected upon for personal and professional learning purposes. By the 1950s, the clinical pastoral education movement of applying the action-reflection model of learning to ministry moved beyond Boisen's own psychiatric hospital into institutions such as prisons, general hospitals, parishes, and training schools. Much like the pastoral-care movements of both Luther and Wesley, contemporary professional Pastoral Counseling was born out of a pastoral concern for the disenfranchised (especially the mentally ill), motivated out of compassion born of pain. It is clear that the clinical method as introduced and applied to ministry by Boisen fits well with Wesley's pragmatic compassion, mentioned above.

Those who have been designated and equipped as pastoral counselors intentionally to offer care and counsel to specific segments of the community on behalf of the church embody the biblical mandate to care for the stranger. For a United Methodist, the practice of Pastoral Counseling is first
of all a ministry of the faith community that extends into the world to reach persons who otherwise may not be reached. Indeed, there can be no Pastoral Counseling apart from the community of faith. It is the community of faith that gives any act of care and counsel its "pastoral" quality. Just as a shepherd without a flock cannot shepherd, so a pastoral counselor cannot offer a pastoral perspective apart from the community of faith that calls and sets him or her apart for ministry. For instance, when a pastor refers a parishioner to a professional pastoral counselor, it is an act of sharing in ministry. This is especially applicable for persons who are seeking help with addictions, marital conflict, or family difficulties, since there are obvious moral and spiritual components to these kinds of difficulties. The professional pastoral counselor shares with all clergy the unique pastoral perspective on the helping process that sets apart ministry brings. However, each person in that process makes a unique contribution to the faith journey of the parishioner.

Professional pastoral counselors work in a variety of settings that usually are not attached to a local church or church agency. However, pastoral counselors are not just a sub-specialty of allied health professionals. Their work has a quality that distinguishes it from other helping professions. The word pastoral suggests an aspect of "guiding" in the counseling relationship. Directly or indirectly, the identity of one who is "pastoral" denotes an authority to provide moral and spiritual guidance. Professional pastoral counselors are in a position to provide shepherding to persons who may otherwise have no involvement in the church.

One way to understand professional Pastoral Counseling as an extension of the ministry of the faith community is to think of pastoral care and counseling as a continuum. It begins with the biblical mandate for all baptized Christians to care for one another. All acts of compassion done by the church, whether as direct services or by way of a relationship, fall into this category. Activities such as distributing food to the needy, staffing clothing closets, and offering emergency assistance are examples of this level of pastoral care. Further along the continuum, pastoral care becomes counseling, provided by designated lay and clergy on behalf of the community of faith. Visiting persons in hospitals and nursing homes are examples of this level of pastoral care and counseling. The next level comprises pastoral care and counseling provided primarily by the clergy by virtue of their ordination and position as shepherd of a flock. Examples include pre-
martial counseling; religious instruction about baptism and the meaning of church membership; and the support and guidance given at times of illness, funerals, weddings, or family crises. Professional Pastoral Counseling overlaps and extends the previous levels of pastoral counseling but can address more pervasive emotional or relational concerns, such as marital and family therapy, grief counseling, and the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders such as clinical depression and anxiety disorders.

One level of professional Pastoral Counseling that has emerged over the past twenty-five years is pastoral psychotherapy. Many professional pastoral counselors have met the educational and clinical standards to become licensed as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC) or Licensed Marital and Family Counselors (LMFT) in their respective states. These licenses allow professional pastoral counselors to diagnose and treat mental disorders, thereby offering under their own licensure long-term psychotherapy from a pastoral perspective.

Conclusion
The United Methodist professional pastoral counselor is characterized by faithfulness to the biblical mandate to care for the stranger, whoever or wherever he or she may be, as well as by the passion to seek the Holy in the midst of relationships. Furthermore, they live out Wesley’s pragmatic compassion through their clinical training by applying the best techniques and theories borrowed from the behavioral sciences to acts of ministry. Pastoral counselors speak the languages of theology, medicine, and the social sciences in order to adapt and apply the Good News to the ever-changing needs of the world.

Truly, the practice of Pastoral Counseling in the United Methodist mode is one of living out the words of John Wesley when he said of himself, “I look upon all the world as my parish. . . . This is the work which I know God has called me to do. And sure I am that His blessing attends it.”

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Endnotes
1. Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Rodney J. Hunter, gen. ed.
2. "Pastoral Care of the Congregation," in Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 214.
6. Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 839.
United Methodist Pastoral Counselors Reflect

I asked three United Methodist pastoral counselors in active practice the following question: "What are the most important challenges and opportunities you experience as a United Methodist pastoral counselor in our world today?" Below are their reflections.

RICHARD BRUEHL

The reflections below are informed by long experience in the field. I have been involved in pastoral counseling as a professor at a major divinity school, director of a pastoral counseling center, therapist to pastors and their families, training supervisor for a multitude of pastoral-therapy students, and independent practitioner of pastoral therapy. I have been deeply involved in the broader life of the profession through the American Association of Pastoral Counselors at both national and regional levels.

Inevitably, these experiences have shaped my thoughts on the current topic. Others who have explored different parts of the proverbial blind sages' elephant will comment quite differently.

The ongoing issue of the professional identity of pastoral therapists remains pivotal. Whatever ambiguity exists currently in the pastoral therapy role is affected by many factors, both cultural and pastoral/theological. The cultural context in which we practice pastoral counseling and therapy today, powerfully influenced by managed-care organizations, has firmly established the norm of "medical necessity" for psychotherapy. Though in some ways this approach is a corrective to past insurance abuses, the wholesale assault upon the traditional practice of therapy cannot be ignored. In addition to the norm of medical necessity, the over-prescription of psychoactive drugs, the severe curtailment of "approved" sessions, and impossible expectations of practitioners both reflect and shape the current cultural bias toward quick fixes and the norm of functionality. A byproduct of this emphasis, perhaps intentional, has been the devaluing of the possibility of healing through relationship upon which, both psychologically and theologically, pastoral therapy has been based.
Hence, the tradition of depth soul-care, growth orientation, and transformative therapeutic experience has been under subtle but serious attack. In contrast to the current cynicism about any healing relationships, pastoral therapists have emphasized their value.

In the main, pastoral therapists have embraced the truth that life is not primarily an experience to be fixed but rather something to be understood, deepened, and surrounded by meaning. The awareness that genuine change—an internal shift of significance—takes place in its own fashion and on its unique timetable appears in stark contrast to cultural norms.

The second major challenge to pastoral therapy is the effect of the burgeoning evangelical Christian movement in counseling, exemplified by "biblically based Christian counseling." This approach appears to be relatively superficial as counselors in this tradition tend to offer biblical prescriptions to persons in ways that are at worst repressive and at best avoidant when it comes to genuine therapeutic encounter.

One could characterize this approach as "spiritual managed care." It tends to ignore the complexity of the human psyche and to "solve" problems in what can easily become moralistic and authoritarian ways.

Finally, so-called "Christian" counseling seems to avoid the tension inherent in effective pastoral therapy between psychological sophistication and the use of theological and religious resources. This "holy ambiguity" is what pastoral therapists at their best have been willing to endure without easy resolution. Tolerance of uncertainty has been our greatest gift to clients, churches, and culture. While a gift, the willingness to steer a course between moralism and relativism can lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

One could hope, though not naively, that the future will belong to those who perceive the norm for seeking effective pastoral therapy not as a medical but as a psycho-spiritual necessity. Counter to those who feel the church should not be in the "mental-health" business, pastoral therapists believe that we are providing genuine pastoral services that are characterized by their unique focus, appropriate boundaries and confidentiality, and endurance over time in ways that typical parish pastoral counseling cannot and should not be.

Professional pastoral therapists have been quietly learning and functioning for over fifty years. For a variety of reasons, the utilization of our knowledge by the church has been spotty and inconsistent. What follows is a list of opportunities for applying the work of pastoral therapy to ministry.
• We should continue to develop pastoral counseling and therapy as a true "extension ministry" in partnership with traditional ministries for the benefit of a hurting world. Practically, this means the encouragement of endorsement, the support of endorsees, and the furtherance of specialized training for this ministry.

• Through its trained therapists, the church could become a bastion of non-market-driven therapy. We can hold out hope for transformation and healing rather than simply focusing on getting people to work on Mondays. That this hope could be lost is a present danger.

• Pastoral therapists have a great deal to offer parish ministers. One can conceive of an ongoing relationship between pastoral therapists and pastors that is preventative rather than corrective. Such endeavors would be focused upon promoting healthy leadership for churches and other settings. Having engaged in a number of such relationships over the years, I am convinced of the validity of the concept. Churches would do well to support such relationships financially and emotionally.

• Careful attention needs to be paid to the development in local communities of referral networks for pastoral therapy. Such networks as now exist tend to be informal and haphazard. Problems of pastoral turnover are great. As a result, most annual conferences and communities have only scratched the surface of the issue.

• The identification of models for the funding of pastoral counseling and therapy ministries is a great need. No doubt much experience exists throughout the world, but this information is difficult to obtain and not readily available to interested churches. Plans will have to be creative and realistic, honoring the constraints of church budgets and liability issues. Significant research needs to be done to codify parish models of pastoral therapy ministry.

Progress on these and other related issues will move the field of pastoral therapy forward. However, at root the acceptance of the hard-won amalgam of pastoral identity and psychological sophistication and training as a viable, legitimate ministry is crucial. At this point, with reference to the possibilities, the field of pastoral therapy remains in its infancy.

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In 1976, I made the transition from parish ministry to the ministry of pastoral counseling. Back then, pastoral counseling as a specialized extension of ministry, with its own professional organization (the American Association of Pastoral Counselors [AAPC]), had been in existence a scant twelve years. The field was marked by the energy and excitement that accompanies a new venture. There was a strong sense among pastoral counselors that what they were doing was deeply relevant to society's needs and an important extension of the church's ministry.

In the first two decades of its professional existence, the field of pastoral counseling was dominated by white, male, ordained clergy, many of whom for one reason or another had not found a comfortable fit in parish ministry. Those first twenty years saw the fairly rapid growth of the discipline of pastoral counseling and of the ranks of those entering this new expression of ministry—the integration of theology and psychology in providing counseling. Early on, the AAPC developed a certification process for those seeking to become pastoral counselors. In addition to a formal theological education and ordination in a denomination, the applicant went through a rigorous training and supervision process that led to certification by the AAPC.

The training led to a professional identity that was relatively well defined. One was an ordained minister, recognized by one's faith group, and had additional training to provide counseling from a theological and psychological perspective—and that training was certified by a professional pastoral counseling organization.

Importantly, many of those who first became pastoral counselors were United Methodist ministers, and that trend has continued. AAPC's first president was a United Methodist minister, as were a number of subsequent presidents, including myself and the association's current president.

Why should so many United Methodist ministers be drawn to the specialized field of pastoral counseling and give leadership to the profession? I believe the reason lies in John Wesley's theological emphasis on experience alongside Scripture, reason, and tradition and his passion for bringing the message of grace to the vulnerable and the marginalized.

Writing in the Virginia United Methodist Heritage, James Logan says it this way:
W. VICTOR MALOY

Wesley was consumed with this message of grace already working preventively in all people and universally available to all as justifying and sanctifying grace. This theology of grace was readily understood by the masses, even those with little or no educational background. It was a theology simple and yet experientially deep and probing.

Pastoral counseling is built upon the clinical pastoral-education movement, founded by Anton Boisen. Like Wesley, Boisen emphasized experience through what he termed “the study of the living human document.” By that Boisen meant that the way ministers could become adept at providing pastoral care was through the experience of providing care and then reflecting on that experience. The training context that Boisen developed, not unlike Wesley’s field preaching, was general and psychiatric hospitals, where the depth of human suffering would be experienced firsthand by those being trained to become ministers.

Therefore, our Wesleyan heritage, with its emphasis on meeting human suffering wherever it manifests itself, is a natural fit with pastoral counseling’s emphasis on bringing the message of grace in the context of the counseling room as people come to talk about their depression, anxiety, loss of faith, and alienation. It is a version of preaching in the streets, and in that way pastoral counseling is a natural expression of Wesleyan theology for those of us who are United Methodist ministers.

The past two decades have seen a variety of changes within the field of pastoral counseling. A growing number of women have entered the field, along with a smaller number of minority persons. An increasing number of nonordained persons working in other mental-health fields have become interested in learning to integrate the theological perspective into their counseling practice and in belonging to a professional organization that represents that integration. In response, the AAPC has created a non-certified category of membership for those seeking affiliation from other mental-health disciplines, and a certified category for those from other mental-health disciplines who have a formal theological education but are not ordained.

The movement toward increased inclusiveness and pluralism has occasioned the most significant challenge facing United Methodist pastoral counselors today, namely, defining and maintaining their professional identity as pastoral counselors. To some degree the issue of professional identity is
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an extension of the impact of pluralism on religion and on United Methodists generally in our postmodern society.

Comments Logan, "Contemporary United Methodism is confronted with a lack of clarity regarding its theological identity and missional purpose. Lay and clergy people alike are clamoring for an opportunity to reclaim their theological heritage as Wesleyans and to apply the energy of that heritage to the demands of the postmodern society in which we live." 2

United Methodist pastoral counselors witness this lack of clarity every day in our clients—an identity crisis produced by an increasingly shallow, media-driven culture. Opinions are formed through sound bytes and fleeting images, feeding the assumption that there should be quick, simple solutions to life's most complex problems.

Fewer and fewer people who seek the help of pastoral counselors are rooted in a long-standing faith tradition. As a consequence, our clients have fewer faith resources to help them understand and construct meaning from their pain and thus to sustain them.

The primary challenge and opportunity before United Methodist pastoral counselors today is to maintain the clarity of our own professional identity as those who integrate theology and psychology, while helping clients find a greater sense of meaning in their lives.

Pastoral counseling as practiced by United Methodists should be a reflection of what James Logan has called Wesley's evangelistic zeal, passion for the poor, organizational skills, and "catholic spirit."

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Endnotes

2. Ibid.
It is hard for me to see the contemporary situation as challenging only to United Methodist pastoral counselors. In my current role as president of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), I have the opportunity to affirm and promote the ministry of pastoral counseling in an ecumenical and interfaith environment. Also, as an affiliate faculty member of the Loyola College in Maryland's Pastoral Counseling Department for the past twenty years, I have enjoyed being in a Jesuit school with a multi-faith, multicultural faculty and student body. Finally, as a pastoral counselor I have always been a part of agencies with an interfaith staff, with United Methodist churches hosting many of the counseling locations.

In recent months I have been working with AAPC colleagues to define our mission and goals for 2005-2009. As we have looked at ways to promote our profession and the practice of pastoral counseling and train the next generation of pastoral counselors, we have sought to identify the challenges and opportunities before us. What we have found is that it will continue to be important to advocate the ministry of pastoral counseling, which integrates psychology, theology, and spirituality. Part of our strategic plan is to continue participating in the Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS) network and to find ways to increase our visibility among endorsing denominations and judicatories represented in our membership. We are also working with other pastoral care and counseling cognate groups through the Council on Collaboration to affirm common standards of ethics and practice in our professions as chaplains and pastoral counselors.

During the past quadrennium, I served as the pastoral counselor constituent representative to the then Section of Chaplains and Related Ministries (now the United Methodist Endorsing Agency) of the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM). It has been good to know that the denomination continues to support and endorse the specialized ministry of pastoral counseling. In working with the United Methodist Endorsing Agency, AAPC will continue to support our ordained elders and deacons, as well as laypersons, who are called to the ministry of pastoral counseling. Respecting differing denominational policies while maintaining standards of credentialing continues to be a high value for AAPC. AAPC has welcomed a representative from the religious
endorsing body network to be a participant with the AAPC Certification Committee as one way of fostering mutual accountability and dialogue.

One of the challenges that is facing pastoral counselors is the need to protect and promote our right to be providers of mental-health services for the general public. In the United States this means that pastoral counselors must meet state requirements for licensure. Pastoral counselors may be licensed as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, or, in some cases, as social workers or psychologists. Only a few states have licenses for pastoral counselors per se. The good news about the requirement for licensure is that it protects the public, ensuring that consumers have highly trained professionals providing their counseling or therapy. The challenge for pastoral counselors is that legislation, regulations, and policies that affect the practice of pastoral counseling must be monitored in every state and the District of Columbia. Sometimes this means advocating/lobbying for the inclusion of certified pastoral counselors as states develop and change their legislative policies, as happened recently in the State of New York.

United Methodist pastoral counselors share the challenge of letting our light shine more brightly so that the general public, faith and spiritual communities, and mental-health and healthcare providers recognize us as trusted and respected colleagues.

The Internet may help pastoral counselors gain greater recognition. While pastoral counselors still rely on referrals from congregations and pastoral colleagues, there is the need to be available to the wider communities in which we live.

Many pastoral counselors have been accepted on “insurance panels” and are working with clients who found information about them on insurance websites, where they are listed as qualified service providers. Some pastoral counselors are also providing services for businesses through employee-assistance programs. A large challenge accompanying these newer opportunities is the time-consuming paperwork of verifying and submitting insurance claims. For some pastoral counselors and clients, this hassle is not worth the effort. For other clients, the fact that pastoral counselors are a part of their insurance network is a great blessing. In the future, there may be more people opting to use Health Savings Accounts (HSA), which will give them more control in choosing their mental health providers.

One of AAPC’s goals is to become an active partner with pastoral counselors and other faith-based mental-health practitioners outside North
America. It is imperative in our global environment to provide opportunities for cross-cultural training. John Wesley reminded us that the world is our parish. While not a tool for evangelism, the pastoral counseling profession is definitely a ministry of healing and compassion for those in need.

As part of a world church, United Methodist pastoral counselors have a responsibility to join with colleagues in expanding the profession and supporting those who serve outside North America. AAPC plans to develop a Web-based clearinghouse for individuals who are seeking opportunities to train or teach active counseling ministries in settings other than their home countries. Partnering with key training institutions outside North America will enhance global opportunities to serve.

As with other ministries of the church, the future of the pastoral counseling ministry means that new pastoral counselors must be recruited and trained and those active in this ministry need to be sustained. In the past quadrennium, I have been pleased to see GBHEM reach out to those in pastoral counseling ministries and encouraging endorsed counselors to attend retreats the board has scheduled for them. As new promotional materials are developed and as GBHEM's website is utilized for information, it will be important that the ministry of pastoral counseling be featured as a specialized ministry in The United Methodist Church.

United Methodist clergy and pastoral counselors are required to participate in ongoing education and formation. To this end, GBHEM must look for new ways to partner with seminaries, graduate programs in pastoral counseling, and cognate groups such as AAPC to provide opportunities for support, collegiality, and continuing learning. While some of these opportunities may be at educational facilities or in retreat settings, there may be some creative ways to use electronic media for interactive education.

In conclusion, our profession, like much of our culture, is in a "white-water rapids" period of change and transition. We are working faithfully to navigate these paradigm shifts while continuing to provide high-quality pastoral counseling services.

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Today the studied indifference toward religion enshrined in the Constitution has come under attack from the Religious Right in such matters as school prayer and the sort of textbooks used in the schools. This has resulted in the development of a political agenda designed to protect the interests of religion from the onslaught of what is often called "secular humanism."

Meanwhile, there are those who maintain that current practice does not properly reflect the indifference of the Constitution toward religion—that this must be taken to its logical conclusion through such measures as eliminating official chaplaincy in governmental institutions such as the military and the legislature; the elimination of tax exemption for churches; and the elimination of government subsidies for quasi-religious celebrations (Christmas displays, and so on).

More recently, this debate has improbably focused on the question of the display of the Ten Commandments in state courtrooms. What is remarkable is the degree of passion for the law displayed by those who call themselves "evangelicals." Scarcely less remarkable has been the fervor of the attachment to a "graven image" of a Decalogue that forbids graven images. There was the famous vignette caught on national news of a man fervently wrapping himself around the granite monument to the Ten Commandments, crying, "They can't take away my God!" Yet such was the passion generated by the decision of Alabama's Chief Justice Roy Moore to display a 5,000-pound granite monument engraved with the words of the Law (a decision on the basis of which the good citizens of Alabama had elected him to his honorable post in 2000) that the State of Alabama had
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been thrust into constitutional crisis. Although Judge Moore was removed from office because of his refusal to obey the order of the courts, the related cases continued to be litigated. On June 28, 2005, the United States Supreme Court, in a sharply divided opinion, ruled that the display of the Ten Commandments in courthouses and other public buildings, where the display had clear religious overtones or intent, was prohibited under the First Amendment—a ruling that even some on the court regarded as an attack upon religion. (One wonders what the attraction is of a monument that forbids covetousness and murder in a nation whose existence depended to a significant degree on the genocide of Native Americans; a monument that forbids theft in a region whose economy was built on the stealing of human beings from their native Africa.)

Of course, this is only the most dramatic (or dramatized) of the struggles concerning the role of religion in relation to the state. Certainly the attempt by many of Judge Moore’s supporters to pass a constitutional amendment enshrining the allegedly biblical definition of marriage as between one man and one woman (a definition that would have astonished any of the patriarchs or kings of Israel) is another apparent attempt to enshrine certain “Christian values” into the basic law of this land.

In this way the debate about the Constitution, which began more than two-hundred years ago, continues today and remains focused on the issue of the proper relation of Church and State. We United Methodists have recently been celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Wesley. What has John Wesley to do with the U.S. Constitution and the contemporary debate about the relation of religion to the republic?

It is generally well known that John Wesley strongly disapproved of the rebellion of Britain’s North American colonies (or, as we like to say, the American Revolution). But Wesley’s attitude toward certain other aspects of the U.S. heritage is less well known. Two-hundred years ago the new U.S. Constitution was still in the process of being ratified. The Convention in Philadelphia had done its job. Now it was the time for debate and discussion—a process that culminated in the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in 1791. It is appropriate to recall the attitude taken by Wesley toward one of the central tenets of that document as it was finally ratified. The only aspect of the emerging constitutional government on which Wesley explicitly commented was its attitude toward religion. That attitude was embodied in the provision that there should be no religious
test for the holding of public office (Article VI) and ultimately in the First Amendment establishing governmental indifference toward religion.

To be sure, the views of an eighteenth-century evangelical cannot be held to be binding on United Methodists today. Still, Wesley's views are especially interesting since they show how a leader of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival viewed the religious indifferentism then on its way to being enshrined in the Constitution.

In many respects, Wesley's views appear to parallel those of contemporary evangelicals. He was a tireless evangelist, preaching three times a day for more than a half century—a feat that no modern evangelist comes remotely close to matching. Moreover, his credentials in combating the spread of what was then called "Deism" (the forerunner of "secular humanism") are unimpeachable. He tirelessly fought the erosion of biblical faith within the church and fearlessly opposed those who supposed it to be possible to offer a watered-down Christianity that catered to modern tastes in place of "the plain old gospel."

It may therefore come as a surprise to learn that Wesley found the religious indifferentism of the new American government to be a signal act of divine providence! Far from attacking the stark separation of Church and State in the American Constitution, he welcomed it and even pointed to it as a sign of the action of God in history!

How does Wesley come to such an astonishing view? And what insight does it offer as we ponder the conflicting views of the relation between government and religion today?

Wesley's view with respect to the religious indifferentism of the new American government is to be found in his sermon "Of Former Times," published in final form as part of a collection of sermons the year following the signing of the Constitution in 1788. Albert Outler gives this account of the writing of the sermon.

The written sermon was produced in June 1787, in the midst of Wesley's long stay in Ireland that year; it is dated Dublin, June 27, which would have been the day following Thomas Coke's return from a missionary journey to America: "We were agreeably surprised with the arrival of Dr. Coke, who came from Philadelphia in nine and twenty days and gave us a pleasing account of the work of God in America." [Journal, 26 June 1787] It was published in the Armenian Magazine in the winter of that same year (November and December, X. 566-72, 620-25).
On this reckoning Coke had left Philadelphia as the Constitutional
Convention was getting underway (it was supposed to have begun on May
14, achieved a quorum for the first time on May 25, and began serious
discussion on May 29, or about the time Coke left). With Wesley’s keen
interest in politics it is safe to assume that he grilled Coke on what was
going on in Philadelphia. The Convention adjourned on September 17, two
months before Wesley first published the sermon in question. His refer­
ence to “the government there” may be taken to refer to the proposed
Constitution or to the various state constitutions (several of which insisted
on separation of Church and State) or to all of these, together with the
Articles of Confederation. In any case, of most interest to Wesley was the
principle of total separation of Church and State, which eventually came to
be formulated in the First Amendment but already in 1787 was a principle
recognized by several of the states and by the most influential members of
the Constitutional Convention.

In “Of Former Times,” Wesley is concerned to combat the view that
things used to be better—the religious and secular nostalgia that looked
upon some part of the past as the golden age of wisdom or faith. Of course,
this is the very attitude that is expressed in the yearning of many modern
evangelicals to restore a religiously homogeneous past.

Wesley’s contention, which we will consider at length in a moment, is
that whatever may be the case with respect to other values it is clear that at
no time before had true Christianity had so clear an advantage as at the
end of the eighteenth century. And that which creates such a favorable
climate is the dawning of the age of religious toleration. Let us see Wesley’s
own words:

For whoever makes a fair and candid inquiry, will easily perceive that true reli­
gion has in nowise decreased, but greatly increased in the present century. To
instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbor. Is not
persecution well nigh vanished from the face of the earth! In what age did
Christians of every denomination show such forbearance to each other? . . .
Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since
the time of the Apostles.3

Unquestionably, for Wesley, as for the eighteenth century generally, the
end of religious warfare was a major achievement. But Wesley is not
unaware that the spirit of toleration so lately spread over the face of Europe was, in part at least, the consequence of the rise of Deism, or what would today be called "secular humanism."

If it be said, "Why, this is the fruit of the general infidelity, the Deism which has overspread all Europe," I answer, Whatever be the cause, we have reason greatly to rejoice in the effect: And if the all-wise God has brought so great and universal a good out of this dreadful evil, so much the more should we magnify his astonishing power, wisdom, and goodness herein. 4

It is clear that Wesley is no friend of Deism (he calls it "this dreadful evil"); but he does see that it has been made to serve the divine purpose of bringing an end to religious persecution. The benefit derived from the emergence of pagan toleration is not merely negative, namely, to end the calamities of religious persecution and warfare. There is a positive benefit as well, one near to the heart of any true "evangelical":

Indeed, so far as we can judge, this was the most direct way whereby nominal Christians could be prepared, first, for tolerating, and, afterwards, for receiving, real Christianity. While the governors were themselves unacquainted with it, nothing but this could induce them to suffer it. O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; causing a total disregard for all religion, to pave the way for the revival of the only religion that was worthy of God! 5

To this point Wesley has been maintaining that there is a connection between an official "total disregard for all religion" and the possibility of introducing genuine Christianity to the general populace. Only an entire indifference to religion on the part of the government makes it possible for a government to tolerate true Christianity. To put it another way: if the government were itself religious, then it would inevitably persecute true Christianity. Wesley, evangelical and priest of an established church, maintains that the cause of true or vital Christianity is best served by a government infested with Deism, and that true Christianity is imperiled when some version of Christianity receives official sanction!

It is in this connection that Wesley remarks upon the emerging constitutional government of England's former North American colonies:
I am not assured whether this [toleration] be the case or no in France and Germany; but it is so beyond all contradiction in North-America. The total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation of true, scriptural religion, without the least let or hindrance.  

A number of points call for comment here. In the first place, we should recall that this is about the only good thing Wesley has to say about those he generally regarded as impious rebels. And the good thing he says refers to the "total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none." Precisely that which occasions so much consternation among the adherents of the Religious Right is for Wesley an instance of divine providence!

It is worth noting in this connection that Wesley's reading of the intent of the Founding Fathers supports the argument of those who maintain that the intent of the Constitution is not only not to establish any religion but also to be utterly indifferent to religion. Wesley knew what many have forgotten, namely, that the founders of our form of government were themselves entirely pagan in their philosophical commitments. In Wesley's day this was called "Deism"; today it is called "secular humanism." The framers of the Constitution decided to protect the rights of "any religion or none." Thus, the argument that the Constitution does not permit school prayer (which at the very least would favor religion over atheism and give privileged status to religion as such) is clearly supported by the evidence of at least one eighteenth-century reading of the "intent" of the framers of the Constitution.

But Wesley does more than give support to a humanist reading of the Constitution. He also maintains that this very humanism—this very indifference to religion—is the providential condition for the proclamation of true Christianity. Thus, any attempt to make government more "religious" must have the effect of impeding the proclamation of evangelical Christianity. If this is so, then the program of the Religious Right must be regarded as self-stultifying or as subversive of true Christianity. And the appropriate stance of an evangelical Christianity worthy of the name would be to support a view of government that makes it the expression of secular humanism. In order to see how this is so, let us attempt to clarify some of Wesley's reasons for taking a view that is so at odds with what many people today would consider "common wisdom."

The basis for Wesley's view is supplied in the same sermon when he
replies to the position of a bishop of his own established church. The bishop held that the greatest day in the history of the Christian Church was the day Emperor Constantine declared himself a Christian and so ended the persecution of the Christians. It is not surprising that a bishop of England's State church should take such a view. What is surprising is that John Wesley, who regarded himself as a zealous priest of that same church, should so vehemently disagree. Here is his reply.

I cannot, in any wise, subscribe to the Bishop's opinion in this matter. So far from it, that I have long been convinced from the whole tenor of ancient history, that this very event, Constantine's calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and honour on the Christian Church, the clergy in particular, was productive of more evil to the Church than all the ten persecutions put together. From the time that power, riches, and honour of all kinds were heaped upon the Christians, vice of all kinds came in like a flood, both on the Clergy and the laity. From the time that the Church and State, the kingdoms of Christ and of the world, were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, Christianity and Heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other, that they will hardly ever be divided till Christ comes to reign upon earth. So that, instead of fancying that the glory of the New Jerusalem covered the earth at that period, we have terrible proof that it was then, and has ever since been, covered with the smoke of the bottomless pit.

Wesley's position, derived we recall from the study of "the whole tenor of ancient history," is that true Christianity is fatally compromised when it enters into an alliance with wealth and power. It then turns away from its task of announcing good news to the poor and becomes the guardian of privilege. It forsakes the following of the Crucified to become the handmaid of imperial power. It was this corruption against which the Reformers had protested two centuries earlier. But that protest had unleashed a fresh wave of violence as churches allied themselves with and became the pawns of contending princes and principalities. Thus, in Wesley's view, history itself made clear that true Christianity must ever be the victim of any alliance with the State. For this was to mix "the kingdoms of Christ and of the world." From this vantage point, then, the emergence of a studied indifference to religion as the cornerstone of political philosophy in the eighteenth century could be viewed as an act of divine providence that delivered the
gospel from its Babylonian captivity to the Constantinian temptation.

Wesley's view of the danger of an alliance of the church with wealth and power was derived not only from an academic study of the history of the church. It was also a product of his own experience in leading the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. Wesley's attempt to call people from a merely nominal, or conventional, Christianity to a truly evangelical commitment to the gospel was met with pronounced opposition on the part of the established church and the wealthy and powerful of England. The story of the persecution of the Methodists by mobs incited by influential clergy and wealthy merchants and of the courage of the early preachers like George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers remains a fascinating tale even today.

What Wesley learned from this persecution was that when the church becomes hostage to the status quo in a particular society, it reacts punitively against any attempt to alter that status quo, especially when such an attempt calls for real repentance and thus reversal of that context. Thus, the church was made to be an opponent of the gospel by the very means by which it sought to acquire a position of protection or privilege in the world.

This persecution was not ended by an enlightened decision on the part of the church. It came about by way of the determination of Deists, especially the much-maligned King George, that the State would protect the right of any religious expression, or none. That is, the Crown decided on deistic or humanistic grounds that no persecution on the basis of religious expression would be tolerated. Practically, this meant that, as Wesley expressed it, "there was a law even for Methodists." Much later, Wesley gave this account in his sermon "On God's Vineyard":

God stirred up the heart of our late gracious Sovereign [George II] to give such orders to his Magistrates as, being put in execution, effectually quelled the madness of the people. It was about the same time that a great man applied personally to his Majesty, begging that he would please to "take a course to stop these run-about preachers." His Majesty, looking sternly upon him, answered without ceremony, like a King, "I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience' sake."

The King's magistrates were instructed to punish those who attacked evangelicals because the King was officially (and also personally) indi-
ferent to religion. To understand this it is only necessary to ask what would have been the result if the King had been a zealot for the Church of England (of which, after all, he was the head)? In such a case, if it appeared that the evangelicals were undermining the position of that church, he would have been persuaded easily by his own bishops to oppose the Methodists. The King’s indifference to religion made it possible for him to protect Methodists from persecution.

What the framers of the Constitution managed to do was to turn this religious indifferentism into the very foundation of a modern state. As a consequence, Wesley could hail the emerging constitutional government of the United States as a singular act of Providence in spite of his opposition both to the revolution that made it possible and to the Deism that was its philosophical basis.

What Wesley knew, and what many of today’s evangelicals have forgotten, is that the possibility of unhindered proclamation of evangelical Christianity is best assured by a government that makes indifference to religion a matter of permanent, strict, and unwavering policy. The call today on the part of certain evangelicals for the State to be the patron and protector of religion represents a terrible confusion with respect to the character of both democracy and the Christian faith. It seeks to remake the Constantinian alliance between the church and the structures of this world. In so doing, it undermines the very freedom of the gospel that is at the heart of a truly evangelical piety.

The agenda of the Religious Right would make the State the protector of religion. It would do this, for example, through adding an amendment to allow schools to encourage prayer. There are others who would require schools to teach religious doctrine (as in the case of scientific creationism). Still others would have the State subsidize private religious instruction. In all of these ways, the State would be made the patron and protector of religious interests.

What is not clearly seen is that this must lead to the destruction of the gospel itself. As Wesley saw, the minute the State becomes the protector of religion it takes an interest in defending religion from attack. But what it may be led thus to defend religion against may in fact be the gospel itself. And those it punishes for impiety may be those who are seeking to proclaim the authentic gospel, real as opposed to formal religion. This is not a mere fantasy. The Roman persecution of Christianity was possible
because the State was the defender of Roman religion. And the threat of persecution directed against early evangelicals was motivated by calls for the State to defend that religion of which it was the champion. The twentieth-century witnesses continual illustrations of the same tendency of putatively religious states to attack the religious convictions of those who are deemed to be harmful to their interests. For Christians to willingly place their necks in this noose is a tribute to our shortness of memory and our perennial desire to supplement the work of the Holy Spirit with the trappings of respectability, wealth, and power.

For its part, there are always those who, in the interest of the power and prestige of the State and its policies, are only too happy to wrap themselves in the robes of piety. They are eager to persuade us that not only wise policy but also piety require of us allegiance to their causes and programs. The cynical manipulation of piety to cloak the interests of avarice and arrogance was denounced by the prophets. It continues to be one of the chief strategies of worldly power. But the Founding Fathers realized that this was inimical to democratic government. For that which wraps itself in the robes of religion does so with the aim of not submitting itself to question, of standing somehow above criticism. When this happens, though, the exercise of democracy becomes impossible. Thus, in the name of the responsible exercise of political rights it was necessary to banish religion from the sphere of the State. In so doing, religion was set free for the first time in history to be itself. That is what Wesley called a "singular providence."

Instead of seeking to strengthen the ties that bind religion and government, evangelicals should be seeking to complete the work of this separation. The very protections that we enjoy (special tax exemptions, freedom from military service for clergy, and so on) derive from Constantine—from that very alliance between church and empire that resulted in the corruption of the gospel and the absolute dominion of the State over the Church. For the sake of the freedom of the gospel, these privileges should be renounced.

While we are at it, it would be a very good idea if our churches were to have the courage to get American flags out of their sanctuaries. The presence of these flags in the worship space provides grounds for the confusion between ultimate and earthly loyalty, which is the fertile seederbed of idolatry. Removing the flag should in no way be construed as an unpatriotic act. On the contrary, it would be a gesture of solidarity with the
framers of the Constitution in perfecting their work of separating Church and State.

There may be those who would point out that the framers of the Constitution did not themselves carry matters to this extreme. That would be true. But, as in the case of the enfranchisement of women and the abolition of slavery, the work of the Constitution is ongoing. It requires of us the willingness to take further than the framers dared the basic principles that animated their work. Just as a commitment to justice led successors of those who wrote the Constitution to abolish slavery, as a commitment to democracy led others to recognize the right of the poor, African-Americans, and women to vote—so also a proper regard for the achievement of the Founding Fathers would rightly lead us to continue and perfect their work of separating Church and State.

Who knows, we may discover in this effort that secular humanists and evangelicals may again recognize a common purpose—one that promotes both democratic freedoms and the freedom of the gospel.

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Endnotes

1. For a discussion of Wesley’s political views in this regard, see my Good News to the Poor: John Wesley’s Evangelical Economics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 199-222.
3. Ibid., 451.
4. Ibid., 451-52.
5. Ibid., 452.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 450.
How can The United Methodist Church most effectively employ licensed local pastors in ministry?

GARY D. MOODY

The United Methodist Church has a long history of using local pastors to facilitate ministry in rural and small-church settings. A perceived shortage of ordained clergy has brought about the proliferation of persons choosing local-pastor ministry in answer to the call of the church for affordable clergy for our small churches. As a result, we now have more than 6,500 full- and part-time local pastors under appointment in our churches, not counting the associate members under the 1992 Discipline. I believe that if The United Methodist Church were to be innovative in its deployment of these individuals who, out of their deep experiences of faith have responded to the church’s call for more clergy, the denomination would find itself once again growing in places where sending ordained clergy would not be cost effective.

We need to develop the new ideas for pastoral ministry that have already begun to bear fruit in many...continued on page 408

JAMES L. MAYFIELD

The option of persons serving The United Methodist Church as licensed local pastors gives our denomination practical flexibility in providing pastoral leadership to local churches. Four of the ways in which our denomination is well served by having this option have been around for some time. A fifth is relatively new.

What these five options have in common is that they help The United Methodist Church provide clergy leadership to congregations. Let me explain.

First, there is what I call “the apprentice pastor” use of licensed local pastors. This takes two basic forms. One is the student apprentice who is serving as a pastor of a congregation while she or he is enrolled in formal education, preparing for seminary, or completing her or his seminary degree. These licensed local pastors are serving congregations as a way of earning money to help them continue their journey toward a...continued on page 411
annual conferences. For example, the Northwest Texas and Florida annual conferences are using local pastors with great success in new-church starts as well as in transformational appointments for marginal churches. Many of our annual conferences have "transitional churches" that are on the brink of being closed. Some of these churches are in trouble because they are located in areas where the population is shrinking. Others are in need of "intentional interim" clergy but cannot afford them. In many of these situations, cooperative ministry efforts or multi-charge appointments could be designed that could be served very well by local pastors.

Local pastors are ideal for transitional church settings for several reasons. First, their lower salary presents less risk and enables marginal churches to have pastoral ministry. Second, local pastors' life experience often resonates well with the life experiences of persons in small churches, thus making it easier to spearhead innovative ministry. I know of a local pastor in Florida, a former automobile dealer, who has one of the fastest-growing churches in his district. His abilities matched the need of his congregation and he continues to lead them forward in ministry. This pastor's time and effort have turned out to be a very good investment for the congregation. Third, quite often the children of local pastors are grown. Thus, these pastors don't have to worry about the educational and family issues that arise for clergy with school-age children. Local pastors are very itinerant clergy.

Rural districts could be very creative with appointments in situations where medium-size churches that are surrounded by a number of small rural churches need part-time associate pastors. Forty percent of students currently enrolled in the Course of Study have bachelor's or more advanced degrees and are trained, experienced teachers. Why not use such a pastor to serve simultaneously as a part-time associate pastor in a medium-size church and also as pastor in one of the surrounding rural churches? In fact, a significant number of local pastors and associate members have extensive experience in business administration or professional careers that could be used with great effect in these settings.

Another innovative opportunity for using local pastors is to deploy ethnic—particularly Hispanic—local pastors in communities with large, growing ethnic populations. Furthermore, local pastors could serve in community- and social-service ministry while also pastoring a local church.
They could serve in specialized ministry in hospital and industrial chaplaincy as one component of their pastoral ministry. Their communities and their congregations could benefit greatly from this.

The deployment opportunities for local pastors and associate members are limited only by the inability or the reluctance of The United Methodist Church to be innovative in the way it prepares them for their work. Called to ministry out of the midst of our churches, local pastors represent to the denomination the vast secular work experience of the people in our congregations. The denomination should capitalize on this reservoir of experience and use local pastors' zeal to serve God in pastoral ministry. It is time for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to review the Course of Study School system in light of the needs of small-membership churches as well as financially challenged medium-size churches and to design a curriculum that will use local pastors and associate members to facilitate new and effective ministry in these settings.

Do we need chaplains who are able to work in isolated and low-paying situations? Let us train and appoint local pastors to this work. Do we need persons with financial, educational, or administrative skills who also feel called to pastor small churches? Let us give them specific training to serve both as associate pastors in medium-size churches as well as the ministry and leadership training they need for pastoring small churches. Are new-church starts too expensive for seminary graduates? Appoint local pastors and associate members who have shown abilities in these areas to start new churches that will keep The United Methodist Church alive and vitally active in serving Christ.

Finally, I would like to look at two important actions that will impact the possibilities for deploying local pastors and associate members in the future. First is the reinstatement of the category of "associate member" of the annual conference by the 2004 General Conference. Though somewhat different from its 1992 definition, this category affords local pastors a level of social and vocational acceptance within our clergy system. The opportunity to become associate members of the conference is a significant boost to the morale of local pastors and also expands their usefulness.

The second action is the study of ministry assigned to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry by General Conference last year. The study is an opportunity to help those engaged in ministry to define what they do and how best to do it. In a recent article in The Source, Robert
Kohler, assistant general secretary in the Board's Division of Ordained Ministry, says that the study "will engage the Order of Deacons, the Order of Elders, the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members, and the laity of the church in a discussion of the mission of the church, the ordering of ministry, and their effect on those who minister in the name of Jesus Christ."3

How can The United Methodist Church most effectively deploy local pastors in ministry? While the responsibility for answering this question finally rests with the whole denomination, we must trust God to show us how to work it out together.

Endnotes

2. The 2004 General Conference has made it possible for licensed local pastors to be appointed to extension ministries. See The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church–2004 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2004), ¶ 316.
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seminary degree; and they are also learning about being a pastor, the way any apprentice learns her or his craft or profession. The congregations served by these student apprentice pastors not only receive ministry but also have a special opportunity to participate in the ministry of educating pastors.

Second, the use of licensed local pastors in an apprentice role also makes conference membership a possibility for persons for whom the seminary route to ordination and conference membership is not a realistic option. This route is analogous to other apprentice routes to professional competence and certification. The major portion of their education is not in the classroom but in on-the-job training. This group of licensed local pastors is focused only on serving local congregations as pastors and not on ministries that require more formal theological education and specialized training.

Third, licensed local pastors whom I am calling "second-career servant pastors" are those persons who have retired from some other type of work and have financial resources sufficient to free them from depending upon a congregation as their only source of income. Because of both their stage in life and their financial freedom, these pastors tend to be remarkably free from what I call "preacher ambition" and tend to be content where they are appointed, with minimal concern about their next appointment.

These second-career servant pastors differ from apprentice licensed local pastors in that they have no desire to move toward conference membership. Their goal is to be used by the bishop to serve a local church. In my annual conference, they usually serve small, rural congregations that need a pastor who "loves the Lord and will love the folks."

Fourth, another group, "part-time worker-pastors," are licensed local pastors whose primary employment is not related to the church but who serve small congregations on a part-time basis. I remember a man during my childhood who worked in a local bank but who, for many years, each weekend served a tiny congregation in a rural town with a population of approximately 750 people located 30 miles from his home. Part-time worker-pastors are not available to be sent anywhere in the annual conference but are willing to serve small congregations within a reasonable driving distance from where they live and work during the week.

Fifth, a relatively recent use of the licensed local pastor option is by
LICENSED LOCAL PASTORS

persons who have completed seminary and are qualified in every way but one for conference membership and ordination. They are not able honestly to say they are willing to go wherever the bishop would send them. They have too much integrity to play “word games,” much less to lie in order to be ordained. So they offer themselves in pastoral ministry as licensed local pastors, to be used by the bishop and the church within certain geographical limits as needed.

Two of the associate pastors of the congregation I serve are licensed local pastors. They are among the most gifted and effective clergy with whom I have had the privilege to work. They are licensed local pastors but have more formal education than most ordained clergy. Helen Almanza has B.A., M.A., Ph.D., and M.Div. degrees, while Ron Campbell has B.A., M.Ed., M.Div., L.P.C., and D.Min. degrees. Both are unable to say with integrity that they are willing to go wherever the bishop wishes to appoint them. Both must stay within the Austin area for family reasons. So rather than play word games or lie, they have chosen the route of licensed local pastor and serve at the will of the bishop and the need of the conference. When they can be of use in the Austin area, they will serve the church; but should the bishop choose not to use them in this area, they will earn their daily bread in other ways. Ron has gone back to work for the public schools at least twice since earning his D.Min. degree, because there was no appointment for him in or near Austin.

The option of employing licensed local pastors gives our denomination additional practical flexibility in providing needed pastoral leadership to congregations.

What is the primary difference between the ministry of the licensed local pastor and that of the ordained elder in The United Methodist Church? In our current practice, the difference has less to do with the authority to administer sacraments and more to do with issues of church order in regard to (1) supervision, (2) the covenant between the annual conference and elders with reference to appointments, and (3) issues related to the ordering of the church at large (especially issues related to the annual, jurisdictional, and general conferences).

The implied wisdom is that the primary responsibility for clergy input and leadership in the ordering of the church is best served by those with formal theological education and experience that includes but also goes beyond on-the-job training of serving congregations.
One final question. Would it not be wise to provide deacons with the same sacramental authority we currently accord licensed local pastors? Again, as it stands now, the primary practical difference between elders and deacons has primarily to do with who supervises whom rather than with who is authorized to administer the sacraments—a relationship not unlike that between the elder and the licensed local pastor. I am convinced that, if deacons had the same sacramental responsibilities as licensed local pastors, many who feel called to specialized ministries on church staffs or beyond the local church would be more appropriately ordained deacon and have the deacon's relationship to the appointment process.

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Epiphany! The word itself is surely heard as an exclamation, for an epiphany is an experience of divine revelation. How could one acknowledge such a manifestation without shouting “Glory!”? The celebration of Epiphany is the oldest element of the three-part Christmas cycle and was the third Christian holy day established, following Easter and Pentecost. In some areas, this celebration day may have been in place as early as the late second century. Originally, Epiphany signified the birth of Jesus, the revealing of God to the world. However, in the fourth century, when Christmas was eventually established and connected to a particular date, Epiphany was refocused on the baptism of Jesus. John Chrysostom explained the meaning of Epiphany to a congregation in Antioch in 387 C.E. with these words:

For this is the day on which he was baptized and made holy the nature of the waters. . . . Why then is this day called Epiphany? Because it was not known when he was born that he became manifest to all, but when he was baptized; for up to this day he was unknown to the multitudes.1

Over the years, this remained the focus of the day in the East, but the West made Epiphany the commemoration of the visit of the Magi—the manifestation of the Divine to the Gentiles.

Although the Sundays following Epiphany have not constituted a special season per se, the Lectionary passages certainly lend themselves to such a treatment. Between Epiphany and Lent, God is revealed in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ baptism and ministry. Additionally, the themes of light overcoming darkness, of God’s active involvement in the world, and of the importance of transforming encounters with God in the concrete events of life are teachings that appear throughout the Scripture selections of these weeks. Helping worshipers connect the events and
themes of the Scriptures with the season of the Christian year can surely enrich understandings and reinforce our own opportunities for epiphanies in the day-to-day living of the new year.

The passages from the Book of Psalms for the Sundays following Epiphany connect well with the overall themes of the season, and they link in interesting ways to the other lectionary passages for each week. Many people express great love for the psalms, but that fondness often reflects their familiarity and comfort with only certain well-known psalms. Many more psalms are seldom read or heard as the topics of sermons. However, as Nahum M. Sarna points out, the uniqueness and power of the psalms are as a record of the "human quest for God." In the Law and the Prophets, God reaches out to human beings. The initiative is with God and the message that is shared is a divine word. God speaks and people listen. But in the Psalms, it is human beings that reach out to God. The people initiate the conversation and human language is the vehicle of communication. In this sharing, God receives and chooses to respond based on divine wisdom.

Thus, the human laments and praises, the struggles and hopes, expressed in the psalms emphasize important truths about the journey of faith: God listens to the praises of our lips and the needs of our hearts. God enters into our struggle to align our beliefs with the dissonant experiences of life; and, like Jacob at Penuel, there are blessings in the struggle. These are truths with which worshipers can identify: their quest for God, their struggle to harmonize faith and life, their yearning to be blessed. With God’s grace, epiphanies abound.

January 8, 2006—First Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 29; Gen. 1:1-5; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

Consensus suggests that Psalm 29 reflects an older Canaanite psalm that was taken over by Israel and refocused on the absolute power of Yahweh. The ability to absorb and adapt ideas and beliefs from the various cultures around them is a well-known aspect of the Hebrew faith. Originally, this psalm may have been a song of praise to Baal, the Canaanite weather god, who was believed to have power over floods and waters. But now the psalm expresses the sovereignty of Yahweh over all other gods, over the forces of nature, and over chaos in general. Some scholars have identified this as a praise psalm following the form of a beginning imperative to worship (vv. 1-2): a listing of reasons for that worship, shown in the descriptions of
God's power over life and events (vv. 3-9); and a conclusion showing God enthroned as King offering strength and blessings (vv. 10-11). However, Walter Brueggemann labels Psalm 29 a "psalm of enthronement" and further identifies it as a psalm of "new orientation." The establishment of Yahweh as King brings order and well-being to the world. This order overcomes the anxieties and threats of life and "the very act of singing the song is itself a practice of that new order." The song reminds believers that God is on the throne and all is under divine command.

Without a doubt, Psalm 29 presents God as a God of ultimate power. This power is expressed through God's voice that thunders above the waters. It is a voice of power and splendor that flashes fire (v. 7). It can "break the cedars of Lebanon" (v. 5)—an example meant to get people's attention. The cedar is a tree of great height and strength; and King Solomon chose the cedars of Lebanon for wood when the time came to build the Temple. God's voice does not shatter just any tree; it can shatter the strongest of trees. God's voice can make the mountains of Lebanon "skip like a calf, and Sirion [another name for Mount Hermon] like a young wild ox" (v. 6). God's voice can affect all of nature. In light of such power, the psalmist suggests, the only appropriate response is to worship—to cry "Glory!" (v. 9b).

This act of worship comes from a group of "heavenly beings" who are introduced at the beginning of the psalm as part of the call to worship. "Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength" (v. 1). This expression seems to reflect the older image of a heavenly court comprised of lesser gods and/or angels. Although the members of this court are commanded to worship, their expression of "Glory!" comes only after they see the demonstration of God's power, that is, after they witnessed an epiphany, if you will. Only then are they moved to an appropriate response.

The psalm ends with God enthroned forever and above all: above heavenly beings, chaos, and creation, from where God gives strength to God's people and blesses them with peace. God's power is not power for power's sake but rather power that brings order to a world of anxiety and threat so that people can live in strength and peace.

Psalm 29 presents several themes to explore in sermon preparation. Both the transcendence and immanence of God are reflected in the presentation of God's mighty power and in God's desire and willingness to bless.
The "heavenly beings" serve as a kind of model for human worshipers. Like the heavenly court, human beings are called to worship God, recognize God's strength and splendor, and respond appropriately. In a sense, earth is challenged to mirror heaven and cry "Glory!" Recognizing and exploring this call to appropriate worship may be one approach to a sermon focused on Psalm 29. In his book The Bible Jesus Read, Philip Yancey suggests that U.S. Americans struggle to express praise and adoration to God. Sports fans and entertainment aficionados seem to have no trouble idolizing and worshiping outstanding athletes or famous singers or actors. But when it comes to praising the Lord who made heaven and earth, people seem inhibited and unsure. One way to make this psalm come alive may be to preach "around" the events of a worship service—sharing the call to worship and discussing to what people feel they are being called. What might be God's expectation of God's people in a worship setting? The hymns, the Scripture, the proclamation of the Word—all are examples of God's power and glory that should lead to appropriate response (i.e., affirmation of faith, offering, etc.). All these are ways of proclaiming "Glory!"

Several images in this psalm connect in interesting ways to the other lectionary texts of the day. First and foremost, Psalm 29 describes the demonstration of divine splendor as happening through the power of God's voice. Although God's voice is represented as affecting many aspects of creation, controlling the nature of water is mentioned more than once. Both of these images—voice and water—are central to the Genesis and Markan lections. In the opening creation story, the Spirit of God is hovering, brooding, over the face of the waters—and then God speaks. God's powerful voice calls light into being and separates light from darkness. As in Psalm 29, here is a God with a voice that brings order from chaos and light from darkness and who blesses God's people. This same power of voice and strength appears in the Markan baptismal story. As soon as Jesus comes up out of the water, he sees the heavens being "torn apart" (v. 10), the Spirit descends on him, and a voice from heaven says, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (v. 11). This is a voice that tears open the heavens, that claims Jesus as Son, and creates a moment of epiphany. In the Markan pericope, a baptism of the Spirit is also introduced by John the Baptist, who confesses that this is not a baptism he can offer but one that will be given by the promised One who is coming. The baptism of the Spirit is often expressed with the image of
fire as at Pentecost, an image used also in Psalm 29:7, "The voice of the 
LORD flashes forth flames of fire." This image connects with the third 
lection for this Sunday, which describes Paul at Ephesus talking with 
believers who had received only John’s baptism of repentance. Paul 
proceeds to baptize them in the name of the Lord Jesus and they receive 
the Holy Spirit. Clearly, these images lend themselves to a sermon on 
baptism that stresses the centrality of God/Christ as Lord of our lives.

January 15, 2006—Second Sunday after the Epiphany
Ps. 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Sam. 3:1-10; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

The lection uses only a part of this psalm, avoiding the section that asks 
God to kill the enemies of the psalmist, whom the writer also identifies as 
God’s enemies. The section of Psalm 139 that is the focus of the lectionary 
reading presents an all-knowing, ever-present God who encircles the 
psalmist and knows every thought and every action. This is a God who is so 
closely connected to the writer that God has known him or her since his or 
her creation in the womb and will continue in this intimate relationship 
to the end of his or her life.

This beautifully written psalm expresses the understanding that we are 
fully and completely known by God. There is nowhere we can run or hide 
and nowhere we can be overtaken by darkness because the Divine and the 
light of the Divine are always present with us. God’s hand is upon us. This 
is a message that can be heard from two different perspectives; and some­
times these perspectives are even held together in a kind of intellectual/
emotional paradox. For example, a great sense of comfort issues from the 
reassurance that, wherever we find ourselves, God is with us. We are never 
cut off from the constant presence of the Divine. God “hems” us in, 
“behind and before” (v. 5)—words reminiscent of the pillar of cloud and fire 
that went before the Hebrews as they left slavery in Egypt and that moved 
behind them to protect them from the pursuing Egyptian army. Put in the 
vernacular of our day, "God has our backs." This is one perspective. Yet, on 
the other hand, do we really want to be known so completely that even our 
very thoughts are divinely ascertained? This is a perspective that often 
leads to feelings of unworthiness and fears of being judged. In the 
Companions in Christ Bible study, the story of Jesus’ encounter with the 
Samaritan woman at the well is discussed in terms of how much Jesus 
knew about the woman. The writer includes the verses above from Psalm
CATHIE LEIMENSTOLL

139 in the discussion, suggesting that we worship a God who both knows us intimately and loves us completely. After presenting this material in a study group I was facilitating, I ask the participants, "How do you feel when you think about God knowing you so completely?" Immediately, a shy young woman in the group exclaimed with a feigned look of terror, "Aaah!" Even when we realize that God's complete knowledge of us is tempered with love, we still experience mixed feelings. Perhaps Psalm 139 gives the preacher the opportunity to emphasize that God's knowledge of us allows our needs to be known so that God's love for us can address those needs. We are known and loved as we are, so that, in turn, we can become the people God is calling us to be.

Viewing the divine knowledge and love that call us into a deeper relationship with God in this way enables a connection with the other lectionary texts of the day. The Gospel story is Jesus' call of Philip and Nathanael to discipleship. Although Nathanael is skeptical of Philip's exuberant reporting of having found the Messiah, he agrees to "come and see" (John 1:46). When Jesus sees Nathanael, he identifies him as an "Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" (v. 47). When Nathanael skeptically inquires how Jesus could possibly know that, Jesus informed Nathanael that he saw him "under the fig tree before Philip called you" (v. 48). The point is, Jesus, the manifestation of the Divine, knows people intimately and lovingly calls them beyond who they are to be the people they can become.

Call is also the focus in 1 Sam. 3:1-10. Samuel is presented as trustworthy and is called to carry the Lord's message of change and punishment to the house of Eli. God knows the wickedness of Eli's sons and announces the consequences of that wickedness. This is a God who knows people intimately and acts on that knowledge for blessing and punishment. Certainly, this passage recalls the paradoxical feelings when we realize just how intimately God knows us and yet calls us to faithful, righteous living.

January 22, 2006—Third Sunday after the Epiphany
Ps. 62:5-12; Jonah 3:1-5, 10; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20
This section of Psalm 62 presents the theme of trusting in God. Psalm 62 is a reminder of the musical nature of the Book of Psalms. Many of us learned in seminary that the Book of Psalms was the "hymnbook of the Second Temple." Psalm 62 carries musical directions and notations that remind us that this psalm was indeed part of the worship experience of the...
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people. The instruction “To the leader” suggests that the notations were being given to a group of musicians or a particular musical director responsible for leading the congregational singing. “According to Jeduthun” may relate to a particular style of singing, and the obscure term selah could have marked a congregational response of some sort. At any rate, we are reminded once again that, even though a psalm may express a personal situation, the community is the place where worship occurs and where faith informs experience.

Psalm 62:5-12 expresses the psalmist’s trust in God—in God alone does the psalmist feel safe, protected, and redeemed (vv. 6-7). This trust is so unwavering that the writer can advise the community to claim the same trust (v. 8). Placing trust in other people or status or wealth is useless (v. 10). Such success and power are only illusions: they are here today and gone tomorrow. On the other hand, God’s faithfulness is rock solid—strong as a fortress (v. 6). God provides the refuge that gives rest to the weary, strength to the weak, and hope to the hopeless. Surely, members of modern congregations yearn to hear such reassurance as they struggle to be faithful and to put their trust in God in the midst of cultural influences that point instead to status, wealth, and dishonesty as sources of security.

The theme of trust can also connect this psalm to the other lectionary passages for this Sunday. The preacher may want to explore not only Jonah’s inability to trust in God and the consequences of that for Jonah but also the consequences for the Ninevites when Jonah grudgingly follows God’s call. The passage from 1 Corinthians is a warning that the end is near and people should respond accordingly. Certainly, trusting in the Lord would be imperative in anticipating the day of judgment, the fulfillment of salvation. Finally, the Gospel passage is Mark’s treatment of Jesus’ calling of the first disciples. The distinctive element in Mark’s account of the calling is his use of the word “immediately.” Mark wants to stress the urgency of Jesus’ ensuing ministry. However, in the context of trust, the word may also suggest that Simon, Andrew, James, and John responded to Jesus’ call because they immediately trusted the One who called them, the manifestation of the Divine. Here we have a “seashore epiphany.”

January 29, 2006—Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Psalm 111: Deut. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28

Psalm 111 can be identified in several different ways. It is a psalm of praise.
The psalmist begins with the imperative "Praise the LORD!" (v. 1) and then explains the appropriateness of the command with a description of the character of God. God does great works full of honor and majesty, is righteous and merciful, remembers the covenant, and redeems God's people. This description picks up the theme of an ancient confession seen in Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17, 31; and Jonah 4:2. Thus, because this is the character of God, praise is the appropriate response of God's people.

Other aspects of this psalm can lead to additional identification as to form. The fact that Psalm 111 is an alphabetic acrostic reminds one immediately of some of the Torah psalms that were used to teach and to suggest the orderliness of God's creation and rule. Additionally, v. 10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," hints of a wisdom psalm. Walter Brueggemann acknowledges those two possibilities but chooses to categorize Psalms 111 and 112 as "songs of retribution" and part of a larger category of psalms he calls "psalms of orientation." Psalms of orientation "express a confident, serene settlement of faith issues. Some things are settled and beyond doubt, so that one does not live and believe in the midst of overwhelming anxiety. Such a happy settlement of life’s issues occurs because God is known to be reliable and trustworthy." The acrostic form gives a sense of a world of order and stability, and the text suggests that recognizing and reverencing God gives a person the wisdom needed to live appropriately with praise and joy.

The Gospel lection is the first healing Jesus performs. In Capernaum, Jesus is confronted in the synagogue by a man with an unclean spirit. This spirit identifies Jesus as the "Holy One of God" (v. 24), a manifestation of the Divine. As the Holy One of God, Jesus embodies the character of God; and this character is just beginning to be revealed in this first encounter of healing in the synagogue. This is a God who redeems people—in this case, from an unclean spirit—and restores their lives to order and stability. It is just the beginning of the encounters Jesus will have with a wide variety of people: Simon’s mother-in-law, a leper, a paralytic, and the disciples themselves. These encounters will restore wholeness, bring wisdom, and order the world in a new way.

The people in Capernaum are amazed and respond appropriately—as do we—with praise: "A new teaching—with authority!" (v. 27). Epiphany! Glory!
LECITIONARY STUDY

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Endnotes

3. Ibid., 32.
8. Ibid., no. 103,8, 895.
10. Ibid., 25.
From the very beginning of Christianity there have been tensions between those wishing to uphold the purity of the gospel message in a hostile or indifferent secular world and those hoping to make that same gospel message more appealing through accommodation to the prevailing thought patterns of the day. One need think only of Tertullian's celebrated comment, "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" and contrast it with the more philosophical approaches to the exposition of Christian doctrine of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and, above all, Origen. In fact, even Tertullian used philosophical arguments when it suited his apologetic purposes. So it is not surprising that in the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas, for example, was suspected of heresy because he used the philosophy of Aristotle to undergird his philosophical/theological scheme in the *Summa Theologica* and other writings. Of course, in the early modern period, this tension became more pronounced because the Aristotelianism once deemed heretical by some had become synonymous with the necessary philosophical presuppositions of the Christian faith. As Galileo found out, to question the philosophical worldview implicit in Aristotelianism was sufficient grounds for a charge of heresy.

At the present time, the tension between classical Christian belief and the latest advances in science and technology centers on the complex of issues generated by the notion of evolution and, in particular, the origin of the human species. From the time of Darwin onward, creationism (i.e., the belief that the universe was created by God in the manner described in Genesis 1) has always been quite popular among a large segment of conservatively oriented Christians in North America. To be sure, there are "strict creationists," who argue that God created the world in literally six days, and there are "progressive creationists," who interpret the "days" of the biblical account as different ages of the world. Likewise, there are "scientific creationists," who, at present, are arguing in the courts of this country that
the creationist hypothesis should be regarded as a legitimate alternative to contemporary theories of evolution in high-school classrooms. But all creationists share a common presupposition, namely, that God's Word as revealed in the Bible has to be safeguarded against the inroads of the "atheistic materialism" implicit in the use of contemporary scientific method. On one level, of course, they are right. Scientists deliberately prescind from the question of God's existence and activity in this world so as to focus on purely natural explanations of what happens. But this methodological materialism does not necessarily imply ontological materialism, or atheism, since many scientists are practicing Christians who do science as part of their personal mission and ministry. Of course, these same scientists have to reconcile within their own minds and hearts the sometimes conflicting claims of religion and science; and this task is not always easy.

For example, Charles Darwin, while writing the Origin of Species (1859), clearly believed in the existence of God and in divinely ordained laws of nature. But by the time he published The Descent of Man in 1871, he had become an agnostic, finding it impossible to believe in the existence of a personal God who allowed for so much pain and suffering as a consequence of the pitiless workings of the principle of natural selection in nature. But theistic scientists like Asa Gray (1810–1888) in the United States saw in evolution God's mechanism for ongoing creation. The difference between Darwin and Gray—indeed, the difference between materialistic and theistic believers in evolution to this day—has to do with the issue of chance versus purpose in the understanding of evolution. Darwin and his followers concluded that natural selection was based on strictly random changes in bodily design which, given an unexpected alteration in environmental conditions, would favor certain species over other species and certain individuals over other individuals within a given species. Accordingly, evolution is purposeless—a process of ongoing experimentation in nature with no evident goal beyond the survival of the individual. In contrast, Gray and other theistic scientists (e.g., Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne) to this day insist that chance in nature is part of God's plan for creation. God uses the spontaneity within nature to bring forth new and more complex forms of life. While this trial-and-error approach to the work of creation will inevitably involve pain and suffering for most creatures, more advanced forms of life, such as human beings, would presumably never have come into existence without it. One prominent
contemporary theologian who has made this case for an “unfinished universe” quite well is John Haught in his much-acclaimed books *God after Darwin* (2000) and, more recently, *Deeper Than Darwin* (2004).

Another area in which tension has existed between the traditional claims of religion and theories based on scientific research is in the area known as sociobiology—the conscious application of the principle of natural selection to the survival and propagation of populations rather than simply of individuals within a given population. The key issue here is the notion of altruism, the sacrifice of self-interest for the sake of another. For example, Edward O. Wilson, in his book *Sociobiology* (1975) claims that altruism is less a conscious choice on our part than an unconscious mechanism in our bodies whereby our genes seek to reproduce themselves. For altruism is normally beneficial for both individual and group survival. What is usually at stake in those cases where individuals make unusual sacrifices to meet the needs of others is still enlightened self-interest. One has a vested self-interest in protecting family and friends from harm. In the rare cases where assistance is offered to a total stranger, it is done in the expectation that this person or someone else will do the same for me at a later date. Richard Dawkins aptly summed up this line of thought in his controversial book *The Selfish Gene* (1989): Genes are ruthlessly selfish but, likewise, quite clever in finding ways to reproduce themselves.

Naturally, this line of thinking represents an affront to the traditional beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and most of the other world religions. At least for the first three, altruism is grounded in God’s antecedent love for human beings and all other creatures. We respond in love to God and to one another because we have consciously or unconsciously already experienced God’s care and concern for us. But a simple denial of Wilson’s and Hawkins’s claims in the name of personal religious experience does little to advance the ongoing religion-and-science dialogue. As with the claims made by scientists about the key role of chance in cosmic evolution, so Christian philosophers and theologians need to learn more about the genetic base of human behavior and make appropriate qualifications to the otherwise sweeping claims of those same geneticists. As a starting point, they may well choose to read Pitirim Sorokin’s classic work *The Ways and Power of Love* (1954; reissued 2002). A Harvard sociologist, Sorokin sought in that book to study love from a scientific perspective in all its various dimensions. His work was largely snubbed by his colleagues in sociology, but in recent years has been taken up
again by Stephen Post and his collaborators at the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love at Case Western Reserve University, with funding from the John Templeton Foundation. A volume of essays edited by Post, Lynn Underwood, Jeffrey Schloss, and William Hurlbut and published under the title *Altruism and Altruistic Love* (2002) sets forth their findings thus far. One contributor, Stephen Pope of Boston College, found a way to combine Thomas Aquinas’s *ordo caritatis* (the “proper order of love,” beginning with love toward members of one’s immediate family) with theories about the influence of genes on human behavior as indicated above.

A third area where the religion-and-science dialogue has recently intensified is in neurophysiology, where empirical evidence is building up that the classical distinction between the soul and the body or, more specifically, the mind and the brain cannot be sustained. Scientists on principle do not favor dualistic schemes in which a break in the continuity of natural processes is stipulated so that a new and more complex form of existence and activity can be brought into being. Hence, many would prefer to think of consciousness as a function of the human brain and of the brain itself as a product of still-lower-level bodily, even subatomic, processes. Others are willing to admit top-down as well as bottom-up causation within the human body so that the mind is not reducible to the brain but nevertheless is intrinsically dependent upon the brain for its proper functioning. Thus, when the brain is damaged, the mind suffers an irreparable loss; and when brain activity ceases at death, the mind, or soul, dies with it. Faced with these alternatives, some theologians have conceded that the mind, or soul, is indeed only functionally distinct from the brain and other bodily processes since the psychosomatic unity of the human being is beyond dispute. At the same time, they defend traditional belief in personal immortality or life after death on the grounds that God reconstitutes a human being as an immaterial reality with a spiritual body immediately after death so that the individual can enjoy eternal life with God as promised in the New Testament (see, e.g., *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* [1998]).

However, in his book *The Emergent Self* (1999), William Hasker argues that ongoing personal identity seems to be lost with this understanding of the doctrine of resurrection. Conceivably God could create two or more replicas of the deceased person rather than just one. In addition, would even the single replica of a deceased person experience itself as identical with its former bodily self or as a new and quite different reality? As his
own solution to the issue of bodily resurrection, Hasker argues first that in place of the Platonic dualism of matter and mind proposed by René Descartes, or even the Aristotelian dualism of matter and form worked out by Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages, Christian philosophers and theologians should think in terms of "emergent dualism." By that term he means that the mind, or consciousness, is indeed emergent out of the human brain as soon as the latter has attained a specific level of complexity but that, once emergent, it can exercise top-down causation. Mind is not simply the passive product of neuronal activity but an agent in its own right that, in some measure, controls both the workings of the brain and the human body as a whole. Just as a magnet generates a magnetic field with properties separate from the magnet, so the brain generates a field of consciousness distinct from itself as an organ of the body. Second, he concludes that God could conceivably sustain this "soul-field" after the death of the body and even provide the soul-field with a spiritual body fitted to its new level of existence and activity. Hasker stresses that this is only an analogy, not a causal explanation, since the notion of "field" even among natural scientists is so ambiguous, at least at present.

Underlying Hasker's proposal, of course, is still another issue on which not only theologians and natural scientists disagree but on which theologians among themselves are divided, namely, the appropriate model for the God-world relationship. If God is Pure Spirit, then how could God bring into existence a material world and then exercise providence over that world without interfering with its normal operation in terms of natural laws? Thomas Aquinas provided the classical model for the God-world relationship with his contention in *Summa Theologiae* (I, Q. 8, art. 3) that God, though transcendent of the world as its Creator, is nevertheless immanent within it in virtue of divine knowledge and power. Creation exists only because God gives it the power to be at every moment and guides it in its exercise of that same limited power. But many contemporary theologians have noted that, while God is thus immanent within the world, the world is not immanent within God. God and the world are basically separate realities: and the problem of divine activity first in creating a material world and then in guiding its development once created still remains.

What these same theologians propose instead is the notion of panentheism, i.e., that everything finite exists in God as the sole infinite being and yet maintains its own existence apart from God. Of course, the problem is
how to explain this non-dual reality of creation apart from God without lapsing into pantheism. Charles Hartshorne, an early student of the process-oriented philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, suggested that God should be understood as the "soul" of the universe, with the universe itself as God's "body." Some years later, in her book *Models of God* (1987), Sallie McFague endorsed the same understanding of the God-world relationship but without explicit reference to Whitehead's philosophy. In both cases, God is said to be immanent in the world as the soul is immanent in the body. The limitations of the analogy, however, are likewise clear. God and creatures seem thereby to be too closely aligned with one another. God needs a "body" (if not this world, then some other world) in order to be God. Likewise, human beings and other creatures are reduced to divine "body-parts," with little or no sense of independent existence and activity.

In his book *Nature, Human Nature, and God* (2002), Ian Barbour suggests that a more apt model for the God-world relationship might be that of a cosmic community of entities of which God is the preeminent member. In this way God and creatures could share a common "space" in which to engage one another while maintaining their necessary differences from one another. In my own work (see *The One in the Many* [2001]), I have urged that the model of a cosmic community would be further enhanced if God were understood in explicitly trinitarian terms, i.e., if creation were conceived as taking place within the all-encompassing space, or field, of activity proper to the divine persons in their dynamic interrelation (on this point, see also Denis Edwards, *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology* [1999]). Creatures would thus come forth from God by divine decree, exist in God consciously or unconsciously during their time in this world, and eventually return to God so as to share in eternal life. All this speculation, of course, only points the way to what John Haught in *Deeper than Darwin* called "a deeper theology," one in which contemporary belief in God is linked to a philosophy and theology of evolution with conscious reliance on explicitly process- and future-oriented modes of thought. Yet the exact shape of this evolutionary scheme is still not agreed upon. Readers with time and interest in the subject would be well advised to read on a regular basis the articles in two academically oriented religion-and-science periodicals, *Zygon* and *Theology and Science.* Likewise, for more popular presentations of many of the same issues, *Science and Theology News* and *Science and Spirit,* two periodicals sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, could
be consulted. Finally, for Internet users, the web site at www.metanexus.net provides much useful information about conferences and new publications in the field of science and religion.

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Across the street from one of our parsonages there spread out a beautiful cemetery, adorned with oaks and graves and capacious walkways from meadow to meadow. In the winter, our children used the hillsides to toboggan. In the summer, they played ball across the tombs. We marked the fall with long walks amid the sarcophagi. I can still see my father lifting his grandson to sit, for a moment, astride a grave-top elk.

In the Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, we may think of our ministry after the manner of children playing in the graveyard. Wyoming Conference lost 5 percent of its membership in one year (2003). North Central New York is a combination of 70,000 members from Northern and 80,000 members from Central a generation ago. Today the total membership is under 80,000. New Jersey had a membership of 200,000 thirty years ago; today it is 100,000. Those of us riding sleds and catching flies and grounders in ministry today do so atop a full graveyard. In The Logic of Renewal, Abraham cites R. R. Reno’s sobering words, “As a believer in the now late- (or post-) modern West, I suffer the diminishment and debilitation of Christianity. The church . . . is in ruins. If you, the reader, have faith, then you suffer this ruination as well. . . . To be in the church is to endure a broken form of life” (140). Not all jurisdictions in the United States are so conditioned—yet. But the experience of the Northeast awaits others, as building gives way to rebuilding and new ministry to the very different labors of renewal.

For those (still relatively few) who will admit what condition our condition is in, Abraham’s book may provide some substantive reflection, especially in its last forty pages. There, he helps us come upon a most interesting voice in his summer reading collection, that of R. R. Reno. And Abraham “comes clean,” if not entirely clear, about his own view of the stew.

The book provides a “map” of fourteen options in renewal, summarized here in a sentence each. Draper: Renewal requires a literalistic reading of Scripture, rejection of existentialism and the scientific method.
and avoidance of the world's religions. Bennett: Renewal depends on a particular (Augustinian) encounter with the Holy Spirit. Newbigin: Renewal depends on a robust representation of classical dogma. Spong: Renewal depends on total rejection of the dogma and its forms, espoused by Newbigin. Ruether: Renewal requires a kind of free-church community, characterized by healing, friendship, and nurture. Ratzinger: Renewal needs to rely on the unity and catholicity of the body of Christ, protected by the Bishop of Rome. King and Romero: Renewal will come in the genuine struggle for justice. Schmemann: Renewal begins with eucharistic revival. Bilezikian: Renewal is such to the extent that it is an ongoing, carefully crafted, seeker event. Cupitt: The church needs to die to make way for the Kingdom, which is secular life as we now know it. Norman: Renewal needs only a priesthood committed to the teaching of revealed doctrinal truth. Wagner: Renewal requires the combination of technical and spiritual principles of church growth. Reno: Renewal requires the faithful to endure the church's ruin, neither running away into distancing nor clamoring for separation.

Abraham has chosen to affirm without qualification the struggle for justice in the voices and lives of King and Romero as an essential feature of authentic renewal. Otherwise, in the above list (itself a summary of about 150 pages in Logic, which for their part are a summary of 59 books and articles), the author has found strengths and weaknesses to consider in each writer and no other single point of full affirmation. This is a commendable choice. Abraham's own view of renewal can be summarized in two points. 1. The logic of real renewal is theological, ecclesiological, simple, paradoxical, discerning, and just. 2. Renewal requires a quest for intellectual integrity that avoids whining pessimism, eschews universalistic tendencies, promotes justice (narrowly defined), replaces Tillich with Augustine, avoids congregationalism, affirms Pentecostals, acclaims the work of the Holy Spirit (traditionally construed), eagerly discusses epistemology, and takes the long view.

The Logic of Renewal seems to be an assortment of notes from summer reading, summarized with liberal citation, in varied authorial pairings—denominational, thematic, and theological. (The chapters formed the basis of earlier public addresses.) As such, it is a helpful topography of some recent literature on renewal. The book's treasure comes at the end in a cursory review of the work of R. R. Reno. Once an editor at Harper Collins
was asked how he could read hundreds of books and know which ones to print. "I know in a paragraph, or a page, who can write. You know fast. Did you ever listen to somebody sing? You don't need the whole opera. A verse will do." Reno can sing. I am going to use the honorarium for writing this review to buy his book *In the Ruins of the Church: Sustaining Faith in an Age of Diminished Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002).

*Claiming Theology in the Pulpit* by Burton Z. Cooper and John S. McClure (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003)

Over the past three decades, preaching has been reinvigorated by the "turn to the listener," signaled by the groundbreaking work of Fred Craddock and amplified by a host of teachers and preachers. This fruitful new direction in homiletics, especially with the appeal of an inductive form, has taught us to conceive and prepare sermons that are more attuned to the person in the pew, to the way hearers of sermons listen and respond to preaching. Any preacher who missed this turn in the theory and practice of homiletics must have been locked in the church basement for a generation.

While the gains for preaching and sermon listening have been immense, yellow flags of caution have begun to appear. With all this concern for the "fittingness" of a sermon's form, particularly a form based upon the listener's and preacher's experience, what happens to theology? In our haste to shape a sermon to the contours of the listeners' perceptions, have we tossed theological integrity aside? Teachers of preaching have begun to be concerned that after three or four years of formal seminary education, students' sermons are often theologically shallow, muddled, or vapid. One fears that the same state of affairs broadly prevails in the church. If the pulpit has eschewed theology, should we be surprised that congregations are also perplexed about their own theological convictions? Such a situation begs for a "turn to theology" in preaching, which is now well underway.

*Claiming Theology in the Pulpit* is one of the best guides thus far to preaching with theological integrity. Cooper, professor emeritus of Philosophical Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.
G. LEE RAMSEY, JR.

and McClure, professor of Homiletics at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, offer sturdy support for preachers who want to gain solid theological footing for preaching. Convinced that preaching matters and that "congregations respond appreciatively, even enthusiastically to good preaching," the authors help the beginning and well-seasoned preacher understand how to achieve "a clear and consistent theological perspective in the content of the sermon" (1).

These wise guides know that what preaching needs is not formal theology per se but theological awareness on the part of the preacher. They are not appealing for a return to drab doctrinal sermons. Rather, they are calling for a higher level of theological self-awareness on the part of the preacher that will translate into lively and theologically informed sermons that will engage the congregation in more faithful understanding of themselves, the work of the church in the world, and, ultimately, the work of God. They do not want to force theological orthodoxy upon the preacher. Instead, recognizing the pluralism that is inherent in congregational and social life today, they claim that a preacher's sharpened awareness of theological difference can help to "mitigate misunderstanding of the sermon, provide the basis for an attitude of respectful engagement with divergent positions on theological and social issues, and widen the reach and positive power of the sermon" (5).

The book unfolds in two parts. Part 1 lays out a theological profile that covers method, authority, and worldview (the hidden theological assumptions of the preacher and the congregation) and examines five consciously held theological categories: theodicy, atonement, ethics and ecclesiology, the relation of Christianity to other religions, and eternal life/eschatology. A genuine strength of the book is the way in which Cooper and McClure define their categories succinctly yet sufficiently. The busy preacher can begin to locate him- or herself, for example, with respect to theodicy or views of the Atonement without becoming overwhelmed by theory. They include a helpful profile and chart in the appendix that encourage the reader to identify his or her own theological convictions. Indeed, one way to read the book is to look first at the profile and chart to get a sense of Cooper and McClure's categories and then to read the text for definitions and clarifications.

Part 2 demonstrates how the theological profile can be used in sermon brainstorming and preparation. It includes actual transcripts from conver-
sations among preachers and the authors while working with the theological profiles. In this way, the authors "show and tell" how preachers gain clarity about their own theological assumptions and how these assumptions affect the content of a sermon. The book concludes with sample sermons from both Cooper and McClure in which they evaluate each other's sermons according to the theological profile.

If there is a slight weakness in this book, it is mostly due to its brevity (142 pages). The theological profile will prove so helpful to many working preachers that they will wish for a more comprehensive treatment of other categories of Christian doctrine. If so, readers might consult McClure's earlier work in The Four Codes of Preaching for a more expansive presentation. Finally, the authors acknowledge that the theology of the listener is dynamically related to the theology of the preacher. Yet the book does not explore the theology of those who listen regularly to the proclaimed word or how the listeners' theology(ies) bear upon the theological shape of the sermon. This is not so much a fault with the book, since Cooper and McClure do not intend such exploration, as it is an anticipation of further study in this direction. For example, Ronald Allen and Mary Alice Mulligan's recently released Believing in Preaching: What Listeners Hear in Sermons (Chalice, 2005) takes new strides down the road of understanding the theology(ies) of the sermon listener.

For every preacher or teacher of preaching who has wanted better theological grips for sermon conception and preparation, this book is a gift. Well-written, clear, and concise, it will help the preacher go to the pulpit with renewed confidence that proclaiming the gospel with theological integrity is not only possible but crucial for the church in the world today.

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