Towards a Practice-Oriented Model of Formation of the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit: Shaping Local Pastors for Ministry in the United Methodist Church

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Abstract

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This thesis is about the formation of licensed local pastors in the Course of Study of the United Methodist Church. It incorporates an empirical qualitative study involving 46 licensed local pastors in the United Methodist Church across the United States over a 6-month period: 40 participated in 13 online focus or sharing groups, and 46 completed a questionnaire. The aim of the sharing groups was to explore how local pastors may have encountered the Holy Spirit during their formation in the Course of Study, and to investigate what these encounters may entail for their shaping and preparation for ministry. The questionnaire was used to gain demographic information.

The research question was: How does foregrounding the Holy Spirit impact the formation and education of local pastors? The argument is that foregrounding the Holy Spirit raises new questions for theological education and shapes the preparation of local pastors for ministry. The thesis explores how, by foregrounding the Spirit, a total process of formation comes into view in the lived and ordinary, formally and informally, beginning from the call into the ministry and moving through participation in the Course of Study. Other questions are also emerging about the very purpose of a licensed local pastor within the polity of the United Methodist Church, especially regarding the UMC's theology of ministry and ecumenical commitments. In addition, practices such as worship, friendship, and pedagogy take on a new relevancy in formation as local pastors learn ministry by doing it: local pastors learn to share in these practices as they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, supporting each other vocationally through a maze of denominational demands and educational requirements, and stewarding their economic resources.

The image that surfaced in this research for the proposed model is that of a Methodist Meeting House of Formation. Through the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina,* this image resonated with the learning of ministry as a spiritual practice, as well as with how local pastors expressed their experiences of the Spirit's presence, the images they chose, and the testimonies they shared. It was also an image that spoke to new possibilities for re-scripting the Course of Study that could offer a way to move beyond broader academic or encyclopedic paradigms and *'paideutic'* frames of reference in theological education: a practice-oriented

model that seeks to transcend the binary between the academic and '*paideutic,*' being indwelt by the Spirit and expanding the ways people know, learn, and engage in ministry. A strong communal ethos accompanies the model, which is enriched by the 'pneumatological scaffolding' in the Gospel of John and the First Letter of John, and further strengthened by John Wesley's turn to praxis in his 'house of religion.' The image of the Methodist Meeting House of Formation, then, serves as both a guiding image and a physical venue for formation, and is also theologically located within the ecumenical witness of the UMC and the Wesleyan impulse to grow in holiness.

A consequence of this intervening pneumatologically is that curriculum and pedagogies are understood more contextually, and the organization and polity of the United Methodist Church are questioned for failing to recognize local pastors. The role of worship is set within this context to reclaim the ministerial 'order' of local elders in the annual conference, to invoke the Holy Spirit's blessings, and to reimagine the Course of Study not simply as an educational program for academic credit but as a community-oriented approach to gaining pastoral wisdom or know-how. The Course of Study becomes oriented toward learning the practices of ministry, embodied relationally and indwelt by the Spirit.

Declaration

None of the materials contained in this thesis have been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other institution. The thesis is my own work.

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgements

In her book *Lifelong Learning: Theological Education and Supervision*, Frances Ward writes that 'to learn means to encounter new experience and other perspectives, and this can change us. To learn in the hands of the living God will challenge our sense of identity. It will take us, with God who is both the ancient of days and the eternal child, into a lifelong seeking after understanding that brings us to the limit of our comprehension.'[1]

I wrote this thesis as part of my ongoing journey as a lifelong learner, to understand what I had been doing with local pastors over two decades in the Course of Study, and to envision other educational possibilities for their formation. This thesis presents a portion of what I have come to comprehend: a recognition that when we fall into the hands of the living God or indwell life with the Holy Spirit, our sense of identity changes and prompts more questions. That's certainly been my case: as someone who reflects theologically on the practices of ministry as a pastor and teacher, there is always 'more' to what the Spirit discloses.

This is why I would like to acknowledge several entities and individuals who have helped me with the 'more' of this process. First, I am thankful for the financial support I received from the Foundation for Theological Education in Houston, Texas. Being a John Wesley/Harry Denman Fellow has been an honor and has significantly contributed to participating in the doctoral program at Durham. It has also provided a community of pastors and scholars dedicated to practicing the Wesleyan way of discipleship.

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[1] Frances Ward, *Life Learning: Theological Education and Supervision* (London: SCM, 2005), 4.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.0 Case Study

Susanna, Kitty, John, and Charles are candidates for ministry in the United Methodist Church. Susanna is preparing to serve as an ordained elder, and Kitty is preparing to serve as an ordained deacon.[2] John and Charles are journeying through the Course of Study as they serve as licensed local pastors: John as a full-time pastor and Charles as a part-time pastor. They have gathered in their annual conference to celebrate the ministry of the church. It's the highlight of the conference: ordination. Susanna and Kitty have worked through their seminary preparation and examination phases and have been voted into full membership by the executive session of clergy–all those who are ordained. They have completed their candidacy process. Now comes the moment when the conference sets them aside for ordained ministry to 'take thou authority'– one as an elder for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service, and the other as a deacon for the Ministry of Word, Order, Service, and Compassion.

In the ordination service, the whole conference will gather as the church apostolic and catholic, as the annual conference is the primary unit of the United Methodist Church's connection with the ecumenical church. Susanna and Kitty will process into the worship assembly with their bishop and other leaders, making their way to the front near the altar. They will be wearing their white robes and take their place to the side of the chancel. The whole liturgy is oriented toward presenting them to the conference and demonstrating that they have been appropriately examined and approved. Indeed, a major portion of the service is called the 'examination': the bishop will ask Susanna and Kitty about fulfilling their responsibilities as elders and deacons, and rely on God's help to do so. The bishop's words mark the point in the liturgy when Susanna and Kitty will profess their faith in the Triune God and confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Once examined, Susanna, as an elder, and Kitty, as a deacon, will, one by one, come to the front of the conference, where the bishop will ask them to kneel. Supporters of Susanna and

[2] I am using names from Samuel and Susanna Wesley's family. 'Kitty' or 'Hetty' as she was also called, is the nickname of Mehetabel. She was the sixth oldest of the Wesley children. I am using 'Kitty' as the name here, as it appears as 'Kitty' in other places of historical record.

Kitty will come forward and lay hands on them, while others stand when Susanna and Kitty kneel. Those with ordaining responsibilities from other denominations may also be present as a sign of the church's unity.

Once kneeling, and surrounded by those with conference oversight of Susanna and Kitty, the bishop will continue with the epiclesis prayer, stating the names of Susanna and Kitty individually, and citing the following: 'Lord, pour out your Holy Spirit upon Susanna (and Kitty) for the office and work of an elder (or a 'deacon'). In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' The bishop will then announce to every candidate by name: 'Take thou authority as an elder (or deacon).' In Susanna's case, the bishop will then add the words 'to proclaim the Word, administer the Sacraments, and order the church's life,' with Kitty, 'to preach and serve all God's people.'

Once these words and prayers are offered, the bishop will address all candidates who have come forward, recognizing them as elders and deacons, respectively, and as part of the clergy orders, with Susanna becoming part of the order of elders and Kitty becoming part of the order of deacons. They will then receive 'red stoles,' signifying the Holy Spirit's presence in their ministries, and a reminder that the ordination service is about depending on the Spirit for guidance. The bishop will transition and lead the conference in Holy Communion, or, if not, offer a 'sending forth' prayer in the name of the Triune God.

During the ordination service, John and Charles, as licensed local pastors, are in different places. John is physically present as a full-time local pastor serving three congregations. He has time to attend. Charles, on the other hand, cannot because he is working at General Electric. Charles serves one church as a part-time local pastor.

John and Charles began their formation into the United Methodist Church (UMC) the same way Susanna and Kitty did. They had both served as laypeople in their local churches and felt called to the ministry. They attended the discernment retreat in their conference and participated in all the meetings with their Staff Parish Committees and the District Committee on Ministries (dCOM). They also completed the necessary background checks, psychological exams, and UMC readings on ministry. But once they shared that they were going to serve as licensed local pastors and not move toward ordination, they experienced the proverbial fork in the road: unlike Susanna and Kitty, who went off to seminary, John and Charles enrolled in the

License to Preach School for forty hours to gain more information about the UMC ministry, such as Methodist history, doctrine, and administration, among others.

Once John and Charles complete their 40 hours in the License to Preach School, they will receive their license to serve: John will serve three small churches full-time, and Charles will serve part-time in one small rural church. Because they are not considered fully itinerant nor full members of the annual conference, John and Charles are *assigned* these positions by their Superintendent and serve as an extension of the bishop's authority. The license provides the administrative means for them to preach the Word, serve the Sacraments, and order the life of the church, but only in their assigned churches–not beyond.

John and Charles are now eligible to enroll in the Course of Study. Because he is full-time, John will need to find ways to attend one of the Regional Schools of the Course of Study, which are embedded in UM seminaries. Because he is part-time, Charles will also enroll in the Course of Study Extension Site, conducted by the same seminary, only located in his annual conference. John will take most of his classes online at the Regional Course of Study, though, depending on his schedule, he could attend in-person classes when they are offered. He would like to go with Charles to the Extension Site and take classes, as it is 1 hour from his home. He and Charles have developed a deep friendship from the License to Preach School. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, however, has a rule requiring full-time local pastors to attend a Course of Study at a UMC seminary and take classes from the faculty there, not at the Extension Site, which typically doesn't have seminary faculty, though this may shift depending on circumstances.

Yet Charles will most likely take all his classes in person, as they are held three hours from his home over three months, once a month on a Saturday. Charles knows that he has eight years to complete his twenty classes, though he knows of local pastors who haven't.

Charles and John will need to maintain their license by staying enrolled in the Course of Study. The Course of Study curriculum begins with 100-level courses and moves to 500-level, more advanced courses. John will probably take the higher-level classes first, as he is a second-career student with a degree in literature. Charles has technical school training in electronics, so he will likely take the 100-level courses first.

Suppose, however, that five years later, John has completed his twenty classes and is now prepared to graduate. Here, John will experience something a little different from Susanna and

Kitty: a worship service in his Course of Study to celebrate graduation. He will gather with his colleagues and instructors, away from the annual conference. In fact, the graduation service takes place in a small chapel in a UMC congregation.

To celebrate the occasion, John will attend and line up with other Course of Study graduates, if there are more, just outside the chapel door. They will process in with the instructors and the Course of Study director, all wearing academic robes and regalia. Yet unlike Susanna and Kitty, who processed into the conference worship in their white robes for ordination, sitting on the chancel with the bishop, John will wear something casual and sit in the chapel's front row. A few family members of the graduates have attended the service.

During the service, the gathered sing and pray, taking time to rejoice in their baptism and membership in the priesthood of all believers.[3] Indeed, as the service unfolds, John will hear words from Ephesians 4:11-16 on how 'Christ sets apart some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up the body of Christ, until all come to the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.' John will then hear the director of his Course Study state how 'God honors all those who have been called and set apart for the work of equipping the saints.'[4]

For these words, John is thankful to be recognized and to have completed the Course of Study. Following the sermon, John will also hear words about how 'local pastors are licensed for pastoral ministry and share with the elders of the UMC all the responsibilities and duties of a pastor in the fourfold areas of Word, Order, Sacrament, and Service within local congregations to which they are assigned.' This prayer reminds John of all the responsibilities of a pastor and the call to serve 'God and the church through their local ministry.'[5]

All this occurs within this particular service. John listens and receives his graduation certificate. The director and conference representative thank John for his ministry and for the 'richness and diversity of the local pastors' lived experiences 'inside and outside the church, and

[3] The Prayer of Recognition in the Service celebrates 'the work of God, done by the people of God and given to each Christian as a vocation: Through baptism, all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers, the church made visible in the church.' See Appendix P for the full service of graduation.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. Annual Conferences hold an executive session with elders, deacons, and local pastors. During the executive session, the Board of Ordained Ministry mentions the names of graduates from the Course of Study. The bishop *might* share these names during the annual conference sessions, though the practice is not always consistent. Some bishops may offer a prayer for local pastors, but no laying on of hands or invoking of the Spirit.

for meeting all the graduation requirements.[6] John will return home and continue serving his three churches.

In this brief scenario, I have tried to provide what Clifford Geertz has called a 'thick description' to gain deeper insights into particular practices, asking what they mean and how power dynamics operate within any given community.[7] The above 'Case Study,' as I am calling it, is my attempt to describe how the UMC practices 'setting aside' those called to serve as local pastors, elders, and deacons, offering a way into this thesis.

I start at the end of the Course of Study to set up a way to measure it against ordination and compare it with those who take the seminary route. All cases are different, but this description highlights distinct features of the liturgical practices at the annual conference compared with those at the graduation worship service. My claim is that these services disclose different conceptions of ministry: one bears witness to the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the UMC's sense of catholicity and apostolicity in mission. At the same time, the other is grounded in a functionalistic understanding of ministry that assumes the administration of a license outside the conference for its implementation. That insight, I suggest, reveals pneumatalogical implications for the formation and education of local pastors in the Course of Study, as it raises questions about what the Course of Study is about, and what local pastors are for.

I make this observation because John and Charles are not considered ordained clergy, but they are not laity either. Yet at no point are John and Charles set aside by the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands by a bishop or the annual conference, or receive the examination of conscience according to John Wesley's historic questions for ministry, or the commissioning to serve in and be a part of a ministerial order. There is no 'initiation into the way of life,' even though John and Charles are expected to live it. What is going on here?[8] What would happen if we took seriously what John and Charles shared about their experiences as local pastors regarding the total process of their formation? And how would their education and formation change if we listened to what they said?[9]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 4-28.

[8] Richard Osmer's approach to practical theology involves this question as part of the practical theological cycle of reflection. I use it simply as a way to share what I have experienced first-hand; cf. Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

[9] These questions are similar to the ones asked in the following regarding youth ministry; cf. *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education - If We Let It,* edited by Kenda Creasy Dean and Christy Lang Hearlson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

1.1 Argument of Thesis and Questions for Research

This thesis grows out of my experiences with local pastors like John and Charles at the annual conference and with them as an instructor in the Course of Study. It arises from a twofold concern: first, that John and Charles are considered less than real pastors with ecclesial authority because they are not ordained, yet they are expected to fulfill the same pastoral responsibilities as elders; second, that John and Charles are prepared for ministry through the Course of Study program that remains captive to academic or abstract notions of theology yet carries within it potential advantages for ministerial education and formation that seminary, graduate education does not. I see both of these concerns as related, in that behind them is a managerial social imaginary that John and Charles learn to navigate: the administrative process leading to and maintaining a license to preach finds its educational equivalent in the Course of Study for earning credits to keep the license. An instrumental rationality governs the educational and formative process for local pastors.

This is not to say that Susanna and Kitty don't have to navigate a similar process. They do. However, as they proceed in their education and move toward ordination, they receive from the conference a very different form of initiation than Charles and John did: to be sure, they navigate a maze of bureaucracy, but unlike John and Charles, Susanna and Kitty will be publicly set aside by the prayer of invocation, as an act of the Holy Spirit. Their *charisms* for ministry are recognized, and authority granted. The whole process is one of mediating the Spirit within the annual conference as part of the church's apostolic life. That is not the case with John and Charles.

Therefore, I want to ask, in this thesis, how foregrounding the Holy Spirit would change the preparation of local pastors for ministry as part of their journey through *the Course of Study and into a new status of ministry*: that of a local elder. As an instructor in the Course of Study**,** I have been concerned about what I perceive as a lack of emphasis on the pneumatic formative aspects of the Trinity in the education and formation of local pastors, from their entry into ministry through the Course of Study itself. It has been my perception that an overly bureaucratic process and an academic approach predominate in the formation of local pastors rather than the

concrete practices of ministry that constitute the church as a social means of grace. It has been my hunch or sense that these two aspects of formation and education are connected.[10]

This was the concern I wanted to explore in this research: I wanted to test this hunch about the Spirit in the formative and educational process of local pastors. To explore this hunch more fully, I asked local pastors in the thirteen Sharing Groups whether and how they had experienced the Holy Spirit during their preparation and formation for ministry in the Course of Study. I did so because I went into the research assuming the Holy Spirit was not being emphasized. However, I came away with a more complex picture of how local pastors' education and formation occur. In this thesis, I invite readers to see what I found, in the hope of reshaping the Course of Study and the status of local pastors.[11]

Therefore, I indicate the following regarding my thesis: as a project in practical theology, I incorporate empirical qualitative research to explore how local pastors view their learning for ministry in the Course of Study and to investigate what their experiences of the Holy Spirit may entail for reshaping their preparation for ministry. In doing so, I want to reclaim Wesley's emphasis on *praxis* within his 'house of religion' to rescript the overall formation process toward a practice-oriented model that intentionally foregrounds the Holy Spirit. In doing so, I emphasize the importance of God's Spirit experienced in the 'lived' or being indwelt in the ordinary. This focus leads me to speak of the total process of education and formation as lived formation, especially concerning how the Spirit is encountered in worship and friendship, and the significance of pedagogies that relate to the embodiment of ministry practices.

Yet such embodiment is not confined to the classrooms of the Course of Study, but goes to the heart of the annual conference's practice of invoking (or not invoking) the Holy Spirit upon local pastors as an act of the Spirit for the sake of the church's mission. It is why I see this

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[10] Pete Ward describes the practical theological task as beginning with a 'hunch' that occurs in the ordinary or everyday occurrences of life. He also suggests that this 'hunch' can serve as a way to test assertions or claims in research, as Christian Scharen did in his empirical research on the formative power of worship in three Atlanta congregations, examining the complex relationship between worship and ethics. Scharen's research reveals that it is a mistake to idealize the formative power of worship, as it overlooks the larger forces at work in the community that also shape life. I see some similarity with Scharen's argument and James K. A. Smith's project in that there are always 'liturgies' operating inside and outside the church; formation is not a linear process; see Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 18, 104-105; and Christian Scharen, *Public Worship and Public Work: Character and Commitment in Local Congregational Life* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 10.

[11] Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination, and the Holy Spirit* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013), xv-xvi.

foregrounding of the Spirit as significant to a Methodist House of Formation that serves as a community of practice for learning ministry and a regular meeting place for a ministerial order of local elders. In other words, stated negatively, the absence of local pastors (like John and Charles) in the conference assembly reiterates my concern that their absence reflects the broader church's failure to ascribe value to their ministries, and that it remains within a managerial imaginary that governs the overall formative processes of local pastors.[12] As Jeff Astley asks, is this a case of a hidden curriculum at work, namely, how the church places local pastors outside the Spirit's blessings in the conference, not worthy of the Spirit's invocation? The church learns that local pastors are 'second-class' and that the Course of Study is second-rate.[13]

Astley's question would accord with the insight in my research that so much of learning occurs outside the formal classroom and often leaves out 'the implicit, unconscious, informal, and unstructured': we often do not contend with the 'hidden curriculum' of a tradition, or that 'set of experiences through which people learn effectively, but which are not explicitly labeled as learning experiences, and which are not consciously intended as such.'[14] My research resonates with Astley's claim.

However, as Astley goes on to say, a 'hidden curriculum in worship' might also be the most important medium of implicit learning in the church, or, in this case, what is truly being taught concerning local pastors: they remain outside the Holy Spirit's formal blessings in the conference assembly.[15] They are organizationally an administrative appendage to what the church teaches and to whom it grants authority. The Course of Study is the program that helps to keep this appendage intact.

In this thesis, I stand at the intersection of learning, formation, and education for local pastors and ask what is happening here. That is, while I examine the experiences of the Holy Spirit among local pastors, I do not, as I shared above, want to reduce the research to their individual experiences only. As Simeon Zahl has written, contending with the Holy Spirit means contending with and attending to experience and life itself.[16] There is always 'more' than the

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[12] Philip Kenneson, 'Gathering: Worship, Imagination, and Formation,' in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 53-67.
[13] Jeff Astley, 'Christian Worship and the Hidden Curriculum of Christian Learning,' in *The Contours of Christian Education,* edited by Jeff Astley and David Day (Essex: McCrimmons, 1992), 141-152.
[14] Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening, and Learning in Theology (*Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 9.
[15] Jeff Astley, 'Christian Worship and the Hidden Curriculum of Christian Learning,' 141-142.
[16] Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 77, 224;

experience itself; there is also the organization's context. In addition, when dealing with the Holy Spirit, there is the conversation with scripture and tradition: the Bible contains images that speak to the Spirit's unique involvement in life, such as wind, fire, and breath: the Spirit does not deal with abstract ideas but with embodied experiences, specific people, and local contexts.[17]

Astley and Zahl's insights encouraged me to understand the task of practical theology, then, as a form of 'ordinary pneumatology,' or learning that deals with the concrete 'other,' addressing questions about the embodied, affective, and relational dimensions of life, among others, and that learning and preparing for ministry entails learning particular practices. Indeed, learning for ministry calls forth seeing practical theology as a way of life that involves the whole person and community in the total process of education and formation, both formal and informal, implicit and explicit.[18] It is a holistic endeavor that orients practices, desires, imaginations, and mission, especially on the margins of the church and society, and in the reception of all *charisms* and gifts in Christ's body.[19] Or, as John V. Taylor has written, practical theology attends to the Holy Spirit as that invisible third party who always stands between persons, making them mutually aware and present to one another, particularly in particular contexts, to carry out the church's mission and receive one another's gifts.[20]

I stress this point because the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, who provides the critical principle against which to measure present institutional and educational arrangements in the UMC.[21] There is a 'pneumatological principle' that is 'Christo-morphic,' or taking Christ-shaped patterns of living, which embodies love (1 Jn. 4:19): i.e., the Spirit acts from beginning to end in bringing people into a relationship with Christ through the church, even though it does not mean specifying the exact forms of the structures appropriate to them.[22] It also does not mean that the Spirit is only located in the church or in manufacturing experiences of the Spirit in an

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[17] Simeon Zahl, 'Feathers and All: On Embodied Experiences of the Spirit,' in *Mockingbird* (Spring 2025), 28-30.
[18] Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit: Rescripting Ordinary Pentecostal Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, chapter 1.
[19] Three articles have been helpful in reflecting on the Holy Spirit in formation and education for this thesis: Jo Whitehead, 'Towards a Practical Theology of Whole-Person Learning: Enriching Youth Ministry through Pneumato-logical Perspectives,' in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 11.1 (2014), 61-73; and Ian McIntosh, 'Formation in the Margins: The Holy Spirit and Living with Transitions in Part-Residential Theological Education,' in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 11.2 (2014), 139-149; and Helen Collins, 'The Communal Reception of the Spirit's Gifts of Grace: Re-Imagining a De-colonized Church of England Theological Education,' in *Practical Theology* 17.5 (2024), 416-429.
[20] John V. Taylor, *Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 19.
[21] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 402.
[22] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 123-124.

educational setting, but rather that the Spirit remains open to move where the Spirit moves (Jn. 3:8). Instead, it asks what conditions need to be part of a total process of education and formation that remain open to this possibility to encounter the Spirit.

In other words, this principle offers a way to assess whether such structures and activities in the UMC cultivate communion, in terms of inclusiveness and collaboration, rather than discrimination, competition, or other 'isms' (such as clericalism).[23] It investigates whether the UMC embodies the characteristics of God's household through ministerial practices oriented toward these ends, which are viewed as essential ingredients for gaining practical wisdom or pastoral know-how for ministry.

Therefore, to enrich this principle further, I draw on Johannine material, especially concerning ecclesiology, pneumatology, and Christology. I do so because these areas overlap in the Johannine literature and engender what I consider to be rich theological reflection along the following: as the Father does, so the Son does; as the Son does, so the disciples are to do; and, as the Spirit abides or indwells the disciples, so the disciples are to abide in and be indwelt by the Spirit. This logic, as David Ford has noted, makes Johannine material a creative resource.[24]

Indeed, John's use of the verb *menein* reinforces this choice to use this material and to highlight what Justo González has argued: the essence of the church is the essence of theological education, or a deep communion exists between the Triune God and the fellowship of the church, which influences the way theological education is carried out.[25] It is an insight that bolsters what I propose for a Methodist Meeting House of Formation, whose 'scaffolding' John's Gospel goes on to provide, and John Wesley's 'house of religion' serves to fill out, with the church understood as a 'social means of grace.' I will discuss these dimensions of my proposal in Chapters 7 and 8.

Therefore, as I move toward a Methodist Meeting House of Formation that is practice-oriented, I indicate how I arrive at it by first noting how local pastors responded to the pictures I invited them to describe their experiences of the Spirit, and second, by suggesting that local pastors, despite denominational demands and academic requirements, are indwelt by the Spirit as

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[23] Ibid.

[24] David F. Ford*, The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 9; and John Ecclestone, *The Scaffolding of Spirit: Reflections on the Gospel of John* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987), 1-3.

[25] Justo L. González, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), ix.

they learn how to minister in their local contexts: they are sacramental blessings to one another, as they journey toward holiness of heart and life.

It is a dynamic movement that highlights how education and formation are part of the Holy Spirit's movement: the Spirit *educates* and *forms* local pastors in the ways of practicing Jesus, often outside formal academic settings. This 'dialectical' activity is part of the learning process as local pastors engage in learning while doing ministry, which is one potential advantage of the Course of Study: its proximity to local pastors and ministry contexts.[26] It is also why I am proposing a practice-oriented model in reclaiming an essential Wesleyan dimension of ministerial formation (learning by doing) and exploring how to transcend educational differences in local pastors' backgrounds (learning together): local pastors learn ministry by practicing it and, in doing so, grow in practical know-how through reflection with others— a form of holiness by being Spirit-indwelt.

1.3 Methodology

At the beginning of the chapter, I provided a Case Study to describe how pastors in the UMC, whether licensed or ordained, may experience the end of their seminary training and/or Course of Study as part of their journey into UMC ministry. It represents the broader horizons within which my research takes place, set against a complex set of structures, procedures, and practices.

To approach my research, then, and to understand these wider horizons, I utilized Mark Cartledge's model of researching Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations: Cartledge's methodology for using empirical qualitative and quantitative methods emerged for me during the initial phases of this project, but his overall approach allowed me to visualize what I was doing in a way that would provide me with what he calls a 'pneumatological intervention,' which would allow for 'rescripting' or reshaping the Course of Study.[27] His methodology aligned with Eugene Rogers' pneumatological argument as well: that the 'recovery of robust Spirit-talk' in the church does not run around the use of empirical research methods but through them, as a theology that would reject such methods would itself be characterized as anti-incarnational, if not

[26] D. Stephen Long, 'The Advantages of the Course of Study School,' in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 47.2 (1992), 5-6.

[27] Mark J. Cartledge, *Charismatic Glossolalia: An Empirical-Theological Study* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1-5; and Mark J. Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 26.

anti-pneumatological: the church is subject to empirical and sociological analysis, which is rooted in the experiences of and practices in the church.[28] It was a position that also echoed Ola Tjørhom's concern that this kind of work must also be done through outward, empirically recognizable means and in particular places, not vague or elusive.[29]

Cartledge's methodology helped me to keep these theological concerns in the foreground. In particular, his use of Andrew T. Lincoln's work on the Johannine materials regarding testimony proved invaluable, as I would see the 'testimonies of the Spirit' by local pastors in the Course of Study as a particular means of social knowledge which could be integrated with other forms of knowledge.[30]

Therefore, Cartledge's research model provided a framework for approaching, gathering, and interpreting the data. His emphasis on 'going back and forth' along and between the four research axes – practical theologian, lifeworld, practical theology/theory, and Wesleyan tradition – assisted me in visualizing more concretely the research's 'givens,' or how theology is itself a historical undertaking within which Christians live and work: research is itself a spiritual and empirical practice, carried out as learning a new craft for the purpose of building up the church's witness and mission—first, by taking into account the broader movement of research, or 'searching, encountering, and transforming' phases, and, second, the detailed steps of 'questioning, engaging, analyzing, re-questioning, re-engaging, re-analyzing, and proposing or recommending' new practice.[31] They are part of a 'dialectics of the Spirit,' or a process that unfolds by attending to these different parts of the areas of knowledge.[32]

For Cartledge, then, the research can start in any number of places: e.g., it can begin in the 'lifeworld,' or, in my case, the Course of Study, as the relevant research context; or it might begin with the practical theologian (with me), wanting to test a hunch. Yet it might also start with conversations in theological literature that constitute the broader landscape or background

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[28] Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources Outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 55; and cf. Johannes van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Kampen: J.H. Kok Publishing House, 1990), 33.
[29] Ola Tjørhom, *Visible Church—Visible Unity: Ecumenical Ecclesiology and 'The Great Tradition of the Church'* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2004), 99.
[30] Mark J. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 59-60; cf. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 364-367, 230; Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony in the Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2010), 17; Mark J. Cartledge, *Testimony: Its Importance, Place, and Potential* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2002), 9.
[31] Mark J. Cartledge, 'Practical Theology and Empirical Identity,' in *European Journal of Theology* 7.1 (1998), 39.
[32] Ibid., 28.

discussion of the research, as well as with the theologians' own ecclesial or denominational setting, or, in my situation, with the Wesleyan tradition. All of these are important, especially as they engage with what Cartledge calls the grand narrative of the gospel, or, as I will show in Chapter 7, with the Gospel of John and John's First Letter to bolster my model. The process is dynamic.

The point I found helpful, however, was not to get carried away with my research starting point, but to understand the research movement within the poles and along the axes to generate new insights and knowledge, aiming at transformation. The detailed description of the 'dialectics in the Spirit' opened a way to wrestle with the givens of the research.[33]

Yet, a limitation of Cartledge's model was his tendency to conflate the grand narrative of scripture with critical theory. It is one of the reasons I utilized the Johannine material: John's Gospel, in particular, reminded me as a practical theologian of the need to guard against all forms of domestication and manipulation of the Spirit, as the Spirit blows where it wills (Jn. 3:8). The danger always exists to conflate or reduce any part of the research and to state more than can be said. However, as I will show in Chapter 8, within the Wesleyan tradition, the primacy of praxis can also offer a way to avoid such moves by remaining open to ongoing critique.[34]

1.4 Personal Impetus for Research

I began working with licensed local pastors at the age of eighteen when I felt called into the ministry. I served alongside them while in college. I didn't know about the difference in status between a licensed local pastor and an ordained elder until I went through college and seminary and became an ordained elder myself. Then, I learned more about it when I began teaching in the Course of Study.

However, as I explored the Course of Study and its approach to preparing local pastors for ministry, I increasingly felt a disconnect between what local pastors were experiencing in their churches and the Course of Study's educational format, which seemed geared toward academic performance. I didn't understand why academic performance was so emphasized, since there was no academic credit; it was only required to keep their license to preach. Yet this was part of the program's structure: local pastors were expected to maintain their letter grades (above a 'C' average) while serving in their churches, keeping up their grades so that they could

[33] Pete Ward also makes this point about practical theological research in *Introducing Practical Theology*, 4-6.
[34] See also Helen Collins in *Reordering Theological Reflection* (London, SCM, 2020), 110.

maintain their license to carry out the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service, as well as making sure they took all twenty classes in five to eight years.

Over time, I began to look upon licensed local pastors with what Michael de Certeau calls 'astonished admiration,' or that sense of wonder that Certeau felt when looking upon the cooks and workers of Paris: why do they do what they do? [35] How do they remain devoted to ministry in a denomination that doesn't always honor or respect them as 'real pastors' and that, as some local pastors in this research indicated, views the Course of Study as less than seminary, which is assumed to be the standard for theological education. Local pastors appeared to demonstrate surprising commitment to their calling and to being indwelt by the Spirit, even amidst what Certeau coins the 'jungles of functional rationality,' or, in this research, the UMC's 'cumbersome bureaucracy' and 'incoherent polity.[36] Here, I asked, What prevents the UMC from setting aside and invoking the Holy Spirit upon those who are also carrying out the same priestly acts as the ordained?

My research emerges out of these experiences and concerns. It also occurs within schism, decline, and disaffiliation in the UMC, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, racial unrest, and political strife, or during what Don Saliers has noted is a 'season of deep trauma.'[37] This season included a large number of local pastors leaving the UMC.[38]

Yet it was also a time of abiding and remaining: all the local pastors who participated in my research decided to remain in the UMC. As I will share in Chapter 7, it was this kind of faithfulness that reminded of Certeau's insights, as mentioned above, and brought me into conversation with the Gospel of Jesus: I realized more and more how rich the verb *menein* was to understand how local pastors not only were faithful, abiding in their vocations, but also how they were indwelt by Spirit in their studies and ministries, often in ways that were sacramental, or mutually encouraging one another, especially as friends (1 Jn. 1:5-1; Jn. 13). Indeed, the metaphor of abiding or indwelling became for me an interpretative key for the data.

In fact, the concept of *menein* more broadly spoke to my own journey as well, or to keep what Charles Wesley called holding together, if not abiding in, knowledge and vital piety, as set

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[35] Michael de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xiii-xiv.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Don Sailers, *Where Do We Go from Here? Honest Responses from Twenty-Four United Methodist Leaders,* compiled by Kevin K. Slimp (Knoxville, TN: Market Square Publishing, 2019), 167.
[38] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'A Lewis Center Report: Disaffiliating United Methodist Churches, 2019-2023: Final Report' at www.churchleadership.com.

forth in his famous hymn 'Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost': 'Unite the pair so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety: Learning and holiness combined.'[39] As an heir to Wesleyan and Pietist traditions, I take these words literally to heart, but without disconnecting them from the mind. Growing up in homes with roots in German Pietism and American Methodism, I value this outlook: faith needs to be living and active, vital and knowledgeable, where truth abides.

Yet, as noted above, there has always been a distinct relationship between the formative and the educational in my own ministerial journey: as a 'reflective practitioner,' I don't see the formative and the educational as opposites but as two sides of the same coin, conjoined for the sake of the church's mission, leading out but also formed in. In college and seminary, for example, I received what I would call a classical theological education, focusing on core areas of study (e.g., the Bible, church history, ethics). Once in the parish, however, I realized I needed more grounding in the practical. It is why I sought to learn spiritual direction with the Benedictines, mentoring in leadership at Perkins School of Theology and Ashland Theological Seminary, family systems with Rabbi Edwin Friedman, and an emphasis on evangelism and missiology with William J. Abraham and Andrew G. Walker, whose efforts in creating the Polycarp Community played a large role in lifelong learning, including Durham University. These were formative experiences, but not without critical thought.[40]

In addition, I found myself leading others in these formative and educational endeavors, including creating a new statewide ecumenical organization, working with ordinands transitioning from seminary into ministry, practicing spiritual direction and theological supervision, leading undergraduates in spiritual formation practices, and instructing local pastors in the Course of Study. I also partnered with other colleagues to educate congregations through the Wesleyan Doctrine Series with Wipf & Stock and Wesley's General Rules.[41] These efforts were also part of my ongoing engagement with William J. Abraham's *The Logic of Evangelism* as an entrance point into practical theology and catechetical initiation.[42] My own sense of

[39] Charles Wesley, 'Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' at www.sifalyrics.com.
[40] Andrew D. Kinsey, 'The Polycarp Community,' in *William J. Abraham: A Theological Profile*, edited by Michael J. Gehring and Andrew D. Kinsey (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2024), 227-241.
[41] D. Stephen Long with Andrew D. Kinsey, *Keeping Faith: An Ecumenical Commentary on the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012); and Michael G. Cartwright with Andrew D. Kinsey, *Watching Over One Another in Love: Reclaiming the Wesleyan Rule of Faith for the Church's Mission* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011).
[42] Andrew D. Kinsey, 'Evangelism as Initiation,' in *The Logic of Evangelism Revisited,* edited by Michael J. Gehring, Andrew D. Kinsey, and Vaughn W. Baker (Eugene: Pickwick, 2019), 44-55; and Andrew D. Kinsey,

indwelling and being indwelt by the Spirit encompasses these activities and demonstrates my desire to embody, in practice, what John Wesley called the 'sum of all religion'— loving God because God first loved us — especially in forming and educating local pastors (1 Jn. 4:19).[43]

1.5 Chapter Summaries

I have divided this thesis into the following chapters, with chapters 2, 3, and 4 providing essential background to the research, and chapters 5, 6, and 7 focusing on research methods, research data, and data analysis or interpretation. Chapter 8 is my constructive proposal, and Chapter 9 is the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2 of this thesis focuses on the *background* discussions in practical theology and theological education. This chapter investigates key theories and debates about conversations since the 1980s on the role of practical theology and ways of conceiving its relationship to theological education. The chapter delves into how practical theologians have characterized this relationship, as well as ways to reimagine theological education in the process. I argue that, in these discussions, a pneumatological gap has existed in both practical theology and theological education, and that it has affected how American Methodists have wrestled with similar questions.

Chapter 3 provides the 'lifeworld' of this research, or information, description, and history of the Course of Study. Here, I explain how the Course of Study relates to licensed local ministry within the UMC's theology of ministry, and I outline the early formative process for local pastors and ordinands. I also take time to stipulate how the UMC moved away from ordained 'local elders' and its implications for the church's ecumenical commitments and its own history. In addition, to clarify what this formative process into UMC ministry involves, I *reintroduce* Susanna, Kity, John, and Charles from the Case Study to further share the steps and the differences among licensed local elders, elders, and deacons, as well as the place of the Course of Study.

Chapter 4 is the literature review, in which I engage with three theologians in North America: Cathleen K. Cahalan, Amos Yong, and James K. A. Smith. In this chapter, I explore their work and the ways they understand the Spirit's role in theological education. I note how

'Unfinished Evangelism: Christian Believer and *The Alpha Course* as Forms of Catechetical Training for the Ancient-Future Church,' in *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education* 17 (2002), 51-66.

[43] John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 2000), 915.

their arguments differ and overlap, and how I seek to extend my own argument for a practice-oriented model of ministerial formation and education.

In Chapter 5, I outline the methods I used in this research, including data collection, access, and initial interpretation. I start the chapter by sharing how I gained access to local pastors across the country and the process I followed. I also refer to the Appendices, including the questions I asked in the sharing groups, the format, and the pictures I showed to invite responses. I then describe how the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* figure predominantly in the research and thematic analysis, hinting at preliminary themes.

Chapter 6, the Data Chapter, presents the data and information I gleaned from the research sample transcripts, the questionnaire, and images that local pastors chose to describe their experiences of learning and the Spirit in the Course of Study. This chapter thematically breaks down the sample and who participated. I highlight how I arranged the chosen pictures and the responses from local pastors. I show how the four major themes surfaced after further engagement with the data.

Chapter 7 is the Analysis and Interpretation of the data. Reflecting on the questions I asked in the sharing groups and keeping the Spirit as forethought rather than an afterthought, I bring together the data, the literature review, and pieces from theological education into conversation. Here, I bring the Gospel of John and John's First Letter into the project to enrich the practice-oriented model of formation I propose. I see this step in the research as part of 're-scripting' or reimagining the Course of Study, providing the 'scaffolding' for my Methodist Meeting House of Formation.

In Chapter 8, I further develop the framework of the Methodist Meeting House of Formation and draw on John Wesley's metaphor of Methodism as a 'house of religion' to flesh out the inner workings of the 'House' I advocate. I explore Wesley's 'house of religion' and argue that it provides a way to move formation and education toward a practice-oriented model and beyond the split between theory and practice. The primacy of Wesley's practical theology of praxis also helps orient my model. Yet I also contend that, for my proposal to gain credence, the UMC must also be grounded in the wider catholic and apostolic witness of the ecumenical church, while also reclaiming the role of 'local elders' as a ministerial order. I contend that the administrative procedure of licensing often mirrors the managerially prescribed ways in which local pastors are formed and educated in the Course of Study: indwelling the Spirit and being

indwelt by the Spirit entails the entire formation and educational process, from the beginning of the call into ministry to the end of ordination.

In Chapter 9, I summarize my thesis argument and process and offer recommendations for future research. I also note the contributions I consider this research to make, even amidst challenging denominational decline and division: the role for local pastors will only grow.

Chapter 2
Background Discussion:
Practical Theology and Theological Education

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide *background* on discussions in theological education and practical theology that inform the broader context of my research. In it, I focus on the conceptual arguments that have influenced conversations in theological education and practical theology, primarily in the United States. The central claim I make is that theological education and practical theology have often overlooked, if not neglected, the Holy Spirit in the education and formation of those preparing for ministry. I argue that by foregrounding the Spirit, we can attend more creatively to the importance of the 'lived' or 'ordinary' and disclose the wider nexus of practices and dispositions that shape local pastors. It is why, in my research, I sought to discover how licensed local pastors may have experienced the Holy Spirit during their formation in the Course of Study. I wanted to test my hunch about the perceived lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the preparation of local pastors and its implications for ministry.

In doing so, I also wanted to explore if they shared my perception about the Course of Study's overall academic focus. In this chapter, I provide what I see as the relevant backdrop to how practical theologians and theological educators approached these conversations.

I break down the chapter as follows:

I conclude the chapter by summarizing key points and arguing that the failure to attend to the Holy Spirit creates situations in which theological education can easily become decontextualized (if not abstract) and that ministerial formation, especially for local pastors in the Course of Study, can be reduced to 'gaining credits,' rather than learning to embody practices that are constitutive of ministry. Further, I contend that the UMC inhabits an overly managerial or administrative social imaginary that inhibits the Course of Study from realizing its potential to

shape local pastors for the church's mission in the world.[44]

2.2 Defining and Placing Practical Theology in Discussion

. In Chapter 1, I used Mark Carltedge's methodology of practical theology and empirical research to describe the way I approached the data. I did so to stress how I view the practical theological task as one of moving 'to and from' between four essential research areas: a) the practical theologian (me), b) Wesleyan spirituality, c) the context of the Course of Study, and d) practical theology and/or theory. That is, I envisioned my work as part of what Cartledge calls the 'dialectics of the Spirit,' or the constant discerning of God's presence in the lives of those who participate in the Course of Study as local pastors.[45] It was an effort to sustain ongoing reflection on the particulars of faith, to reshape practice, and to reclaim a Wesleyan emphasis on formation.[46] As such, it was an approach that resonated with the broader practical theological field in disclosing the undeclared norms, values, and metaphors that expressed what local pastors experienced in the Course of Study.[47]

I begin this section with this methodological reminder to clarify my understanding of practical theology and to use Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's helpful outline to describe it. Miller-McLemore sets out four ways to understand practical theology: a) a way of life, b) a method, c) a part of a curriculum, and d) a professional discipline.[48] All four dimensions of practical theology are distinctive yet interconnected. In this research, I approach practical theology as essentially a way of life that shapes the praxis of those who serve in the church, though not exclusively. That is, methodologically, as stated above, I view practical theology as beginning with concrete, everyday concerns and moving toward reflection and action, engaging with the Spirit.

However, as Miller-McLemore contends, practical theology as a 'way of life' often

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[44] Charles Taylor describes a social imaginary as a 'largely unstructured and socially held understanding of the way things are and ought to be: an implicit grasp of social space' supported by a repertoire of collective actions. I contend that the social imaginary in the UMC functions to keep local pastors out of sight through administrative procedures and the Course of Study, which continue to operate within an academic paradigm; cf. *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 171-176.

[45] Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives,* 28-29.

[46] Kenneth M. Loyer, *God's Love through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 207.

[47] Pamel D. Couture, 'Practical Theology at Work in the United Methodist Church,' in *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times,* edited by David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 566-567.

[48] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 'Introduction: The Contributions of Practical Theology,' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 1-20.

intersects with understanding practical theology as a 'method,' or as the utilization of research methods and practices to enrich faithful ministry.[49] As I will share in Chapter 5, I used several research methods to understand the experiences of local pastors. In doing so, I recognized that such methods and practices did not occur in isolation, but were part of interpretation and integration as well: the aim was to employ them to understand and reenvision the Course of Study.

Therefore, practical theology, as a way of life and as a method of research, overlaps with and extends my understanding beyond its role as part of a theological curriculum and a professional discipline, without discounting them.[50] Indeed, I view practical theology more as cultivating pastoral 'know-how' or wisdom (*phronesis*) that contributes to the life of the church's ministry as much, if not more than, to the academy.

Here, I diverge from those models of practical theology within the more 'encyclopedic' structures of theological education, or from those that I see siloing it within a predetermined fourfold curriculum of Bible, church history, theology/ethics, and the practical areas of ministry, such as preaching and pastoral care.[51] As Mary McClintock Fulkerson has also contended, this division has often confined practical theology to clergy formation and has been validated only by what professionals considered 'scientific' pursuits within particular disciplines (*Wissenschaft*).[52] This frequently meant that the 'practical,' or even soul-forming, wisdom of the past (*paideia*) was overlooked, leaving out the complexities of lived faith. Structural dimensions of political and religious contexts, as well as the power dynamics within them, and the socially located character of all knowledge and the theories that inform them, were also not addressed within this framework.[53]

I find Miller-McLemore's outline of practical theology, then, along with McClintock Fulkerson's critique, helpful, as they highlight the complex relationship between practical theology and theological education. They disclose tensions between the two, but also point to the need to envision the practical theological task as one of engaging holistically and inter-disciplinarily to understand and reshape ecclesial practice, which involves integrating various

[49] Ibid., 10-11.
[50] Ibid., 11.
[51] Ibid., 7.
[52] Ibid., 11.
[53] Ibid.; cf. Mary McClinktock Fulkerson, 'Theology and the Lure of the Practical: An Overview,' in *Religion Compass* 1.2 (2007), 295-296.

forms of knowledge in theological education, without falling prey to mere technique or skill-building, yet remaining theological from beginning to end.[54]

It is why I define practical theology as a spiritual practice that seeks to discern and indwell and is indwelt by God's Spirit for the sake of the church's ministerial praxis. It is a definition that I see resonating with Bonnie Miller-McLemore's definition of practical theology as a kind of 'liturgy or work of the people' in praising, arguing with, and responding to God's presence in many contexts.[55] It is also a definition that echoes Methodism's own history of practical theological engagement, namely, remaining open to the Spirit to reshape, reclaim, and renew the church's practices for the sake of mission.[56] Here, I see empirical qualitative research as integrated with, and intended to be part of, the practical theological endeavor to carry out faithful ministry and to inform theological education.

Yet I want to continue to refine my definition of practical theology by bringing Robert Pazmiño's insight into the discussion. According to Pazmiño, practical theology must have a pneumato-logical focus, enriching theological education and formation. In particular, practical theology must attend to the Holy Spirit as the One who teaches: i.e., to how the Spirit leads (or *educes*) people out of their preconceived ideas, biases, and practices; as well as 'forms in' them the affections and practices of Christ's ministry (or *paideia*).[57] This 'leading out' and 'forming in' are part of the same movement of the Spirit. By seeking to indwell and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, practical theology guides theological education toward acquiring pastoral 'know-how' and attending to all aspects of education and formation involving the person and the community. The aim of practical theology in this process, then, is not only to disclose and reshape the values, norms, and practices that are part of education and formation, but also to be open to God's life-giving Spirit.[58]

Such a focus on this Spirit-movement, however, does not exclude the more 'academic' aspects of practical theology or theology within theological education; instead, it recalibrates

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[54] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 'Practical Theology, Pedagogy, and Theological Know-How,' in *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 187.
[55] Ibid., 2.
[56] Couture, 'Practical Theology at Work,' 566.
[57] Robert W. Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher: Theological Basics in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 100; and Peter C. Hodgson, *God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999), 6-7.
[58] Pazmiño, *God Our Teacher*, 100; Couture, 'Practical Theological Work,' 566.

them, if not intensifies them, toward their true end: the gaining of pastoral wisdom as integral to a life of holiness. In other words, if practical theology aims to cultivate pastoral wisdom as critical to ministerial praxis, challenging practices and norms, etc., then theological education must also be geared toward a broader vision of integration within the Spirit. Here, practical theology does not abandon 'critical thinking' or 'subject-centered' scholarship, but places them in the service of theological education to move more deeply into a way of life of loving and serving God. Surprisingly, as I learned in this research, such 'academic' aspects of theological education in the Course of Study were not disabling.[59] Instead, what was disabling was the perceived 'attitudes of intellectualism' by instructors, which were considered condescending.[60] Such perceptions, I contend, raise questions as to what constitutes 'academic' and how it relates to the Spirit's role. Yet such perceptions also raise questions about how instructors present pedagogically focused, well-prepared materials that are oriented toward the practice of ministry.

Therefore, viewing practical theology more as a way of life or a work of the people than as part of the encyclopedic curriculum can clarify these distinctions and their interrelationships. In addition, it can enrich theological education by intentionally indwelling and being indwelt by the Spirit in life-giving praxis by attending to formation in the 'ordinary.' It is why I see practical theology as 'ordinary pneumatology' in addressing not only the individual experiences of the Holy Spirit but also aspects of the broader ecclesial imaginary, including denominational polity and structures, in which the Course of Study relates, attending to all life and experience.

2.3 Pneumatological Deficit in Practical Theology?

A driving force in this research was my concern about a 'pneumatological deficit' in practical theology and theological education.[61] As I discovered, this concern was not entirely unwarranted, as theologians have tended to place more emphasis on Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology than pneumatology.[62] Eugene Rogers, for example, has captured this sentiment well by noting how many theologians often go about their work as if there is 'nothing the Spirit

[59] David Heywood, 'Why Does Academic Theology Disable the Ministry?' in *Practical Theology* 15.4 (2022), 354; and Ellen T. Charry, 'To What End Knowledge? The Academic Captivity of the Church,' in *Theology in Service of the Church*, edited by Wallace M. Alston, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 74-74.
[60] 'Amber' (SG1/PI) from North Carolina was a local pastor who expressed frustration at how she felt one of her instructors told her class that he couldn't do research in the library because he 'had' to teach their class. .
[61] Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit: Interventions in Practical Theology*, chapter 1.
[62] Daniel Castelo*, Pneumatology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2015), 2.

can do that the Son can't do better.'[63] Wolfhart Pannenberg also has referenced this insight by arguing that 'there is almost no other subject in modern theology so difficult to deal with as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'[64] Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit remains the 'Shy Person in the Trinity' or the 'Cinderella' of theological study.[65]

Other theologians have made similar observations. Elizabeth A. Johnson has also voiced frustration when she wrote about how 'forgetting the Holy Spirit' in theology revealed large blind spots: the Spirit often lagged considerably behind reflection on God and the church.[66] In addition, Matthew Levering has suggested, though more cautiously, that the 'contemporary widespread sense of the theological neglect of the Spirit – a neglect that is far more perceived than real – was not all fancy, but that it may come from our shame at our lack of holiness and/or our embarrassment about the church's seemingly lack of unity and holiness.'[67] His critique, along with others, reiterates a perceived lack of attention to the Holy Spirit in theology and in other areas of theological reflection and practice.[68]

The concerns persist, perceived or not. Gerbern Heitnik has pointed out that there remains a crucial need for theologians, especially practical theologians, to address how the church understands the Holy Spirit and the relation of the Spirit's work at the experiential level. Heitnik writes,

> The central problem practical theologians continue to face is the hermeneutical question about the way in which the divine reality and the human reality can be connected at the experiential level. The question focuses attention on the pneumatological basis of

[63] Eugene F. Rogers Jr., *After the Spirit*, 33.
[64] Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'The Workings of the Spirit in Creation and the People of God,' in *The Spirit, Faith, and the Church*, edited by Wolfhart Pannenberg, Avery Dulles, and Carl Braaten (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 13.
[65] Frederick Dale Bruner and William Hodern, *The Holy Spirit: Shy Person of the Trinity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); and G. J. Sirks, 'The Cinderella of Theology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,' in *Harvard Theological Review* 50.1 (1957), 77-89.
[66] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1992), 128
[67] Mathew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 163.
[68] Kirsten Kim, for example, writes about how, until recently, the Holy Spirit has been essentially 'ignored' and remains 'ornamental'; cf. Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007), 2-4; George Marsden makes a similar point by noting the ways in which Christian scholarship is 'remarkably confused by the mix of divine and human agencies–'confused as a football game in which half the players are invisible' concerning the Spirit; cf. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 94-95.

> the theological theory of action. The fundamental choice to be made in this regard affects the daily *praxis* of the church.[69]

Heitnik's insight aligns with Mark Cartledge's arguments that practical theologians have neglected the Holy Spirit and, in doing so, the concrete dimensions of the church's life.[70] Indeed, Cartledge wants to create a new 'manifesto of the Spirit' in practical theology to address this 'pneumato-logical gap.'[71] Clare Watkins has also made a similar observation: a new set of questions emerges when pneumatology is foregrounded in practical theology, noting how persistent the reality is of people living together 'in the Spirit,' as all reality is God's.[72] Yet both Cartledge and Watkins argue how attending to the Spirit 'widens the horizons' in theology and practice, and how, in doing so, 'epiphanic' moments in research can open up instances to discern where the Spirit might be at work and suggest ways to 'rescript' practice.[73]

These arguments illustrate how practical theology may support theological education by highlighting the significance of lived experiences: the workings of the triune God cannot be separated from ordinary formative questions such as, 'How should we act and relate toward each other?' or 'How should we teach and learn?'[74] In addition, such questions can also be integrated into practical theological research itself, such as a) What is the Holy Spirit doing in this context?, b) How does this activity relate to the Spirit revealed in Scripture?, or c) What is the Spirit saying to the broader church in light of this focus?[75]

As I will outline in Chapter 4, a few theologians are addressing the Holy Spirit in practical theology *and* theological education. These theologians view practical theology more as a way of life and discipleship than as a siloed academic discipline or field; they also see theological education as a practice itself, or a practice with many practices, addressing the broader concerns of the church. What they often do not employ or incorporate, however, in their practical theological work is empirical or qualitative research, despite calling for the need to attend to the particulars.

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[69] Gerben Heitnik, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, and Action Domains – Manual for Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 193.
[70] Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit,* 167, 170.
[71] Ibid., 167.
[72] Clare Watkins, *Disclosing Church*: *An Ecclesiology Learned from Conversations in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2020), 2.
[73] Watkins, *Disclosing Church*, 9, Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit*, 26.
[74] Watkins, *Disclosing Church,* 2-3.
[75] Cartledge, *The Mediation of the Spirit*, 24.

2.4 Pneumatological Deficit in Theological Education?

Yet the task of foregrounding the Holy Spirit in theological education remains contentious, especially when practical theology is not viewed as a way of life but is confined to clerical skills or a professional guild. This confinement has prompted some scholars to view the Holy Spirit as unnecessary in theological education, while others note its consequences. Two key phases of this disputed matter provide background for these reflections and my own journey into this research: the first phase unfolded through a series of articles, focusing on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christian education. A second phase occurred in the 1980s and early 90s, addressing the need to shift the ways the church educates and forms persons for ministry in more holistic ways.

The first phase began with a series of articles in the 1960s in the journal *Religious Education*. Edward Farley's controversial essay, 'Does Christian Education Need the Holy Spirit?', prompted questions about the Holy Spirit and what it might mean for Christian theological education: Was the Spirit even needed?[76] According to Farley, not really: the teacher taught, and the Spirit was only some kind of 'x' factor, which (or who) completed the learning process started by the teacher.[77] Here, what was important was not the Spirit *per se,* but the need to 're-contextualize' the relationship between the Spirit and education, not to abandon the Spirit altogether: i.e., the issue was how to 're-situate' the questions to address them, asking what it meant to teach 'in the Spirit' and what hindered it 'in the flesh.'[78] Farley's response was neither totally dismissive nor fully satisfactory.

Yet Farley's arguments did not go unchallenged. Carol Lakey Hess, in her response articles and later in her dissertation, pushed back, noting how Farley's position 'relegated' the Spirit to the status of a relief pitcher, or as one who would come into the game to reverse a 'loss' and help the team 'win' the educational challenge. Hess suggested that more work on theories of

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[76] Farley's articles left many puzzled at the time. Yet he does try to articulate what it might mean to teach and learn 'in the Spirit' as opposed to teach and learn 'in the flesh,' which he characterized as a 'closed schema'; and 'Does Christian Education Need the Holy Spirit? Part I: The Strange History of Christian *Paideia*,' in *Religious Education* 60.5 (1965), 339-346; and 'Does Christian Education Need the Holy Spirit? Part II: The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christian Education,' in *Religious Education* 60.6 (1965), 427-438.

[77] Farley, 'Does Christian Education Need the Holy Spirit? Part II,' 430.

[78] Ibid.; in the UK, David Heywood's work finds common ground with Lakey Hess's concern by bringing educational theory into conversation with God's revelation in Christ and suggesting how, at all phases of learning and in a person's natural abilities to reason, the Spirit operates and illuminates the path of knowledge and wisdom; cf. David Heywood, *Divine Revelation and Human Learning: A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

education and faith development were necessary to clarify the nature of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and education, and that this relationship needed to be more of a 'forethought than an afterthought': i.e., the Holy Spirit was not some 'ornament' added to the learning and teaching process, but the very power which grounded the whole process itself and upon which the process depended—all 'according to the Spirit.'[79]

Yet the challenge, as Hess went on to state, following the publication of Farley's *Theologia*, runs deeper: if everything is 'of the Spirit' in education, then nothing is 'of the Spirit.'[80] To move beyond Farley's 'God of the gaps' approach, and 'clerical' paradigm as reducing theological education to clergy skills, the church's educational ministries would need to come to grips with 'limits' of knowledge by experiencing the 'otherness of others,' of whom the living Christ works through.[81] That is, according to Lakey Hess, seeking the Holy Spirit in teaching and learning should give rise to 'pedagogies of encounter with the other,' especially those on the margins of the church and society.[82] The Spirit was not confined solely to the church. Instead, the church's 'educating in the Spirit' must tap into the 'redemptive impulse' that empowers participation in God's trinitarian movement: learning to see Christ in the 'other' is how the church educates in the Spirit, as experienced on Pentecost.[83]

A second phase concerning the relationship between the Spirit and theological education occurred in the 1980s and early 1990s, though I contend more implicitly. This phase saw a resurgence of concern with the role of practical theology in the academy and the purpose of theological education itself. Here, the publications of Edward Farley's *Theologia* and David Kelsey's *Between Athens and Berlin* framed theological education in terms of two models: first, broadly, a '*habitus*' model, or 'Athens' model, was a communally grounded form of education, whereby practical wisdom (*phronesis*) was needed to form faith, mainly in those preparing for ministry. Teachers and students were united in a common journey. Yet, as Farley contended, this model had become fragmented, and a unity—or a theologia, i.e., a culturing of the soul or a schooling in character formation —in line with the Greek notion of paideia—was needed to

[79] Lakey Hess, 'Educating in the Spirit,' in *Religious Education* 86.3 (1991), 383-384
[80] Ibid., 385-386.
[81] Lakey Hess, 'Educating in the Spirit' (PhD Dissertation), chapter 5.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., 'Dancing with Grace: Toward a Spirit-Centered Education,' in *Religious Education* 89.3 (1994), 392.

shape people for ministry in the church.[84]

The second model, known as the 'Berlin' model, was more 'encyclopedic' in nature, initially drawn from Friedrich Schleiermacher's attempt to legitimize the place for the training of ministers at the University of Berlin and founded upon modernity's notion of critical reasoning and historical research (*Wissenschaft)*.[85] Here, as noted briefly above, practical theology was viewed primarily as part of a theological curriculum divided into four areas of study: Bible, church history, theology/ethics, and practical ministry training.[86]

Yet, as both Farley and Kelsey argued, these models of theological education tended to clash with one another. The purpose of the *habitus*, or 'Athens,' model, or the focusing on the cultivation of the soul's disposition toward God or truly understanding God, was inclined to become subsumed within the more cognitive or scientific approaches to theological education.[87] Lost were the communal and practical dimensions of learning to the 'Berlin,' or 'encyclopedic,' model, which tended to focus more on the autonomous individual and promoted a more 'linear type of education'--- or one of moving from data to theory to the application of theory to practice.[88] This model was also often associated with a growing 'professional' status of the clergy in society and with reliance on *wissenschaftliche* methods of inquiry to explore subject matters. The whole approach of this model, according to Kelsey, rested on direct forms of communication, in which the teacher-student relationship was that of a teacher in a particular scholarly field with students serving that teacher, rather than teacher and student pursuing truth together.[89]

To be sure, these two models did not explicitly include pneumatology or reference the Holy Spirit. However, they did set the stage for arguments in theological education and the role of practical theology that followed, creating tensions within a broader conversation about how to

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[84] Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 6-11; and Edward Farley, *Theologia*: *The Unity and Fragmentation of Theological Education* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), xi.
[85] Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 68-71; Farley, *Theologia,* chapter 4; and cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline for the Study of Theology,* translated by Terrence N. Tice (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), 89-120.
[86] The four-fold division of the theological curriculum precedes Schleiermacher, even though he is credited with establishing it. It was part of speculative university sciences in the medieval era, often dividing theory from practice and common people; cf. Randy L. Maddox, 'The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline,' in *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 653-655.
[87] David H. Kelsey, *To Understanding God Truly: What's Theological about a Theological School* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 133.
[88] Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 24; Farley, *Theologia,* 131-132.
[89] Ibid.*,* 23.

approach both.[90] As I noted below, these models can miss other accounts of formation that may bring more expansive ways of knowing and learning into the formation equation of local pastors. They can also fail to consider the actual and ordinary experiences of people in formation and education, overlooking other, more imaginative ways to shape pastors — particularly local pastors — for ministry, with concerns on God's presence and agency.[91]

2.5 Turn to Practice and Pastoral Wisdom

These initial background conversations in practical theology and theological education have led to several responses. I note two briefly: first, from Bonnie J. Miller McLemore, and second, from Craig Dyskra. I utilize their accounts to address the above discussions as part of my own framing of the argument for moving toward a practice-oriented model, emphasizing the indwelling Spirit and being indwelt by the Spirit.

First, I explore Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore's critique of the 'Athens' and 'Berlin' models. I do so because she establishes a framework for how she sees them, especially in light of Edward Farley's views on the 'clerical' paradigm (which reduces theological education to clerical skills) and the broader 'academic' paradigm actually at work (which also fails to take concrete practices into account).[92]

In addition, Miller-McLemore observes how Kelsey's 'Berlin' model also overlooks the value of pastoral 'know-how' as a legitimate form of knowledge.[93] Such omissions, she contends, reveal an epistemological bias that should prompt further reflection on the many ways people know and learn as they prepare for ministry: there is more to knowing and learning than mere cognitive assent.[94]

Miller-McLemore's insights are helpful because they offer ways to rehabilitate pastoral 'know-how' or wisdom as crucial to theological education for local pastors. Her arguments show that Farley's 'heady' iteration of *habitus* and Kelsey's encyclopedic 'Berlin' model cannot fully address the everyday challenges pastors face. Indeed, as she argues, the problems facing

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[90] Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 23; Farley, *Theologia*, 53.
[91] James W. Fowler, 'Practical Theology and Theological Education: Some Models and Questions,' in *Theology Today* 42.1 (1985), 43-58.
[92] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 'The Clerical Paradigm: A Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness,' in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 11.3 (2007), 19-38.
[93] Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice*, 162.
[94] Ibid., 162.

theological education are not that it has been captured by a 'clerical paradigm,' reduced to ministerial skills, or lost its unifying *theologia* as *paideia* in forming souls toward God.[95] Instead, according to Miller-McLemore, Farley's and Kelsey's models remain too focused on the 'academic' as the *modus operandi* in theological education, excluding the value of other forms of knowing in education; they remain captive to Enlightenment forms of reason and dismissive of the 'applicational aspects' of the 'how-to-do-things-aspects' of ministry. In fact, as Miller-McLemore suggests, both Farley and Kelsey simply reinforce a binary that, in practice, is more complex, particularly given the challenges of discerning the relationships among *techne, phronesis,* and *Wissenschaft* forms of knowledge*,* to name three.[96]

In other words, Farley's approach to theological education, as *theologia,* or as 'one unifying thing,' and Kelsey's 'Berlin' focus, fails to see more than one way to know, learn, and do theology and thus entails, ironically, a loss of critical thinking itself, of understanding how knowledge learned in concrete practice is essential for shaping pastors.[97]

Further background responses to conversations in theological education and practical theology were provided by Craig Dykstra. Like Miller-McLemore, Dykstra also argues that practical theology is more about a way of life than merely an academic endeavor. That is, the issue for Dykstra, in both practical theology and theological education, is how to offer a richer account of practice, or 'reconceiving' what practice is, from the bottom up, especially along the lines of Alasdair MacIntyre's account of practice, which involves knowing what constitutes the good inherent in the practice shared by others over time.[98] Such a re-conception has implications for theological education and forming people for ministry.

Noteworthy for Dykstra is what practices are and what they are not. That is, practices are not just techniques people do, but are 'the things Christian people do together over time in response to and in light of God's active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.'[99] Such

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[95] Ibid., 163.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 168.
[98] Craig Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice in Theological Inquiry and Education,' in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education,* edited by Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 35-66.
[99] Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, 'A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,' in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, edited by Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 18, 21; cf. Alisdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory,* Second Edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 187.

an account of practices points to those characteristics of practices that involve the whole community and are crucial for the church's mission, such as doing things over time (historical), together (social), for the life of the world (universal), in response to and light of God's presence (transformational), in local settings (contextual), and witnessing to Christ (relational).[100] As Dorothy Bass, Craig Dykstra's colleague, also suggests, these practices are necessarily part of broader historical traditions, which are themselves part of ongoing arguments about what constitutes the good and which shared patterns people desire to participate in.[101]

Therefore, as theological knowledge is gained in a specific community over time through practice, Dykstra's view of practical theology as a way of life also challenges accounts of practical theology as simply a scholarly subdiscipline or as a mere 'head game': practical theology is an embodied practice; it is practice that is life-orienting and identity-shaping and part of the journey into the constitutive practices of the Christian life, which in turn shapes theological education.[102] In Wesleyan parlance, such practices are means of grace, or the 'arenas' of everyday life that are 'recruited' or 'reoriented' in response to God's presence.[103] Christian practices are not just something we 'do,' but are the arenas in which something is done to us, in us, and through us by the Spirit that we could not do ourselves, and beyond what we do together, having the power to place us where we can receive God's grace.[104]

As such, what is needed is not the abandonment of clergy skills or practice, but a richer account of them. As Dykstra writes,

> 'Practices of the Christian faith…are not…activities we do to make something spiritual happen in our lives. Nor are they duties we undertake to be obedient to God. Rather, they are patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy, and presence of God may be made known to us.'[105]

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[100] Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice,' 38-41, 44; cf., Dykstra and Bass, 'A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices,' 18.
[101] Dorothy C. Bass, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5, 8-9.
[102] Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice,' 44.
[103] Dorothy C. Bass, *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5, 8-9; cf. Craig Dykstra, *Growing Up in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, Second Edition (Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999), 43.
[104] Ibid., 63.
[105] Ibid., 66.

In other words, Christian practices must involve the whole person and community in responding to God's indwelling activity. It is why, paradigmatically, all practices are worship, as 'all the practices of daily life come to focus in worship.'[106] The life of worship and praise, with its gestures, rituals, liturgy, and images, is all oriented to a life that bears witness to God and God's forgiving grace in Christ.[107]

Similar to Miller-McLemore, then, epistemologically and pedagogically, Dykstra emphasizes that Christians don't just 'think' their way into practicing ministry, but practice their way into a way of life that involves the entire body, giving rise to knowledge and wisdom.[108] This kind of 'bodily knowing' affects more than the cognitive and includes a broader array of knowing necessary to shape those preparing for ministry: it points to a more integrative disposition that connects the being, thinking, and doing of ministry, and underscores the importance of embodying practices for learning ministry.

Dykstra's call to reconceive theological education along the lines of Christian practices entails a new 'way of seeing more deeply' into ministry contexts, or a 'pastoral imagination' — a form of practical knowledge gained by doing and reflecting on ministry in community with others.[109] This kind of 'learning' is not contrary to 'academic' theology, nor is it considered inferior to 'applied' theology. Instead, engaging the pastoral imagination reconceptualizes the relationship between theology and practice by expanding the ways of knowing and learning to better understand life circumstances.[110] This 'reconfiguring' is aimed toward fostering pastoral know-how to keep the faith community alive or engaged in life abundant, life that is indwelt by God's presence (Jn. 10:10).[111] It is also intentionally focused on the Spirit and attending to the experiences of people in the everyday, which is an essential part of all ordinary pneumatology (1 Jn. 1:1-3).

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[106] Dykstra and Bass loosely base their work on Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of practice, but they norm their understanding of Christian practices in terms of a responsive relationship with God; cf. Dykstra and Bass, 'Christian Practices and Congregational Education in Faith,' in *Changing Churches: The Local Church and the Structure of Change,* edited by Michael Warren (Portland: Pastoral Press, 2000), 254.
[107] Ibid., 254.
[108] Dykstra, 'Reconceiving Practice,' 50.
[109] Craig Dykstra, 'A Way of Seeing: Imagination and the Pastoral Life,' in *The Christian Century* (April 8, 2008), 26-31; cf. Craig Dykstra, 'Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination,' in *For Life Abundant*: *Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry,* edited by Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 41.
[110] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 'Practical Theology and Pedagogy: Reappraising Theological Know-How,' in *For Life Abundant,* 187.
[111] Dykstra, 'A Way of Seeing,' 27.

2.5 American Methodism's Transitions in Theological Education

Placing this research in the relevant context of the above discussions of practical theology and theological education also involves understanding what was happening in American Methodism. This is also part of the backdrop for this chapter. That is, though I will take up what occurred with the Course of Study in Chapter 3 more fully, I want to stress here how the 'eclipse' of the Wesleyan understanding of the church as a 'social means of grace' in the formation of pastors eventually gave rise to a social imaginary that was shaped by denominational bureaucracy.[112] I contend that this shift in ecclesial self-understanding created tensions, especially concerning the status of licensed local pastors and professionalized classes of ministers. That is, by neglecting the Holy Spirit within the practices of the church as a social means of grace, American Methodism's understanding of ministry became subsumed within a 'professionalism' on the one hand and an 'academicism' on the other, often conflating the two, and neglecting the *charisms,* gifts, and wisdom of those not ordained. In the process, local pastors and the Course of Study were frequently perceived as inferior to other clergy educated in seminaries.

In other words, the shift away from the church as a social means of grace, infused by God's Spirit, meant that questions of authority in ministry were often associated with a professionally oriented notion of theological education. The *charisms,* fruit, and vocational wisdom of pastors, particularly local pastors in the Course of Study, were often overlooked and treated differently, even though they were assigned the same pastoral responsibilities as elders.

I see this shift in inhibiting the sacramental authority and ministries of local pastors in the conference as a sign of failing to attend to the Spirit in the Spirit's fullness, in the body, recognizing and affirming all those for ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service.

In addition, I see the shift as part of the loss of the church as a social means of grace and loss of a missional 'order' of 'local elders' for ministry. As a consequence, the Course of Study, rather than a primary community for learning in ministry, is viewed more instrumentally or as less than a 'valid' form of theological education—an administrative appendage. I view these two aspects as distinct yet interrelated, with the whole notion of the Spirit's presence as the bridge toward a practice-oriented model of formation in the Course of Study, accompanied by a

[112] Randy L. Maddox, 'Social Grace: The Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace in American Methodism,' in *Methodism in Its Cultural Milieu*., edited by Tim Macquiban (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1994), 131-160.

ministry order of local elders, indwelling a way of ministry in the life of the church (along the lines of elders and deacons), while being open to the Spirit.

To highlight these transitions and their relation to the broader discussions in theological education, as mentioned above, I build on Randy Maddox's model of the epochs in Methodism's conception of the church and bring it into dialogue with Russell Richey's historical schema on ministerial formation.[113] Both Maddox and Richey help us see the connections among the models I shared above as American Methodists moved away from more communally formative models toward more professionally and academically oriented models of theological education.

I begin with Maddox's outline of Methodism's history into three major epochs as a heuristic tool for understanding key transitions in how Methodists conceived of the church and its implications for the formation of pastors. In doing so, I draw on four defining characteristics that marked Methodist identity and ecclesial practice: a) liturgical worship and prayer, b) communal support, c) ministerial accountability, and d) missional impulse.[114] These four characteristics or marks were like inner furniture in Methodism's household of faith, disclosing what was central to fulfilling the church's mission:

- Epoch #1 - 1772-1816 (Church as Countercultural Community)

As Maddox argues, in this epoch, American Methodism's self-understanding of the church was a countercultural 'means of grace' infused with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Here, Methodists viewed the church as a mission society spreading scriptural holiness and seeking to disentangle itself from both British Methodism and Anglicanism, and as unique in American culture.[115]

But Maddox also notes that other dynamics emerged during this time: liturgical worship and the Eucharist were becoming less frequent, as Methodists no longer used the Anglican parish for the Eucharist or even for Wesley's Sunday Service. However, to compensate for this neglect, Methodists began relying on smaller, intimate settings and established accountability measures, such as 'probationary' membership, upholding the General Rules, and participating in class meetings; the emphasis on proclaiming the gospel by spreading holiness in particular was

[113] Russell E. Richey, *Formation for Ministry in American Methodism: Twenty-first Century Challenges and Two Centuries of Problem-Solving* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2014), chapter 1; and Randy L. Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 131-160.
[114] Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 133-134.
[115] Ibid., 135-138.

prioritized as Methodism swept across the US. Yet, as Maddox notes, Methodists also began to see themselves as a 'concrete community of care,' often at odds with American culture, especially along racial, economic, and gender lines.[116] Here, Methodist practical theology was more about informing ministry than sustaining a curricular regime. Practical theology encompassed a wide range of activities, embodied in ministerial praxis, such as singing hymns, reciting creeds, delivering sermons, writing tracts, using the Book of Common Prayer, and engaging in small groups and bands. Pastors were trained as apprentices within communities, wider circuits, and networks.[117]

- Epoch #2 1816-1900 (Church as Self-Selected Fellowship of Individuals)

During this epoch, Maddox shows how American Methodism moved toward being a 'denomination,' or a voluntary association of like-minded believers, often exalting the individual as 'self-willing' and 'autonomous,' and as part of national identity. This self-understanding, however, came at a price: the Spirit's regenerating work became sidelined, and the notion of the Holy Spirit's habituating activity in the church as a social means of grace was lost.

Other shifts during this phase included the marginalization of worship, and 'social rapport' and 'status' rather than 'ecclesial encouragement' being elevated; accountability for keeping the General Rules and participating in class meetings as part of probationary membership also disappeared; the Spirit's role in formation was also domesticated.[118] Here, the Course of Study began to be overtaken by colleges and seminaries, as well as by the rise of professional clergy. Methodists understood the church more as a 'voluntary like-minded group, seeking civil respectability, than a social means of grace affecting the whole person.[119]

- Epoch #3 1900-1968 (Church as Modern Bureaucracy)

In this epoch, Maddox shares how American Methodism was often identified as the most 'representative denomination' in the US, defined by its ethos of social status among a rising

[116] Ibid., 138.
[117] Ibid., 139-144.
[118] Ibid., 143; cf. A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 92-93, 149-168.
[119] Ted A. Smith, *The End of Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023), 39-44.

white middle class.[120] Technological advances, scientific discoveries, national expansion, and the growth of administrative bureaucracies consumed the church's energy and resources.[121] That is, the church operated as one organization among others, typically mimicking the nation-state and larger corporate entities. Racial segregation also figured predominantly in this conception of church, separating people into geographical conferences while still promoting 'individual' conscience.[122] Yet Methodists also started to view social change in utopian terms, primarily through the influence of the Social Gospel. Here, they accommodated themselves to broader cultural trends, including the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversies and debates in science, notably on evolution. As Maddox writes, American Methodism was still vital during this period, but not in Wesley's sense of the church as a means of grace that forms people's affections and character. Instead, the church was viewed more as a 'business organization' to be managed by mostly white men who were taught seminary-style administrative techniques rather than as part of a mission to spread scriptural holiness.[123] In doing so, Methodists viewed practical theology more as a subdiscipline of theological education rather than as a way of life.

- Epoch #4 (Church in Liminal Space: Present)

Maddox doesn't address the concerns of the present in what he coins as Epoch #4, other than to suggest that the American Methodists, primarily United Methodists, inhabit a liminal space of uncertainty and opportunity. It is unclear what the current situation will entail for the church's witness, amidst rapid change and decline. The stress on ecclesial institutions will persist for the foreseeable future without a definitive strategy to address the challenges. Yet opportunities for transformation will exist.[124]

Maddox's four epochs roughly follow Russell Richey's schema for understanding the different phases of ministerial formation in American Methodism. Richey's outline offers a few more stages that highlight shifts away from a relationally formative community toward

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[120] Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 144. Another example of this middle-class ethos is found in Kevin J. Corn, *Forward Be Our Watchword: Indiana Methodism and the Modern Middle Class* (Indianapolis: University of Indianapolis Press, 2008), chapter 1.
[121] Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 145-148,
[122] On racial segregation during this era, see William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 84, and regarding American Methodism's embrace of militarism and cultural conformity as 'civilizational education,' see D. Stephen Long, *Living the Discipline: United Methodist Theological Reflections on War, Civilization, and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 41.
[123] Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 146.
[124] Ibid., 148.

organizationally managed bureaucracies. These epochs broadly overlap with Richey's as follows:

Maddox's Epochs	Richey's Schema
Epoch #1 - 1772-1816	Counselled by Wesley and Books
Church as Countercultural Community	
Formation as Communal	Collegially Yoked to Mentors
	Course of Study/Accountability
Epoch #2 1816-1900	Collegiate/University Education
Church as Self-Selected Fellowship of Individuals	
Professional Clergy Status	Seminaries Established
Fourfold Curriculum in Place	
Epoch #3 1900-1968	Synthesized Contextualized
Church as Modern Bureaucracy	
Emerging CPE and Field Ed	
Epoch #4 1968-Present	Where to now?
Church as Liminal	
Schism, Fracture, Decline	

I will revisit Richey's schema in Chapter 3, where I provide more detail about the Course of Study. Still, here I note how his stages in ministerial formation roughly correspond to Maddox's three epochs: moving from a formative community as a means of grace to a managed bureaucracy – i.e., Counselled, Collegial, and Course roughly correspond to the communal formative phase of the church as a social means of grace; Collegiate, Seminaries, and Synthesized relate to the more church as voluntary organized denomination. The Liminal stage I take as our present situation, open to questioning and experimentation.[125]

Richey's account also offers a way to understand the central Wesleyan characteristics of each phase of ministerial formation. These characteristics involve ways of living into Wesley's

[125] Richey, *Formation for Ministry,* chapter 1.

counsels, often mediated through books, where ministry was learned by doing it, especially as yoked with other seasoned elders. A community of encouragement also accompanied those entering ministry via a circuit of congregations or classes, and growing in faith over time often entailed recognizing and deploying a pastor's spiritual gifts, fruit, and character.[126] All of these characteristics helped clarify how American Methodists practiced formation more as a way of life than as a means of simply gaining knowledge through a *summa* (Roman Catholic), an *encyclopedia* (Lutheran), or the *Institutes* (Reformed).[127] Indeed, these characteristics were not anti-academic so much as formative and integrative, practicing faith by incorporating people into the church's mission. In this way, Methodism served as an ecclesial prototype that mediated the Spirit and habituated believers through the means of grace in local contexts.[128] Local pastors were part of an ecology of formation that valued and sought to educate the whole person.[129]

2.6 Summary

In *The End of Theological Education,* Ted A. Smith explains how the rise of voluntary associations in America created the conditions for a social imaginary conducive to supporting professional clergy, often mimicking other professions.[130] Denominations as voluntary associations could leverage and persuade like-minded individuals to live in a political polity that secured their freedom as part of the modern nation-state's ethos. The theological dimensions that defined these voluntary associations were incorporated into this framework, as they sought legitimacy and respectability. The problem, as Smith asks, is what happens when this social imaginary that provided the backdrop begins to unravel? How will denominations move forward with fewer 'like-minded' individuals and often with constituencies divided along gender, racial, educational, political, and economic lines? And how will they form people in and for ministry?[131] Smith's insights and questions capture the tensions described in this chapter, which provide the backdrop to my research. Critiques of 'clerical' and 'academic' paradigms that have emerged within these ongoing discussions have given rise to new trajectories, notably in practical theology. Here, as I shared, practical theology is more concerned with a way of life and

[126] Ibid., 15-20.
[127] Randy L. Maddox, 'John Wesley—Practical Theologian?' in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988), 130.
[128] William, J. Abraham, *Methodism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 118.
[129] Dustin D. Benac, 'A Seat at the Table: Affective Formation and United Methodist Higher Education,' in *Christian Higher Education* 14.2 (2015), 128-130, 140-141.
[130] Smith, *The End of Theological Education,* 41,
[131] Ibid., 38-39.

discipleship than with a discipline within a field or subset of pastoral duties. The 'turn to practice' and the emphasis on practical 'know-how' have led to the inclusion of a broader repertoire of ways of knowing and learning to inform theological education and ministerial formation.

In the research that follows, I aim to extend these insights by foregrounding the Holy Spirit as a critical dimension and orienting perspective of these ongoing conversations in theological education. It is a critical pneumato-logical principle, as I stated in Chapter 1. It is also a key part of my argument in that, with the eclipse of the church as a social means of grace, communal forms of theological education often become subsumed within denominational and organizational structures. Instrumental rationality operates in ways that view ministry as a professional occupation, reducing the status of local pastors to an administrative procedure of licensing, and the Course of Study to a form of education confined to an academic program for earning grades to maintain that license. Such an administrative procedure is often enacted outside the annual conference assembly rather than within it, often by neglecting to invoke the Spirit upon those set aside for Word and Sacrament—local pastors.

Yet as I discovered in this research, the picture is more complex. The above discussions in theological education and practical theology, while applicable to framing past and current debates, did not include empirical research and focused only on seminaries, not on programs for training bi-vocational and multi-vocational pastors.

In addition, only Carol Lakey Hess raised concerns about the role of the Spirit in theological education–at least early on, dealing with the concrete 'other.' At the same time, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Craig Dykstra set the stage for moving these discussions in both practical theology and theological education to the importance of pastoral know-how and practice and beyond the Athens/Berlin binary, which typically remained formal, ideational, and abstract, though it did propose a broader vision of 'knowledge.'[132] That is, as I discovered, absent from Farley and Kelsey's framing of these discussions were the concrete realities of the people being educated and formed for ministry.

My concerns in this chapter were to show that their arguments remain important and to set the wider framework for current conversations in theological education. My question is: how

[132] Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995), 10-11.

does foregrounding the Spirit within the Wesleyan tradition shift the formation and education of local pastors toward a practice-oriented model?

In the next chapter, I will share more about the Course of Study as the present context or 'lifeworld' for this research and suggest that, as a program of and for the church's local pastors, it has advantages over other forms of theological education, provided it moves toward understanding theological education as a spiritual practice for shaping pastoral wisdom. In doing so, United Methodists can move in this direction.

Chapter 3

Relevant Context:

Overview of the Course of Study

3.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I argued that licensed local pastors (LLPs) in the United Methodist Church (UMC) remain under-researched. This is particularly true of the Course of Study, the program that trains local pastors for ministry. In Chapter 2, I provided background for discussions in theological education in the US that currently frame debates on ministerial formation, contending that they lack a pneumato-logical focus on practice. My goal was to place my research within these discussions to understand how licensed local pastors and the Holy Spirit remain absent from overall theological reflection and study, and to move toward a practice-oriented model of formation that indwells the Spirit. Through empirical research, I sought to bring these two aspects together to reimagine and reshape the Course of Study, asking how local pastors may have experienced the Spirit in their formation.

In this chapter, I argue that the Course of Study, despite its history of ministerial formation, continues to operate within the encyclopedic, academic paradigm of theological education, *and* that licensed local ministry in the UMC remains captive to a functionalist understanding of ministry. Both of these instantiations, I contend, operate within a managerial imaginary that keeps local pastors away from the public assembly of the annual conference, which is the primary unit of catholicity and apostolicity in United Methodism. They also reflect a pneumatological, if not charismatic, deficit at odds with Methodism's own history of ministerial formation *and* ordering of ministry, not to mention at odds with United Methodism's own ecumenical commitments.[133]

I have broken down the chapter as follows:

[133] Ted A. Campbell, 'The Oral Roberts Option: The Case for Ordained Local Elders (and Local Deacons?) in The United Methodist Church,' in *Quarterly Review*, 24.4 (2004), 358-366.

In the section on how the Course of Study works, I also introduce four characters to highlight how local pastors, like John and Charles, navigate their experiences within it, alongside an elder, Suzanne, and a deacon, Kitty, whose journeys differ. In doing so, I aim to show that their experiences of ministry in the UMC are formative throughout as they journey toward graduation and ordination, which I shared at the beginning of Chapter 1.

3.1 Short History of Course of Study in American Methodism

The Course of Study in American Methodism has a unique history. The first iteration began at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1816, when the Committee on Ways and Means brought a recommendation to establish a 'course of reading and study proper to be pursued by candidates for ministry.'[134] This 'Course' would fall under the guidance of presiding elders in the annual conferences and later bishops who would instruct those who were 'on trial' or 'probation' for ordained ministry. Over time, the Course of Study expanded to require pastors to participate for two to four years.[135]

Annual conferences also began to develop methods for examining candidates for ordination as they went through the 'Course,' typically following the outline of John Wesley's advice on the formation of lay preachers and clergy.[136] The Baltimore Annual Conference, in particular, created a more robust plan for formation in 1817.[137] However, no overarching pattern or standard for the Course existed at the beginning. Instead, the Course was comprised of reading lists and apprenticeship-style components. Yet even during this phase, many annual conferences did not have a Course of Study or create one.[138]

Courses of Study, however, were only part of a wider system of formation and credentialing. American Methodists did not just want ministers who could master reading lists, but who could also display the relational qualities of 'sanctified living' such as life conversion, spiritual fruit, and missional purpose.[139] These characteristics were also broken down according

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[134] Russell E. Richey, *Formation for Ministry in American Methodism: Twenty-first Century Challenges and Two Centuries of Problem-Solving*, 15-16, 34-25.

[135] The phrase 'on trial' denotes the period of examination and confirmation of a candidate who begins the process of ministerial formation through the annual conference; cf., Richey, *Formation for Ministry,* 34.

[136] Unless otherwise stated, all references are to *The Book of Discipline 2016*.

[137] Richey, *Formation for Ministry,* 34-35.

[138] Louis Dale Patterson, 'The Ministerial Mind of American Methodism: The Courses of Study for the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North,, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church: 1820-1920' (Madison, NJ: Drew University, 1984), 17; see also L. Dale Patterson, 'Improvement in Methodist Ministerial Education at the End of the Nineteenth Century,' in *Methodist History* 23.1 (1985), 68-77.

[139] Patterson, 'The Ministerial Mind,' 25-26

to natural abilities, gracious virtues, and acquired learning.[140] In the early stages, the Course of Study was the place where Methodist pastors would gather and affirm such 'outward' characteristics, along with the 'inward' call that persons were discerning. All this took place *before* ordination and election to full membership in the annual conference.[141]

Two turning points in American Methodism prompted critical adjustments in the Course of Study. First, following the Civil War, Methodists began to hear demands for a more 'educated' clergy.[142] The laity were not only dealing with rapid cultural change, but also with higher levels of education amongst themselves. These demands translated into changes in the Course of Study itself, where the church needed to develop more 'substantial' understandings of the Christian faith and devise more specific tools for ministerial practice.[143]

Secondly, Methodists experienced internal tensions, as some leaders felt compelled to establish a 'bulwark' against the growth of theological schools. Methodists increasingly found themselves arguing with one another as they faced the headwinds of intellectual change within and outside the church (e.g., evolution, biblical criticism, social movements).[144] Here, a growing gap formed between those who wanted to maintain the criterion of maintaining clergy as persons who possessed 'regenerate hearts and minds' as they traveled circuits and those who saw the benefits of more 'respectable and managerial' forms of pastoral leadership in stationary appointments in a highly modern society.[145]

As I shared in Chapter 2, Russell Richey's schema of the tensions and shifts in Methodism's approach to ministerial formation provides a helpful heuristic for understanding how Methodists were moving away from communal models of education toward more bureaucratic ones.[146] His eight-fold historical outline serves to locate these changes:

- Counseled Phase – Pastors learn under John Wesley's Imperatives and via books
- Collegial – Pastors learn via yokefellow tutelage and apprenticeship
- Conference – Course of Study Instruction and Accountability to Conference

[140] Ibid., 22-24.
[141] William B. Lawrence, *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2011), 71-72.
[142] Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 224,
[143] Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1920* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1963), 32-33.
[144] Gerald O. McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980), 9-12.
[145] Patterson, 'The Ministerial Mind,' 61-62.
[146] Richey, *Formation for Ministry*, 13-14.

- Collegiate – Establishing College-Centered Educational Efforts
- Seminary – Creating Seminaries to educate pastors
- Synthesized/Contextual – Growth of CPE and Field Education
- Now what? – Liminal Phase of Education and Formation[147]

Richey writes that these phases overlap and build on one another as successive stages. Yet they also, each in their own way, disclose how Methodists tried to maintain the 'soteriological aim' of their theology and practice, while making the shifts, particularly in the Counseled, Collegial, and Conference phases.[148] This soteriological aim, or 'growing in grace,' was marked by a 'learning by doing,' as well as a 'working with' a seasoned elder. All of these aspects were oriented toward moving candidates into ministry as they developed and as far as their character, gifts, and fruit warranted.[149] Here, the covenantal framework of ministry in the annual conferences also helped to see the Course of Study more and more as a 'rite of passage,' and as a maturing in faith and commitment.[150]

Yet, as Richey goes on to write, such phases also tried to maintain the critical 'theological imperatives' that were important to Methodism's identity and mission:

- Living into Wesley's Counsel as outlined in the 'Larger Minutes' and later in the Discipline, counsel mediated by selected books to read.
- Ministry is learned by doing ministry with others.
- Persons are initiated into ministry and nurtured by the community on a circuit, or by those on successive circuits, within a conference, as part of a *connexional* system.
- Growing in and affirming one's spiritual gifts and fruit in ministry.[151]

It is not the purpose of this research to go into the specifics of all the changes in Methodist ministerial formation.[152] However, regarding the education of local pastors, it is essential to acknowledge the tensions that have existed (and still exist) in the UMC, not only in theological education but also in polity and ordination. The Methodist Episcopal Church, a predecessor body of the UMC, in particular, was continually refining the Course of Study and

[147] Ibid., 9-11.
[148] Ibid., 11.
[149] Ibid., 14.
[150] Patterson, 'Improvement in Methodist Ministerial Education,' 68.
[151] Ibid., 14-15.
[152] Other scholars have covered these changes: Conrad Cherry's *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) and *Piety and Profession: American Theological Education*, 1870-1970 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

the status of local pastors to address the concerns of an educated populace: Methodist pastors needed to be 'refined' in the debates of modern society, not just learned in pastoral skills.[153] These tensions only grew within the church as divisions emerged in annual conferences between those who wanted to retain Methodism's distinctive features of 'experiential religion, holiness, and salvation' and those who saw the need to relate the gospel to a changing culture.[154]

This specific shift also presented unique challenges to what Dale Paterson described as the Course of Study's attempt to cultivate a 'common ministerial mind' with a central orienting perspective and an agreed-upon curriculum.[155] That 'common ministerial mind,' however, became fragmented, and questions about 'what to teach?' and 'how it would shape pastors,' along with 'what the mission of the church was about,' became pressing: what language would Methodists use to form clergy? If the formational mission still was to spread scriptural holiness, what would that look like? If it were to address an educated populace, what would that mean?[156]

Methodists debated these questions directly, highlighting the tensions within their respective theological frameworks. The influence of the Social Gospel and more liberal trends in American culture, along with the Modernist-Fundamentalist chasm, meant that Methodists were coming to grips with a variety of ways of understanding sin, holiness, and salvation, not to mention dealing with changes in urban and rural areas.[157] In addition, the role of the pastor was shifting: churches wanted managers, not simply preachers. Pastors needed to be trained to lead the church as any other organization. These transitions meant the church was no longer viewed merely as a 'disciplined mission society,' but as a place like other entities to make the nation more Christian, if not civilized, through other means (e.g., voting, promoting public education).[158]

All these changes necessitated a reevaluation of the methods by which Methodists would practice ministerial formation. In a religiously open marketplace, Methodists would need to 'educate their own.'[159] They would do so by examining how they could gain cultural

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[153] Patterson, 'Improvement in Methodist Ministerial Education,' 69.
[154] Richey, *Formation for Ministry*, 37.
[155] Paterson, 'The Ministerial Mind,' 3-5.
[156] Conrad Cherry writes how tensions between those who espoused evangelical-holiness fervor and those who proposed educated professional clergy began to permeate American Methodism from the mid-19th century to the present; cf. *Hurrying Toward Zion*, 21.
[157] Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*, 51-54.
[158] Paterson, 'The Ministerial Mind,' 265-270; cf. Long, *Living the Discipline*, chapter 1.
[159] Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion,* 19-20.

respectability: Methodists wanted educated clergy, as the Congregationalists and Episcopalians did, but also sought to distinguish themselves from Calvinists and Unitarians.[160] Such a disposition would mean educating clergy by staying 'current' with the world's progress and making sure that, as one Methodist leader put it, 'qualified candidates for ministry would need to know how to write and put together a complex sentence.'[161] Theological education in this vein would change the Course of Study by developing more comprehensive reading lists and providing classes in biblical criticism and systematic theology. The Course would also need to offer classes in management-related skills to ensure a well-functioning church. In short, it would need to go from a credentialing program to more like a seminary.[162]

The Course of Study continued as a primary pathway for theological education and ordination into the 20th century, but it did so by competing more with colleges and seminaries, often lagging, and by changing ordination requirements, expecting more.[163] The experience of ministerial formation also began to move further away from local churches and toward academic scholarship and residential formats, prompting concerns about what the church was teaching candidates for ministry as they left for school.[164] The costs associated with theological education at college and seminary also raised concerns about how Methodists would fund it without individuals incurring debt as they educated their own. This became important following the creation of the UMC in 1968, as the new denomination looked to address the pressures of training clergy for ordination, and the Course of Study became the instrument for educating licensed local pastors.[165]

3.2 Theology of Ministry in the UMC

In the document 'Sacred Trust,' leaders in the UMC have written that its ordering of ministry remains 'gracefully broken.'[166] The statement echoes another document by bishops and

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[160] Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*, 51-52.
[161] E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors*: *A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 125.
[162] Patterson, 'The Ministerial Mind,' 251-255.
[163] Conrad Cherry shows how graduate theological education for training pastors disrupted the network of pastors and the Course of Study in particular; cf. Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion,* 19-20.
[164] Richey, *Formation in Ministry*, 76.
[165] The United Methodist Church created the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) to deal with the costs of forming professional clergy in 1968. This fund, however, continues to shrink due to the large number of churches that disaffiliated in 2021-22, church closures, and declining revenue; cf. Richey, *Formation for Ministry*, 73.
[166] Go to www.gbhem.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ADCA-English-Vol-2-Sec-2-SOM-c.pdf for the document 'Sacred Trust,' which is the UMC's unfolding of a new theology of ministry.

educators in 2003, who stated the UMC needs to address a 'cumbersome bureaucracy' that inhibits ministry and 'confusion' over the UMC's 'incoherent theological understanding of ministry.'[167] The document noted that Methodism originated as a lay-renewal-evangelistic movement within the Church of England, yet still exhibits 'ecclesiological ambivalence' in its ordering of ministry.[168] Interestingly, the document does not mention the Course of Study. Yet, as Richard Heitzenrater has written, Methodists have had no less than twenty ministry commissions on the ordering of ministry since the 1940s to figure out the relationship between theological education, ordination, and the role of local pastors.[169]

Such ambivalence, I contend, raises questions about how the UMC's ordering of ministry can be recast, along lines more consistent with Methodism's own history and ecumenical commitments. In addition, there are incarnational, sacramental, and prophetic dimensions of ministry that can be reconfigured to affirm, if not literally 'see,' local pastors in the conference assembly, celebrating their gifts and rightly invoking the Spirit's presence upon them. Such foregrounding and faithful attention to the Spirit bring these dimensions of ministry into view and address liturgical expressions of ordination, especially regarding those who represent Christ in Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service, including elders and local pastors.[170] Integrating pneumatology into the conversation can point to ways of moving beyond purely intellectualistic forms of education, while also raising concerns about a functionalistic ordering of ministry. Both are interrelated in that they reduce education and licensing to merely administrative procedures.[171]

Therefore, to understand United Methodism's theology of ministry, it is crucial to clarify the two particular categories that provide the basis for the church's ministry: the general and the representative.[172] The 'general' ministry of the church includes all Christians who have been initiated and baptized into Christ's church. Through the sacrament of baptism, God calls and

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[167] 'Foundation Document: A Wesleyan Vision for Theological Education and Leadership Formation for the 21st Century,' 1-16: www.gbhem.org/sites.default/files.
[168] Ibid., 11.
[169] Richard P. Heitzenrater, 'A Critical Assessment of the Ministry Studies since 1944,' in *Perspectives on American Methodism,* edited by Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1993), 431-447.
[170] *Discipline* ¶ 332.
[171] E. Byron Anderson, 'Sacramental Ministry in The United Methodist Church: Postscript – Elders and Local Pastors' (November 18, 2009) at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.
[172] Lawrence, *Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church*, 112-115.

incorporates all persons into 'God's mighty acts of salvation' and gives 'new birth through the water and Spirit.'[173] Such calling and incorporation are communal and are themselves practices of discipleship, grounded in God's love for all and for creation.[174] It is constitutive of the UMC's mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world: in baptism, the Holy Spirit infuses believers with new life in Christ and places them in a covenant relationship with God and each other.[175] It is a covenant derived from Jesus's own life and ministry in the world, as Jesus is both the gift and example of that ministry.[176]

Yet within the general ministry of all believers, God also calls persons to representative ministry: i.e., from within the church's general ministry, God calls persons to represent Christ and use their 'gifts' on behalf of the general, or whole church.[177] According to the *Discipline*, the church is responsible for 'setting aside' those who will share in the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service (Elders and local pastors), or Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice (deacon). This is especially the case with the ordination of elders and deacons, where ordination is understood as a 'visible and outward sign of God's grace,' a gift given to Christ's church through the power of the Holy Spirit; it is a 'holy act' of the church universal that empowers those who manifest an 'inward and spiritual grace' to represent the divine initiative in the community through the church's apostolic and catholic ministry.[178] As a holy offering, rooted in baptism and Holy Communion, ordination bears witness to God's reconciling mission (2 Cor. 5:19). The 'inward' call is accompanied by the 'outward' affirmation of the general church's examination and judgment.

In practical terms, all persons represent Christ in thought, word, and deed. Yet this particular Methodist understanding of ministry means that the 'general' and the 'representative' are inseparable. The representative exists only by virtue of the general; the general and the representative are formative of one another: the general must take responsibility for the representative.[179] That is, the general must provide methods for forming and educating those who

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[173] *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Church Publishing House, 1992) 87.
[174] Gayle Carlton Felton, *By Water and the Spirit: Making Connections for Identity and Ministry* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1997), 44.
[175] *Discipline* ¶ 127; cf., Felton, *By Water and the Spirit*, 44-45.
[176] *Discipline* ¶ 126 and ¶ 302.
[177] Felton, *By Water and the Spirit*, 44.
[178] 'Sacred Trust,' 4.
[179] Long, 'The Advantages of the Course of Study School,' 7-8.

will represent and lead the church's entire ministry. This will entail offering different educational pathways in the UMC: e.g., for licensed local pastors, it typically means enrolling in the License to Preach School and Course of Study; for those who move into ordination as a deacon or an elder, it means attending seminary.

Yet, regardless of the route, all candidates for ministry in the UMC, if approved, proceed to obtain 'certification' from their District Committee on Ministry (dCOM). This certification is granted upon completion of a weekend orientation retreat, psychological examinations, background checks, and meetings with their local church. Once completed, candidates may then receive a license that allows them to perform all pastoral duties in their assigned church(es).[180] I will show how this process works in the next section.

All these paths will involve everyone moving into what is termed 'provisional' status in their annual conferences: candidates for ministry, whether local or ordained, will come under the guidance of their annual conference, while continuing to be examined by their District Committees on Ministry (dCOM). Such a process will also entail approval in the executive clergy session of the conference or the session of all clergy.[181] This provisional membership may last between 2 and 8 years, depending on circumstances.

It is during this time that provisional members may also receive a license to preach and conduct the sacraments in their local church if they are serving a church while in college or seminary; i.e., students may have the status of 'student-licensed local pastors.'[182]

Yet underlying all these pathways, I claim, is a tension in the theology and ordering of ministry in the UMC: a tension between 'functional' and 'sacramental.'[183] It is a tension that runs through American Methodism, which historically has had to deal with understanding the church as an 'ecclesiastical institution' on the one hand and a 'mission society' on the other, i.e., between the church as a bureaucratic organization and an 'evangelical order within the church catholic-apostolic.'[184] This tension points to what some UM theologians have referred to as Methodism's constant appeal to 'missional necessity' to order and define ministry in ways that will 'work' for the sake of the church's mission, a form of pragmatic reasoning that has

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[180] *Discipline*, ¶ 316.
[181] *Discipline*, ¶ 332.
[182] *Discipline*, ¶ 318.
[183] Rex D. Matthews, *Ministerial Orders and Sacramental Authority in The United Methodist Church and Its Antecedents, 1784-2016* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2018), 105-135.
[184] Ibid., 106-107.

influenced the arguments for having nonordained local pastors serve the sacraments.[185]

The practice of having nonordained local pastors serve the sacraments has often been historically at odds with Methodism's own emphasis on having 'local elders' preside over Holy Communion and baptism.[186] As Karen B. Westerfield Tucker has written, it was not until the General Conference in 1976 that UMs reached a legislative compromise authorizing local pastors to preside over the sacraments, though only in a specific place and for a renewable annual term.[187]

It was a move that Randy Maddox has also argued fell into 'functional' or 'instrumental' modes of ministry: that is, as Maddox has written, the move to have nonordained local pastors conduct the sacraments betrayed deeper sacramental views of ministry in Methodism and established an unnecessary tension between the following:

- The sacramental view of ministry holds that sacramental authority is conferred on the person by God through the ordination rite, when the bishop lays hands on the candidate and invokes the work of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*). The community, or conference, shares in this rite together, as a public witness to Jesus Christ and the church catholic.[188]

- The functional view stresses the authorization by a conference of an individual to assume a ministerial office and to celebrate the sacraments on behalf of a particular congregation (or charge), all of which can be revoked by the conference (or body), and which can end when the person no longer serves at the behest of the bishop; there is no public rite to accompany the person in ministry either through the invocation of the Spirit, the assembly of the people, or the laying on of hands.[189]

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[185] Ibid., 10.

[186] Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 267.

[187] Karen B. Westerfield Tucker writes how, with the formation of the UMC in 1968, nonordained licensed pastors were 'expressly forbidden' to administer the sacraments. She then states that, from 1976 to 1996, General Conferences made compromises to allow nonordained local pastors to serve the sacraments, creating ongoing 'inconsistencies' with past Methodist practice and with other Methodist bodies (notably Pan-Methodist churches). She notes how American Methodists struggle to deal with this tension, saying it is indicative of a 'weak ecclesiology' and a 'poor theology of ordination and sacraments'; cf. *American Methodist Worship*, 267-268.

[188] Randy L. Maddox, 'Ordained Ministry in The United Methodist Church: Some Historical/Theological Perspectives on Present Concerns (UMC Ministry Study Commission at Durham, NC (October 28-30, 2013); for functionalist viewpoints, see Laceye C. Warner, *The Method in Our Mission: United Methodist Polity and Organization (*Nashville: Abingdon, 2014), 16-17, and Thomas E. Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church,* 2006), 166-167. To be fair, Warner and Frank argue for a middle way between functional and sacramental views. However, I am proposing a more sacramental ordering of ministry for local pastors.

[189] Maddox, 'Ordained Ministry'; E. Byron Anderson and Ted Campbell, whose works I noted above, are more in the camp of the sacramental ordering of ministry I am advocating.

Pertinent to this research is my view of licensed local ministry as part of a 'functional' mode of ministry and how the Course of Study serves to form those in this status. Though the UMC grounds its understanding of ministry, both ordained and non-ordained, in the general ministry of Jesus Christ in baptism, a gap exists in how the UMC justifies using non-ordained pastors to serve the sacraments and not viewing local pastors as fully 'visible and outward signs' of God's grace, reduced to an administrative technique, even though the *Discipline* makes it clear that licensed local pastors, like ordained elders, share the same pastoral duties of ministry.[190]

My research does not address the long-standing debate within American Methodism regarding the UMC's ordering of ministry. Others have written about the lack of coherence.[191] However, in terms of ecclesial 'coherence,' I turn to what Nicholas Taylor has shared from an Anglican perspective concerning the theological foundations of ministry and address concerns which relate to ministerial formation: if the UMC lawfully authorizes a person to exercise the functions and office of a priest, they are thereby a priest.[192]

I view Taylor's insight as prescient not only within the internal logic of sacramental authority in the Anglican Communion but also within the church's broader ecumenical context: the UMC's current ordering of ministry does not align with the ecumenical consensus in the landmark document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,* where it agreed with the threefold, historic orders of deacons, elders, and bishops and made it clear that bishops and elders in particular should practice the distinctive responsibilities of presiding at the sacraments.[193] This was also the case in another ecumenical document adopted by the UMC: the *Consultation on Church Union* (or COCU). Here, the UMC, along with all of its Pan-African Methodist partners, recognized the threefold order of deacons, elders, and bishops, which affirmed (again) the role of bishops and elders in presiding at the sacraments, especially Communion, rather than nonordained persons.[194]

Such ecumenical agreements continue to highlight tensions between espoused and

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[190] *Discipline* ¶ 316.
[191] See, for example, Rex D. Matthews' encompassing review of the literature in *Ministerial Order and Sacramental Authority*, 105-109.
[192] Nicholas H. Taylor, *Lay Presidency at the Eucharist? An Anglican Approach* (London: Mowbray, 2009), 107.
[193] *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 14-15, 25-50.
[194] Pan-Methodism includes the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and the UMC; cf. *Consultation on Church Union* (New York: Church Publishing, 1992).

operative theologies of ordination in the UMC. As Byron Anderson and Ted Campbell have argued, these 'inconsistencies' in what is operant disclose how, on 'functional' grounds, the UMC justifies the separation of the appointment of pastoral leadership from ordination for sacramental ministry, and, therefore, from the ministry of LLPs, indicating a less than coherent theology of ordained ministry.[195] Such tensions complicate not only ecumenical agreements just mentioned but Methodism's own theological tradition of having 'local elders.'[196] In separating sacramental authorization from pastoral ordination, and by noting 'missional necessity' as the reason to do so, along with obtaining a graduate theological degree, two things have happened: first, the ecclesial authorization for sacramental ministry disappears from public view; i.e., there is no liturgical or communal, if not pneumato-logical, recognition on the part of the conference assembly of God that is the manifestation of the church catholic and apostolic. Second, in making this move, the UMC's view of sacramental ministry as 'local' ministry is disconnected from the ecumenical church; ministry is reduced to a matter of utility, with theological education as one marker rather than the fruit, gifts, and graces of ministry.[197] The full understanding of the connectional, covenantal, and communal nature of ministry in the UMC is undermined, thereby keeping LLPs hidden in plain sight, liturgically and organizationally.

3.3 How the Course of Study Works for Local Pastors

The Course of Study program is the primary means of educating LLPs. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) has responsibility for overseeing and prescribing all the studies in the Course of Study [198] Since the creation of licensed local pastor status in 1976, the Course of Study has had two primary purposes: first, to train local pastors for ministry as they serve in various contexts, and second, to provide a mechanism for holding local pastors accountable, as they participate in the Course of Study to maintain their license, even as they meet annually with their District Committee on Ministry (dDOM).[199]

Yet, as this research shows, the process of attending the Course of Study is not linear;

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[195] Anderson, 'Sacramental Ministry in the United Methodist Church: Postscript – Elders and Local Pastors.'
[196] Campbell, 'The Oral Roberts Option.' 364.
[197] Anderson draws out the implications of the absence of the assembly and the 'functional' ecclesiology undergirding it; cf. Thomas H. Schattauer, 'A Liturgical Perspective on the Meaning and Function of Call and Ordination in the Life of the Church' (November 12, 2009, Wartburg Theological Seminary).
[198] *Discipline* ¶ 1421.3.d.
[199] *Book of Discipline 1976* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Church Publishing House, 1976), Section on Ministry.

local pastors may take multiple routes into the Course to earn their credits, attending Regional Schools or Extension Sites, taking online classes through GBHEM, or even seminary courses.[200] However, as I discovered, LLPs are also known for not attending the Course, even though it is required by the *Discipline*.[201]

To describe how the Course of Study works, then, I would like to reintroduce the four characters I shared in Chapter 1 to highlight the similarities and differences among the following representatives to gain a better perspective of the process leading to ordination for elders and deacons and graduation for local pastors: Susanna (elder), Kitty (deacon), John (full-time LLP), and Charles (part-time LLP). All four of these persons have been part of the church's general ministry before moving into its representative ministry. John and Charles, in particular, highlight how LLPs enroll in the License to Preach School, the Course of Study, and the path they will take. Susanna and Kitty, the ordained elder and deacon route. All four candidates will journey through a similar process, which may vary from conference to conference, but which is patterned accordingly:

- Step One begins with a conversation with the pastor of the church attended by the potential ministerial candidate. Here, individuals will share with their pastor where they see God calling them and discern where the Spirit is leading. Many candidates at this point receive a copy of the book *The Christian as Minister* to explore the phases and aspects of ministry in the UMC. All candidates, like Susanna, Kitty, John, and Charles, begin this phase in a local church.[202]

- Step Two will involve the candidates contacting a leader of their District, which their congregation is part of, usually the Superintendent or the Associate District Superintendent (ADS). In this step, all candidates create a 'Statement of Call' indicating how they believe Christ is calling them into ministry. Here, they meet with a Superintendent or ADS, then complete a conference questionnaire and undergo a background check.[203]

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[200] Full-time local pastors are required to attend a Regional Course of Study, with some expectations for part-time local pastors: Regional Course of Study Schools include: Garrett and Methodist School of Ohio (Northcentral Jurisdiction), Wesley (Northeastern), Perkins and St. Paul (Southcentral), Duke and Emory (Southeastern), and Claremont (Western). Extension Course of Study Sites for part-time pastors are located in Indiana, Illinois, Native American Course of Study, Upper Midwest Extensions in Iowa, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin; in the Southcentral in Arkansas, North Texas, and Texas; in the Southeastern, in Appalachia, Memphis, Tennessee-Holston, and Mississippi; in the Northeast in different parts of New York and New Jersey.
[201] *Discipline* ¶ 319.3.
[202] *The Christian as Minister: An Exploration into the Meaning of God's Call* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2013).
[203] *Discipline* ¶ 310.d.

- In Step Three, candidates work with an administrator of their conference to create an 'eBridge' account. This account will help Susanna, Kitty, John, and Charles track their forms throughout the process.

- In Step Four, all candidates will meet with their Staff-Parish Relations Committee, which is responsible for working with a pastor and/or staff in a local congregation. The purpose of this meeting is to secure the Staff-Parish Relations Committee's support and to outline the phases of the candidacy process. All the candidates will have a form for the pastor of the church, the chairperson of the committee, and the candidate to complete.[204]

- Once Susanna, Kitty, John, and Charles receive support from their respective churches, they will prepare to attend an 'Orientation Retreat.' Before the retreat, they will complete a series of forms, including additional conference information forms, the Application to Attend the Retreat, and a copy of their high school or GED diploma. In addition, if they have graduated from a college or technical school (or more), they provide copies of their transcripts.[205] All candidates will need a 'Professing Member Letter,' which, on church letterhead, attests to their membership in their congregation. Lastly, they will need to cover the retreat fee, which ranges from $300 to $500, depending on the conference.

- Step Six, following the Orientation Retreat, will require that Susanna, Kitty, John, and Charles begin meeting in a small group known as the Candidacy Mentoring Group. They might be with each other or with other ministerial candidates. Each of them must attend this group and meet with a Candidacy Mentor at least four times in preparation for their 'Certification Interview' with their District Committee on Ministry (dCOM).[206] They will then schedule time to receive psychological assessments and complete financial forms. In this step, the candidates will also address the following 'Historical Questions' that persons set aside for ministry in the UMC must answer at the beginning:

    1. Do you know God's pardoning grace? Have you the love of God abiding in you? Do you desire nothing but God? Are you holy in all manner of conversation?

    2. Have you the gifts as well as the evidence of God's grace for this work? Have you a clear and sound understanding of right judgment in all things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do you speak justly, readily, and clearly?

[204] *Discipline* ¶ 310 a.
[205] *Discipline* ¶ 310.2 a., b., (1) and (2), c., d.
[206] *Discipline* ¶ 311 and ¶ 315.

3. Have you the fruit of the Spirit? Have you been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by your service?[207]

In the UMC, as long as these 'marks' are evident in Susanna, Kity, John, and Charles, the church will support their call to representative ministry. Such marks provide sufficient proof that the Holy Spirit has moved them to lead the church. They then move to the next step.

- The Seventh Step will involve the candidates uploading all their documents on eBridge, completing their Statement of Call, answering the historical questions both orally and in writing, and meeting with dCOM. Once Suzanne, Kitty, John, and Charles move through these steps, they receive certification to continue their path toward ordination or local licensed ministry. After a year of service, they will begin moving toward provisional membership status in their annual conference under the care of the dCOM.[208]

But what happens if Susanna and Kitty decide to be ordained as elders and deacons, and John and Charles want to serve as local pastors, with John as a full-time and Charles as a part-time pastor? Here, their paths as provisional members will diverge.

Susanna, for example, who plans to become an ordained elder, and Kitty, a deacon, will begin searching for a seminary to attend. John and Charles will begin the enrollment process for an 80-hour License to Preach School. Because Susanna and Kitty will enter seminary, they will remain in contact with their dCOM as provisional members, commissioned to attend a seminary approved by GBHEM and the University Senate of the UMC, and will agree to take the required courses for their degrees.[209] Here, however, as one seeking to be ordained as an elder, Suzanne will more than likely take three to four years to complete a Master of Divinity; Kitty will also take graduate classes in a field specialized in her area of ministry, in her case, pastoral counseling.[210] Depending on their life situations, they may take their classes entirely online while serving a church or working in another job (depending on the seminary and their vocational decisions), or they may reside near a seminary and take their classes there. Financially, Suzanne and Kitty may receive scholarship support for their education through the seminary or with the Ministerial Education Fund (MEF).

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[207] *Discipline* ¶ 319.d 1-3. All candidates answer these questions, but only elders and deacons answer the 'Historic Examination for Admission Questions' in ¶ 319 and ¶ 336, respectively.
[208] *Discipline* ¶ 324.6 (Section VI: Provisional Membership).
[209] The University Senate is the credentialing arm of GBHEM for theological schools: *Discipline* ¶ 1414-1418.
[210] *Discipline* ¶ 330 and ¶ 335.

John and Charles, on the other hand, will begin attending a License to Preach School to complete 80 hours in the following classes covering topics such as:

- United Methodist Tradition
- Public Worship and Liturgy
- Preaching, Leadership/Administration
- Spiritual Formation
- Educational Ministries,
- Pastoral Care Mission and Evangelism
- Conference-Specific Education.[211]

John and Charles will also take these classes online (some asynchronous, some synchronous) or in person, depending on their annual conference schedule or the GBHEM courses. Or, as several local pastors in this research indicated, they may take them during an immersive, intense week or a long weekend of classes, prayer, worship, and informal gatherings.[212]

As John and Charles take these classes, however, they will also discover that they need to pass with at least average or 'C+' grades. They will also find that, unlike Susanna and Kitty, they will need to cover their own costs, including the License to Preach School, which ranges from $600 to $900, and the Course of Study, which may range from $300 to 400 per class. However, it is also not unusual that John and Charles, after attending the License to Preach School, could decide to attend seminary. This does happen. However, in their instances, once they complete the Licensing School, they will report to their dCOM and Superintendent to see where they may serve in a local church.

Therefore, once their dCOM approves, the Superintendent will assign John and Charles to different congregations. Charles will serve part-time, and John will serve full-time. Because Charles works during the day at a nearby General Electric Plant, the Superintendent will most likely assign him to serve a smaller church near his home. He will work full-time at GE while serving 10 to 20 hours at Wesley Chapel. John, on the other hand, will serve full-time in a circuit or charge of three congregations—Aldersgate, Bristol, and Epworth. He will work a minimum of forty hours per week, serving as the sole pastor.

The Superintendent could move John and Charles, but, as local pastors, they are not

[211] Go to Appendix N for the Courses in the curriculum and to www.gbhem/liscensetopreach.com.
[212] 'Evan' (SG5/P12) in New England shared that the weeklong immersive experience in the License to Preach School solidified his call to ministry.

considered fully itinerant because they are not full members of the annual conference, unlike Susanna and Kitty, whose candidacies will progress toward full conference membership upon completion of their seminary studies. However, as Susanna and Kitty move toward ordination, the Superintendent will also consult with them about their appointments in accordance with the *Discipline*.[213]

It is here, upon entering their churches and being assigned, that John and Charles will enroll in the Course of Study. As a full-time local pastor, John will most likely attend a Regional School or an embedded Regional School within a UM seminary. Here, John will take many, if not all, of his classes in person or online, though he may take courses in person depending on the seminary's schedule. Charles, on the other hand, as a part-time local pastor, will enroll in an Extension Site, probably in his annual conference. Charles will also most likely take classes in hybrid, in-person, or entirely online formats. A great deal depends on the Extension Site and on how it relates to the seminary that supports it. Charles, as a part-time student, could also take classes through GBHEM or another Course of Study, depending on which classes are offered and when.

Both John and Charles will need to complete the 20 classes prescribed by GBHEM. Theoretically, the classes are designed to finish in five years. This will probably not happen, even though John, as a full-time LLP, is supposed to complete the classes sooner than Charles, as Charles is part-time and has another job. Neither John nor Charles will finish the Course within this time frame.[214]

Regardless of where they are or how long it will take, John and Charles will enroll in the Course of Study and participate in the classes as outlined in Appendix N, beginning with 100-level courses and progressing to 500-level courses. Here, these twenty classes are divided into two major sections: 'foundational' and 'functional.' Foundational courses include Bible and Theological Heritage (e.g., New and Old Testaments, theology, Methodist theology, and church history), and 'functional' courses on Congregational Life and Pastoral Identity (e.g., leadership, administration, pastoral care, and evangelism). All of these classes are considered 'seminary-

[213] *Discipline* ¶ 426 describes the consultation process for all pastors.
[214] *Discipline* ¶ 319. Anecdotally, as an instructor in the Course of Study, I have never seen as person complete the Course of Study in five years, but have seen local pastors graduate after being in the Course of Study up to seventeen years.

type' courses, even though they don't count toward a degree.[215]

As my research shows, most local pastors take different routes into the Course of Study. There is no fixed route. That is, let's say that John has a master's degree in literature and took some religion classes in college; he might 'jump ahead' of Charles and take higher-level courses first, though he will still need to take all twenty classes. On the other hand, Charles, who has only technical school training, may want to take a foundational Bible class early on. Yet Charles, because he has taken the 10 courses of the Lay Servant Academy in his conference, is more familiar with the UMC than John and has served on all the committees of his local church. Charles could wait to take some of the more functional leadership classes later.

Regardless of which classes come first, all the classes that John and Charles take will accumulate. As noted, they may take their courses at various locations around the country to earn their grades, which are recorded with their dCOM, Superintendent, and GBHEM, or they may 'stay put' and take their classes in one location. Whatever the case, John and Charles will have PINs so their conferences can track their progress, academically and ministerially. However, to remain in their assigned churches, they will also need to maintain a 'C' average in all their classes, as in the License to Preach School. A grade sheet in Appendix O shows what a local pastor in the Course of Study receives upon completion of a class.

As John and Charles progress through their coursework in the Course of Study, Susanna and Kitty work to complete their seminary training. As certified and provisional members for two years, commissioned to attend seminary, they can now apply for admission to full connection membership. Here, they both will need to receive a three-fourths vote of those clergy in their conference's executive session. Yet once approved, they will still need to serve for two more years under episcopal appointment before ordination; for example, Kitty may serve in a mental health clinic as a pastoral counselor. Susanna, on the other hand, as she moves toward ordination as an elder, may follow a path in a local church or on a multiple-staff parish. Some annual conferences might also offer Residence in Ministry (RIM) programs to help people like Susanna and Kitty transition from seminary to the local church. These programs, however, vary widely from conference to conference. It is a phase that may involve more mentoring, small-group work, and examinations before and after ordination.

[215] See as an example the Course of Study in the Indiana Conference on how it describes classes like seminary classes, at www.inumc.org/courseofstudy..

In other words, Kitty and Susanna, as they return to their conferences and move toward ordination, will have additional requirements to fulfill, including answering questions outlined in the *Discipline,* among them the Historic Questions for Examination for Admission into Full Connection.[216] It is not the purpose here to go into these questions, other than to say that by moving through this process and being approved into full connection, and completing all their requirements, Kitty and Susanna will move toward ordination: approved, they will be able to vote on all matters in the UMC concerning its regulations and policies, and be appointed to serve.[217] This will not be the case for John and Charles, even though they are also like Suzanne and Kitty, set aside for Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service, or Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. John and Charles will also not be examined on the Historical Questions, as Susanna and Kitty are, even though they are expected to lead their churches in the Wesleyan way and to follow the UMC's doctrine, history, and polity.[218]

In practice, as I shared in Chapter 1, this scenario entails the following: when Susanna and Kitty are in the executive session, to be voted into full connection, upon completing seminary, John and Charles will be there too, after participating in the License to Preach School and enrolled in the Course of Study, though without a vote. To be sure, if John and Charles complete the Course of Study's twenty classes, they could decide to move toward ordination and full membership in their conference. That is a possibility. But to do so, they would need to complete an additional 32 semester credit hours in the Advanced Course of Study through GBHEM. I have broken down the 32 credit hours in Appendix N.[219] Here, John and Charles could receive financial support from GBHEM or their local churches, depending on their financial situation, to take these courses.

Now suppose that the executive session has approved Susanna and Kitty at their annual conference, they are ready for ordination—Susanna ordained as an elder to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and Kitty ordained as a deacon to Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice—they are ready to robe up and process into the annual conference service of ordination, whereupon they will receive the authority of ordination by the laying on of hands, red stole for

[216] *Discipline* ¶ 330.d and *Discipline* ¶ 336.
[217] *Discipline* ¶ 334.1, ¶ 369.6, ¶ 602.1.
[218] Discipline ¶ 330.
[219] Discipline ¶ 330.

serving, and invocation of the Holy Spirit from the bishop.[220] I shared this in my Case Study in Chapter 1: the annual conference assembly will surround both Susanna and Kitty with support as they are sent out by the bishop's words: 'Take thou authority.'[221] They will each become part of separate 'ministerial orders' — one for elders and one for deacons.[222]

John and Charles, on the other hand, will participate in the ordination service differently: John will be in the assembly as a participant, as he can attend the conference, but Charles won't because he has to work a special shift at GE. However, depending upon their bishop, John and Charles could receive a prayer in their conference if their bishop decides to do so. There is a special prayer in *The United Methodist Book of Worship* for this occasion.[223]

Yet, as I also shared in the Case Study in Chapter 1, because John and Charles, as local pastors, are close to completing the Course of Study, they will experience the end of their theological education differently: they will receive a certificate of completion, indicating that they have taken all twenty classes. Depending on their Regional School or Extension Site, John and Charles may have a graduation service in which their instructors wear academic robes and participate in worship, but this is not part of the annual conference. They are also not part of an order of elders or deacons, and are not full members of the conference, but are instead part of a network or 'fellowship of local pastors,' which may meet but has no regulatory responsibilities.[224]

Following these worship services, each of our participants will continue their respective paths: e.g., Susanna will be appointed to a county-seat church with a ministerial staff. Kitty has found employment on the staff of a large urban church and will share in ministry as a trained pastoral counselor. John and Charles will return to their local churches: John will continue to serve his three-point charge or circuit, preaching every week, as a full-time LP and completing the Course of Study; Charles will continue to work at GE while serving his parish part-time and taking classes in the Course of Study when he can –-- all serving as Christ's representatives.

These scenarios in this Case Study illustrate the complex relationship between the general and the representative aspects of ministry in the United Methodist Church: the representative

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[220] *The United Methodist Book of Worship,* 667 and 696.
[221] Ibid., 696.
[222] *Discipline* ¶ 306.
[223] *The United Methodist Book of Worship,* 717.
[224] *Discipline* ¶ 323.

(i.e., clergy) comes from the general (i.e., the baptized), yet they follow different educational and ecclesial pathways. They are all set apart for the ordering of the ministry of the church: Susanna, Charles, and John for Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service as elder and local pastors; and Kitty for Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice as a deacon. Susanna and Kitty, however, will be ordained and receive full membership in conference, while Charles and John won't. Susanna will also be considered fully itinerant, while John and Charles are not (though John could be itinerant if he is open to it).

Yet these scenarios also raise another fundamental concern or question at the heart of this thesis: what does ordination mean in the United Methodist Church? If John and Charles are performing the identical pastoral responsibilities as Susanna, then why aren't they also set apart by the laying on of hands and the invoking of the Holy Spirit in the conference assembly? Is ordination tied solely to prerequisites for pursuing educational achievement, or does it also entail the pneumatic foregrounding of the gifts, fruit, and wisdom of those called by the Spirit to continue Christ's sacramental ministry?

The answer to these questions, which I will address more fully in Chapter 8, pertains to Methodism's own ambiguous history in the ordering of ministry between 'ministers' and 'preachers': though both were called to preach, only ministers were ordained as full members of a conference. The distinction went directly to who would serve the sacraments. As Thomas Frank has argued, this 'dual framework' has caused endless confusion, harm, and ambiguity; in addition, it also fails to uphold the UMC's broader ecumenical commitments.[225]

I contend that Frank's insights are not only prescient for my argument by practicing what I shared concerning Cartledge's 'pneumatological intervention,' but that the deeper issue is that of viewing ordination in the UMC as fundamentally an act of Christ's Spirit, which equally sets apart those called to order the church's sacramental ministry. It is why I will argue that ordination must embody a critical 'pneumatological principle' that acknowledges the gifts and commitments of all those called by Christ to the whole assembly.

3.4 Summary

I did not go into this research expecting to discover the complexities of the UMC's theology and order of ministry. That was not my purpose. Instead, I aimed to investigate the

[225] Thomas Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 197-198.

experiences of the Spirit among local pastors in ministerial formation within the Course of Study and what these experiences might entail for re-envisioning it. I did not fully comprehend the status of LLPs. I also did not realize how the 'incoherence' of UMC's theology of ministry would reveal what I see as a pneumatological deficit in the actual practice of ordering ministry and a failure to depend on the Spirit for ministry among local pastors. As I will share in Chapter 7, I see this pneumatological deficit as affecting a broader pattern of formation in the UMC, or a 'liturgical territorialism.' That is, referring to James K. A. Smith, I see in our liturgy a pedagogy that teaches local pastors do not have the same authority as elders, even though they have the same pastoral duties; there is a 'curricular polity' at work keeping local pastors in administrative limbo as neither formally ordained nor laity, an inconsistency that has a long history in American Methodism.[226]

Yet this insight, I contend, entails coming to grips with what I have come to understand as a functionalistic view of licensed ministry in the UMC, a view that relies on administrative procedures to administer the sacraments and on the Course of Study to train local pastors. It does so by keeping local pastors liturgically out of sight of the conference assembly, if not the Spirit's gaze—a breach of the apostolic and catholic nature of the church and Methodism's own history.[227] Such a 'procedure,' I argue, demonstrates in practice how the UMC fails to bring the charismatic gifts of the Spirit into the ordering of the ministry for local pastors, as well as relying on the Holy Spirit to set aside those for sacramental ministry; it also neglects to affirm the practices constitutive of the church for pastoral leadership and ordination. In addition, as I will share in Chapter 7, there is a fundamental lack of ecclesial concern for the actual bodies of local pastors, in which the Spirit's blessing is avoided in the practice of sending out all those who are set aside to preside at the Lord's Supper. Such 'avoidance' I see mirrored in the managerial imaginary of the Course of Study, which still retains the residue of a non-contextualized curriculum and pedagogies that lack the embodiment of ministerial practice.

This is why I propose a two-step pneumatological intervention: one that involves re-envisioning the Course of Study along the lines of a practice-oriented model of formation, in which local pastors learn ministry as novices, with others in community, to indwell the Spirit. The other entails the creation of a missional order of local elders, set aside by the holy act of

[226] Anderson, 'Sacramental Ministry in the United Methodist Church: Postscript – Elders and Local Pastors.'
[227] McClure, Pastoral Theology as the Art of Paying Attention: Widening the Horizons,' 198-200.

ordination to abide in the Spirit, offering a way to connect more faithfully to the church catholic and apostolic. Both steps involve learning to indwell Christ's Spirit, as rooted and modeled in the UMC's baptismal covenant, recognizing the Spirit's graces and fruits, and the Spirit's work in all called into ministry in the conference assembly and set aside for Word and Sacrament. Such steps are also in keeping with Methodism's own emphasis on sanctification as a way to embody and grow in faith corporately, in an orderly yet charismatic manner. The task of the church is to abide in these tensions, to which I will turn in Chapters 7 and 8 as part of my own constructive proposals, and to share how it can do so.

Chapter 4

Literature Review:
Approaching Theological Education
through the Holy Spirit

4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the work of three scholars whose contributions shape current conversations about the Holy Spirit in theological education in the United States: Kathleen A. Cahalan, Amos Yong, and James K.A. Smith. I do so to highlight and explore issues in their work that pertain to forming people for ministry according to the Spirit. I aim to examine how each scholar addresses issues related to my research on *local pastors' experiences of the Spirit in the Course as part of their formation.*

In this chapter, then, I situate my research more specifically within US discussions of theological education and pneumatology. I acknowledge that others in the UK have also addressed these concerns, and that in the US, there are those whose work has sought to reconfigure practical theology along lines more open to the Spirit's praxis and presence. But none of these focused particularly on the Spirit and theological education. The three US scholars in this chapter have made the most recent contributions.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I wanted to address a gap in research on the Spirit and theological education and address concerns I was sensing about an overly academic focus in the Course of Study. I wanted to ask whether foregrounding the Holy Spirit in theological education might revise pedagogies and curricula in more contextually relevant ways, rather than relying on a prescribed, one-size-fits-all approach. In addition, I was interested in how accentuating the Spirit's presence in worship as a place of encounter might shift the Course of Study's focus toward a more holistic approach. These concerns were part of what I wanted to explore: how does integrating the Spirit into the way local pastors are trained change the Course of Study, and if so, toward what?

Therefore, a central claim in this chapter is that foregrounding the Spirit in the Course of Study more specifically has implications for reorienting it: it moves the Course toward what I call a practice-oriented form of theological education that indwells the Spirit contextually and communally, moving it toward its true end – a life of holiness. Here, I see each theologian contributing to what this entails, with Cahalan integrating the Trinity, Yong focusing on

Pentecost, and Smith emphasizing liturgical formation. Common themes also emerge, especially in the critiques of what each scholar sees as the residue of the Enlightenment's abstract forms of reasoning in theological education, and in their proposal for viewing practicing theology as a way of life and discipleship.

I divide this chapter as follows: engaging with and reflecting on each scholar by focusing on their approaches provides models for theological education:

4.1. Engaging Cahalan's Integration Model

Kathleen A. Cahalan, professor of practical theology at St. John's Seminary in Collegeville, Minnesota, and a member of the Lilly Endowment's team to review ministry and theological formation, views theological education through the Holy Spirit's integrating work. She grounds her theology of ministry in Christ's call in baptism and argues that discipleship is the foundation of all ministry, especially for those who will lead the church. Cahalan stipulates that foregrounding the Holy Spirit in theological education means affirming the gifts and charisms of all believers and participating in practices that constitute the church's ministry, beginning in discipleship. She writes:

> The self-identity of the minister is rooted in discipleship, and the further deepening of that identity takes place by living the demands of discipleship in and through the vocation to ministry.[228]

Cahalan bases this understanding of formation on both scripture and tradition, believing God's Spirit-breath (*ruach*) animates all life (Gen. 2:7): the Spirit roots the *being, doing,* and *knowing* of disciples and acts to 'integrate' these dimensions into God's own triune movement, embodied and relational in practice, imitating Christ's ministry.[229]

Cahalan draws on Elizabeth A. Johnson and Catherine Mowry LaCugna to extend her argument and show how the Trinity, as the divine community of three distinct but equal persons,

[228] Kathleen A. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), 49.
[229] Ibid., 153-54.

creates bonds of love with God and others, and how these bonds incorporate people into a *koinonia* of mutual and equal friendship.[230] She employs the Greek metaphor of *perichoresis* to describe these relational aspects of the Trinity to indicate the nature of the Christian community:

> The oneness of God is not static and hierarchical but rather dynamic and mutually self-giving… this communion, like the metaphor of *perichoresis,* describes the movement of a wheel cycle, dancing, and a triple helix. Such images point to action, movement, and activity as constitutive of divine being-in-relationship.[231]

For Cahalan, the Trinity is practiced as a dynamic *perichoretic* movement of God's two hands—the Spirit and Christ—with the Spirit integrating Christ's work of ministry for the sake of the kingdom.[232]

However, as Cahalan argues, whether as disciples or ministers, people learn ministry by practicing it holistically with others. She establishes two lists of practices to disclose what she contends people need to know as they learn ministry: first, the practice of discipleship includes worship, witnessing, loving God and neighbor, forgiveness, prophetic ministry, and stewardship. All disciples are shaped as they participate in these practices.[233]

Second, she prescribes a ministerial list, which involves practices such as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, worship, social ministry, and administration: people who will lead other disciples will learn to embody these practices as participants in God's triune fellowship by responding to and cooperating with the Holy Spirit.[234] Cahalan writes:

> If we understand the Spirit's gift [of presence] as a source of the capacity *for* practice, we must see our acceptance and cooperation with this gift as a necessary response. Our response is in the commitment to form the gift into a capacity that empowers good practice.[235]

According to Cahalan, the Spirit's presence is essential to faithful practice: the Holy Spirit animates our gifts–i.e., our capacities, abilities, and intentions–for ministry, prompting deeper reflection. Our gifts are grounded in God's own being, or the One who empowers and

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[230] Ibid, 154; cf. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 239; Cathrine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1973), 1.
[231] Ibid., 154.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice,* 3-22;
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid., 141.

integrates the *doing, being, and knowing* of ministry *via media*, moving toward God and others.[236] Learning for ministry, then, is dynamic. It is aimed at forming what Craig Dykstra and others, as noted in Chapter 2, call the 'pastoral' imagination–or the kind of knowledge that assists pastors in 'seeing more deeply' into their ministry contexts.[237]

Yet Cahalan draws on other theological disciplines, such as learning theory and biblical studies, to work toward her holistic vision of formation. Here, she critiques both the church and the academy for what she sees as 'ministry specializations' on the one hand and 'siloed guilds' on the other, both of which separate theory and practice.[238] It is why in the field of learning theory, Cahalan utilizes Patricia Benner's and Herbert Dreyfus's acquisition skill model to note how people in practice learn ministry, moving from novice to expert over time.[239] This phenomenological approach to education is not linear so much as a guide for those who learn differently and may come from diverse educational backgrounds. It is geared not just toward the cognitive aspects of learning but also the bodily and sensory aspects.[240]

Cahalan sees this happening in the academy, too, especially in areas like Bible and systematic theology, where topics become fragmented. For Cahalan, the opposite is needed: integration rather than separation.[241] That is, like Yong and Smith, whose work I share below, Cahalan sees the Spirit's activity as one of crossing over and breaking through 'academic silos' and 'specialized barriers' to redirect theological education to its true holistic end–love of the Trinity.[242] The goal is to learn how to bring together the three ways of knowing, being, and doing of formation to practice the life of God in community.

In addition to embodying practices in community, Cahalan's integrative model also emphasizes critical pedagogies and a broader conception of curriculum. Cahalan draws on Charles Foster's research to demonstrate that theological educators need to adapt current

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[236] Ibid., 142.
[237] Craig Dykstra, 'Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination,' in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry,* edited Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 42; cf. Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, *Pastoral Imagination: Bringing the Practice of Ministry to Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021), 4-5.
[238] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice,* 126-127.
[239] Ibid., 137-138; cf. Patricia Benner, 'Using the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition to Describe and Interpret Skill Acquisition and Clinical Judgment in Nursing Practice and Education,' in *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 24.3 (2004), 193.
[240] Benner, 'Using the Dreyfus Model,' 194.
[241] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice*, 146; and cf. Kathleen A. Cahalan, 'Three Approaches to Practical Theology, Theological Education, and the Church's Ministry,' *International Journal of Practical Theology* 9.1 (2005), 92-93.
[242] Ibid.,157.

approaches to learning theory to shape ministers, notably by re-evaluating interpretative, contextual, performative, and formative pedagogies.[243] These 'signature pedagogies,' as Foster calls them, can assist teachers and students in learning for ministry through the study of literary texts (interpretation) and historical contexts (contextualization), as well as in performing ministry practices in ministry settings (performance).[244] As Cahalan notes, however, all these pedagogies have traditionally been taught in classrooms, not the church. On the other hand, formational pedagogies, like Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), ministry internships, and special field appointments, call for ongoing theological reflection and imagination.[245] Yet my concern is that all these issues still assume people preparing for ministry in seminaries, rather than local pastors already engaged in ministry.

These pedagogical approaches, however, cannot be isolated from the curriculum. Indeed, they must be embedded in the curriculum by broadening its scope to include three distinct yet related aspects—vertical, horizontal, and diagonal—that correspond to the being, doing, and knowing of formation.[246] That is, for Cahalan, the vertical dimension of a curriculum often assumes an accumulation of information, with its fourfold division of the Bible, theology, church history, and ministry practices.[247] Courses traditionally move from 'theory to practice' and build sequentially, typically from the Bible to the more practical (e.g., pastoral care, preaching, and worship).

But as Cahalan argues, the vertical is not the only part of a curriculum. The vertical must incorporate the horizontal, or those dimensions that focus on doing ministry. Horizontal and vertical must complement each other to move toward integration. The two are inseparable.[248] However, similar issues can also arise in the horizontal: as with the vertical, the horizontal can often remain too theory-focused unless there is on-the-ground reflection and action aimed at integration.

These aspects of a curriculum, then, as Cahalan goes on to suggest, point to a need to

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[243] Kathleen A. Cahalan, 'Integration in Theological Education,' in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2014), 386-395; cf. Charles R. Foster et al, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, chapter 1.
[244] Cahalan, 'Integration,' 387.
[245] Ibid., 390-391.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.

raise wise companions who can assist those preparing for ministry over time. Such companions are not just 'academics' in specialized fields; they are those who can come alongside those in formation. This is especially the case when the third dimension of a curriculum, or the 'diagonal' or 'being' aspects of the curriculum, come to the fore. This dimension also affects learning for ministry, including life-cycle moments such as birth, illness, and marriage.[249] These aspects often go unspoken but are vital to shaping pastors.[250] It is why, for Cahalan, the task of theological educators is to find ways to integrate all three dimensions, along with signature pedagogies, into more profound ways of seeing. It is a task that invites attending to the Spirit in the actual lives of people and contexts.

4.1.1 Reflecting on Cahalan's Model

Reflecting on Cahalan's model discloses two points about my own proposal for a practice-oriented model of formation. First, I find in her model a helpful way to envision the Course of Study as a community that learns to practice the Trinity by integrating the being, doing, and knowing of formation and by cultivating the pastoral imagination.[251] By integrating the Trinity and practice, her work speaks to how the Spirit and practices relate to the communal nature of knowledge and wisdom, affirming the gifts, charisms, and ministries of all disciples and pastors. This connection is grounded in God's own being and is relationally embodied: education occurs through trial and error and further reflection, often in a practice-oriented form.[252]

Second, in Cahalan, I find a useful distinction between 'knowledge acquisition' and 'knowledge use.'[253] By understanding ministry as a practice to fund the pastoral imagination, Cahalan shifts from learning ministry mechanistically by gaining more information (acquisition) to understanding how knowledge is achieved via practice (use). Such a position refocuses on how people learn and what they may initially need, not at the expense of acquiring traditional theological knowledge (e.g., the Bible, church history), but by asking questions that integrate such knowledge and by appropriating it in practice. Here, her references to Dreyfus and Benner

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[249] Ibid., 391; cf. Christian Scharen, 'Learning Ministry over Time: Embodying Practical Wisdom,' in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry,* edited Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dysktra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 265-288.
[250] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice,* 391
[251] Ibid., 146-147.
[252] Ibid., 152-153.
[253] Ibid.; 138-139; cf. Patricia Benner, 'Using the Dreyfus Model,' 195-197.

are helpful in indicating that learning is messy and that moving from novice to expert does not proceed linearly, depending on a host of variables. Instead, as a phenomenological tool, Cahalan's appropriation of Dreyfus's and Benner's model serves to conceptualize the relationship between practice and knowledge.[254]

I share these points to suggest that Cahalan's model of formation provides a theological basis for how local pastors may learn and gain practical knowledge and wisdom for ministry, especially as they begin: learning is concrete and visceral, not solely about theory.[255] It is about growing through experience and reflecting on experience with seasoned practitioners. A reflection-action model is in operation, with the whole thrust of the educational and formative process oriented toward concrete practice.[256]

I iterate this point to suggest that, in my empirical research and in my own experience as an instructor in the Course of Study, local pastors come from diverse backgrounds. They might come from law or medicine, or from a trade or craft. They may possess a graduate degree or technical training. The differences can be vast.

Calahan's model of integration and her lists of formational practices, however, provide the occasion to reshape the Course of Study in that they offer an opportunity to envision learning for all those who begin the journey into ministry: first, they build on basic discipleship practices, which can serve as a basis to transcend differences among local pastors coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, and second, they offer a means to create a collaborative ethos, whereby local pastors learn together, such as preaching or teaching, engendering more than theoretical speculation or competition, or to put it the way D. Stephen Long has written, to build on the 'in-built ecclesial' dimension of the Course of Study.[257] In Cahalan's framework, it can move toward ways of being, doing, and thinking that can allow the Spirit to decenter the Course of Study away from more vertical, encyclopedic dimensions toward more horizontal, communal dimensions of learning.[258] In doing so, it can also leverage the diagonal curriculum that local pastors deal with daily. Currently, the Course of Study retains a vertical curriculum divided between

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[254] Cahalan, 'Integration,' 393; cf. Benner, 'Using the Dreyfus Model,' 194; and Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 27-31.
[255] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, 130-131.
[256] Ibid., 15.
[257] Long, 'The Advantages of the Course of Study School,' 14.
[258] Cahalan, 'Integration,' 389.

'foundational' and 'functional' classes, based sequentially from 100-level to 500-level courses. What if the whole notion of vertical and horizontal is not the way to conceive of curriculum? What happens when instructors are not divided between a functional and a foundation curriculum, but rather are part of an integrative one?

To be sure, Cahalan's account of practices is helpful. My research underscores the importance of practices in formation, as I view the Course of Study as a community of practice and local pastors as novices on a journey toward becoming experts in practice.[259] Yet I also want to raise questions about how such practices in the Course of Study among local pastors are actually embodied and take shape: how do local pastors receive support for their calling, be affirmed for their gifts, and be recognized as they are sent into ministry? How does a community that learns together shift from the vertical to a more horizontal and diagonal approach without eliminating components of the vertical? In addition, if practical theology as ordinary pneumatology is to engage theological education in ways to rescript it, how may it, as I have tried to indicate, acknowledge the importance of the everyday as places of encounter of the Spirit for learning? Is Cahalan's diagonal curriculum commensurate with the 'everyday'? If so, how may the images of formation that local pastors choose expand the everyday, which is also critical to formation? Cahalan addresses what needs to occur in classes and churches as people learn. What happens when, through the lens of the Spirit, the landscape expands to include particular organizational issues and informal aspects of learning? I will address these questions in Chapters 7 and 9 as I share my own constructive proposal.

4.2 Engaging Yong's Pentecost Pedagogy Model

Amos Yong, professor of theology and mission and Director of the School of Intercultural Studies for Missiological Research at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, grounds his model for theological education in Acts 2—Pentecost.[260] His central claim regarding theological education is to begin with the church as the Spirit-filled community that shares the gospel with everyone everywhere in ways consistent with the Spirit poured out on

[259] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger define a community of practice as a community that shares a 'concern or a passion for something they do and [who] learn how to do it better as they interact with one another regularly. I view the Course of Study as a community of practice where local pastors interact with one another and learn to practice and learn ministry over time; cf. 'What Is a Community of Practice?' (December 28, 2011) at the following: www.wenger-trayner.com/resrouces/what-is-a-community-of-practice/.

[260] Amos Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 5-6, and Amos Yong and Dale M. Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*: *Renewing the Christian University* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2023), 155. 203, 171-175.

all flesh (Acts 2:17).[261] Yong concerns himself with how the Pentecost story provides the paradigm for engaging in theological education: the Holy Spirit on Pentecost creates and catalyzes the church to carry out its mission. Yong coins what he calls the 'pneumato-logical imagination' to inform his approach, emphasizing the experience of and orientation toward the Spirit.[262] Such 'imagination' does not, for Yong, diminish the importance of Christology but enhances it, providing a more Trinitarian account. Therefore, the pneumato-logical imagination is shaped by the experience of the Holy Spirit and insists that encounters with the Spirit are not merely cognitive but also involve empirical, emotional, and embodied experiences grounded in real life.[263]

Yong approaches the theological task, then, with a series of questions focused on the Holy Spirit: a) What has the Spirit done?, b) What might the Spirit be doing?, c) What would the Spirit do? d) What would the Spirit wish for or empower us to do?[264] These questions are fundamental to shaping theological education because they encourage the church to consider its identity (who), purpose (why), and pedagogy (how). This 'triadic conceptualization' in light of Pentecost affirms how the Holy Spirit is to be engaged in all dimensions of theological education and formation and corresponds to the church's historical affirmations of *orthodoxy* (belief), *orthopathy* (heart), and *orthopraxy* (hands).[265] To these ends, Yong aligns with Cahalan's integrationist model of being, doing, and thinking, and echoes Wesleyan and Pietist themes of relational, affective, and practical spirituality. The goal of theological education is to be holistic.[266]

Yet a critical aspect of Yong's pneumatic framework is his desire to refashion what he sees as an overly 'Reformed, or Word-centered, focus' in Christian higher education.[267] Yong draws on wider Wesleyan-Holiness and Pietist-Pentecostal sources to argue that higher

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[261] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 36-26; cf. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), chapter 5.
[262] Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 133-135.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 4-5.
[265] Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 123.
[266] Yong and Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*, 142-46; Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 106; cf. Gregory S. Clapper, '*Orthokardia*: The Practical Theology of John Wesley's Heart Religion,' in *Quarterly Review* 10.1 (1990), 49-66; and Marcus K. Kilian 'Wesleyan Leadership Formation: A Neuroscience Integration' in *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 38.4 (2019), 251-67.
[267] Yong and Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 38-39, 123-25.

education, in general, and theological education, in particular, cannot be about 'seclusion in denominational bubbles,' but must break down barriers and inculcate God's mission for all people, offering opportunities to encounter the Holy Spirit.[268] These possibilities of experiencing the Spirit are vital aspects of theological education, not as free-floating or abstract theories but as embodied, emotional, and empirical impulses.[269]

That is, similar to Cahalan, Yong grounds his model of theological education in scripture and tradition, relying especially on biblical images and metaphors that serve as prompts or 'lures' pointing beyond themselves to the Spirit they describe.[270] Here, Yong moves between images and experiences to listen to people give voice to their encounters with the Spirit of God.[271] As noted above, it is how Yong describes the pneumatological imagination as arising from these dynamics between experience, image, and the Spirit:

> The pneumatological imagination arises from specific encounters with the divine, specifically with the Holy Spirit. Equally, certain root metaphors or images given in the scriptural narratives and handed down by tradition act as lures and provide imaginative invitations that make such encounters possible.[272]

In other words, as previously alluded to, the pneumatological imagination finds its basis in the relationality of the Holy Spirit and serves to integrate aspects of theological education, such as the affectional, practical, and spiritual dimensions of life, especially in the church.[273]

For these reasons, theological educators must work not only *after* but also *from* and *of* Pentecost, experiencing the Spirit in the present and envisioning new possibilities for theological education and formation in the future.[274] In doing so, they must commit to upending all forms of domination and exclusion and to working toward peace and justice.[275] The reality of the boundary-crossing Spirit and the radical calls to hospitality set the church's missional journey into motion, bearing the fruit of the Spirit among all people, especially the marginalized, and

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[268] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 98.
[269] Ibid., 108.
[270] Yong, *Spirit, Word, and Community,* 133.
[271] Ibid., 134-140.
[272] Ibid., 136.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 4; cf. Amos Yong, *Mission after Pentecost: The Witness of the Spirit from Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 116-117, 277.
[275] Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 130.

sharing the Spirit's gifts with all.[276]

Yong's model, then, operates within a Trinitarian and Incarnational frame of reference, focusing on cultivating a habitus that brings together Christ-oriented patterns of activity and Spirit-infused practices of ministry, with two essential elements: first, moral formation with conversion; and second, openness to God's transcendence within immanence.[277] According to Yong, the human self is formed in and oriented through a rich matrix of activities cultivated by the ethical, theological, and missional dimensions of Pentecost.[278] The Pentecost story provides the 'biblical architecture' that supplies this *habitus,* which, in turn, integrates 'head, heart, and hands' as a way of being in the world.[279] Conversion into this *habitus* becomes not about submitting to a particular set of ideas but about participating in God's transcendence in the here and now, in this moment.[280]

Yong wants to move theological education toward this holistic view of *habitus* and away from the Enlightenment's technical forms of rationality. In doing so, he wants to steer theological education from 'one-way theory to practice' or 'banking model' approaches to ministry and learning and toward embodying a 'theory-*praxis* feedback' loop, which orients pedagogies dialogically and experientially.[281] Such a focus is similar to Cheryl Bridges Johns' notion of the Spirit's pedagogy among the oppressed, in which people come to know God fully, not merely as a matter of conscientization, which remains captive to cognitive epistemologies, but as *yada*, or intimate, holistic knowledge.[282] This form of knowledge refers to how the Holy Spirit opens and addresses the entire Christian community, engaging it missionally and liturgically.

Yong's stress, then, on inter-relationality, interdisciplinarity, hospitality, and equality, is essential to his own understanding of a 'Pentecost Pedagogy' that blurs distinctions between laity

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[276] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit*, 24.
[277] *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 161; and *Spirit-Word-Community,* 56-59.
[278] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 4; *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 17, 29.
[279] *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 41.
[280] Ibid., 29.
[281] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 98.
[282] Ibid., 97; I do not use Cheryl Bridges Johns, but she critiques Paulo Freire's notion of conscientization for focusing too much on the cognitive than the integrative. For Bridges Johns, formation in the Spirit must involve knowledge more akin to the Jewish term *yada*, or knowing God intimately in community among the oppressed; cf. Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 62-65; see also Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1984), chapter 2.

and clergy on the one hand and reshapes the pedagogy and curriculum on the other.[283] Like Cahalan, Yong sees discipleship as the primary engine driving theological education and formation, with the task of not prop up 'ecclesial hierarchies' that divide clergy and laity, but to practice the Spirit's subversive ways at the bottom of ecclesial structures.[284] In other words, the challenge in theological education is to expand the relational dimension of 'we-ness' in ways that affirm differences and overcome discrimination.[285] Pentecost underscores this orientation, especially among persons with visual, auditory, intellectual, or developmental impairments. This is why theological education must lean into more experiential pedagogies, such as musical, poetic, and kinesthetic, to create spaces and places where people can experience the Spirit's presence. Echoing theologian Sharon Betcher, Yong's pneumatic focus is not about 'fixing' or placing people into some 'presupposed mold of holiness' but about unleashing multiple forms of relationality.[286]

A final aspect of Yong's Pentecost model that I highlight is the economic one, situated within neoliberal capitalism and marked by growing economic disparities and the expansion of a digitized world. Yong utilizes Thomas Friedman's metaphor of 'flatness' to describe this moment as 'networked' and an opportunity to expand the church's mission in theological education: a 'flat' world is connected in ways that eliminate institutional hierarchies, creating opportunities for direct exchanges across all areas of life. Flatness refers to how such 'electronic connectedness' shifts information and technology flows, disrupting older, hierarchical forms of knowledge. As a result, a whole new economy has come into existence, creating new challenges, especially among 'haves' and 'have-nots.'[287]

To address this situation, Yong employs what he calls 'charismatic complexes' to show how theological education can spread among different people groups. Charismatic complexes are online networks that offer alternatives to the 'encrusted bureaucracies' of old mainline and evangelical Protestant groups.[288] They are considered relationally oriented and are growing in a

[283] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit*, 96.
[284] Amos Yong, 'Liberating and Diversifying Theological Education: A Subversive or Empowering Aspiration?' in *Cross Currents* 69.1 (2019), 10-17.
[285] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 112-113.
[286] Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007)*,* 50; cf. Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 123.
[287] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 2-3.
[288] Ibid., 17-18.

digitized world, replacing denominational structures and prompting realignment among evangelicals, charismatics, and mainline Protestants. It is an occasion, as Yong writes, to engage in a new mission as both older mainline and evangelical Protestant establishments -

> …have to be reinvented almost completely if they are to engage with an electronically flickering, socially amorphous, and charismatically churning complex of relationships. Surely, 'evangelicals' will be an important feature in this domain of theological education, but it may be even more urgent that theological educators heed not the label of evangelicalism but experiential and charismatic spirituality…less through denominational protocol and more on relational and democratized *charisma*, and networks of charismatic leaders and lay people.[289]

In other words, the older mainline and evangelical Protestant seminaries and denominations need to be pneumatically reimagined as the Holy Spirit de-centers first-world imaginaries that exclude and oppress.[290] According to Yong, the Spirit is pointing the way to a Pentecost Pedagogy that will listen to voices from the margins and include them in online networks that offer more learning opportunities.[291]

4.2.1 Reflecting on Yong's Model

Yong's Pentecost Pedagogy model raises issues concerning my practice-oriented model of formation for the Course of Study. These issues center on the following themes: missional impulse, relational embodied-ness, and abundance amid neoliberal scarcity.

First, on the positive side, Yong's model aligns with the missional, ecclesial, and Spirit-indwelling impulse of the Methodist theological tradition of which I am part. I value the way Yong frames the growth of people in practical knowledge through a comprehensive ministerial praxis, which is critical to fostering a life of holiness of heart and life.[292] Yong's model welcomes all into Christ's redemptive mission as the church practices holiness for those seeking the Spirit's transformation; it also aims to blur the distinction between laity and clergy while establishing bonds of love.[293] This is especially the case concerning persons with mental and physical impairments, people from different ethnic backgrounds, women, and those who cannot afford a theological education. Indeed, one of the central themes in the Sharing Groups was how

[289] Ibid., 18.
[290] Ibid., 70.
[291] Ibid., 20.
[292] Yong and Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 123-124.
[293] Amos Yong, *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 60-64.

people felt welcomed into both the License to Preach School and the Course of Study, and how they found a place to meet others and live into their call to ministry. Local pastors from various denominations formed lasting friendships as they journeyed together in ministry. Interestingly, close to half of the forty-six respondents in my sample came from evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic (PC) traditions.[294] In short, local pastors found a common mission in the UMC.

Second, on a more critical note, I want to address Yong's dialogical and relational emphasis concerning his notion of Pentecost Pedagogy: what does it actually look like on the ground? For example, what happens when Yong's arguments for embodied learning come into contact with his enthusiasm for online learning?[295] How does this impact learning for ministry?

Yong does not appear to explore how online learning formats affect people. Local pastors in my sample repeatedly expressed frustrations with online and digitized forms of education. As they described it, they understood the need for it, mainly due to the pandemic, and knew they could complete the Course of Study sooner by taking more classes online, primarily through the GBHE and/or other Courses of Study. Online learning was more convenient and cost-effective, given the time and cost of travel.[296] Yet other local pastors in my sample reported feeling their learning was cut off from the Course of Study community when online: they were disappointed with instructors who didn't know how to teach online, or with the inability to gather for worship with colleagues.[297]

These concerns raise questions about how Yong appears to over-identify the Spirit with a flattened, digitized world, suggesting that his enthusiasm for online theological education and mission may mask an ideology of efficiency, with a relational, embodied cost. For example, does his model remain disembodied, above the educational fray? How do people learn ministry practices online? How does one attend to the Spirit?

Social philosophers like Christine Rosen and Hubert Dreyfus have asked similar

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[294] See Chapter 6 and Appendix J.

[295] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 18-19.

[296] 'Ed' (SG5/P11) from Iowa expressed this sentiment well when he shared that while serving a circuit of three churches, attending online was helpful for saving money and travel time, though he also admitted he missed seeing his colleagues in person.

[297] 'Kennedy' (SG11/P31) was an example of a local pastor in my sample who missed attending in person and worshipping with others. One of her reasons for sharing this was her frustration with a seminary instructor who didn't return phone calls or emails. She thought it would have been better to meet on the campus.

questions about what kind of persons are being formed by going 'all-in' with online learning.[298] They question what happens to a person staring into a screen and the cumulative effect of digitized educational formats: what actually happens to a person when this kind of learning is taking place? Is it embodied? If so, how? What new pedagogical issues arise? For Dreyfus, online learning fosters privatization, if not isolation.[299] Yet are there ways to cultivate community online? If so, what does it look like? What does it mean to use this kind of technological format to gain pastoral wisdom? Yong does not address these concerns.

And third, related to these online issues, is how Yong's emphasis on the Spirit's egalitarian role plays out. Yong stresses the Holy Spirit shows no partiality (Acts 10:34). A networked world is a sign of the Spirit's flattening and inclusion. Yet, is this really the case? Do the 'charismatic complexes' that Yong promotes negate social hierarchies? For example, one reason many local pastors in my research said they entered ministry in the UMC, considered an old mainline church, was its openness to people of color and women. They shared how they were leaving Pentecostal/Charismatic complexes and groups that excluded them, suggesting that such networks are not entirely free from exclusion or domination. The issue was more complex.

And yet, Yong's model doesn't speak to these issues. Instead, it leaves open concerns about efficiency that make theological education accessible, at the expense of the embodied pedagogies in community that seek to learn practices in specific contexts. To be sure, at the heart of Yong's model, I see embodied relationality as an essential pneumatological dimension in theological education and formation. His approach provides a comprehensive praxis toward hospitality, witness, and mission, according to the Spirit: the church is the embodiment of Spirit-filled relationality. Therefore, as Yong rightfully notes, the Holy Spirit acts particularly, not abstractly, amidst and with particular people in particular places. Ironically, however, what Yong's model needs is an ethnographic upgrade, as it ultimately does not address how such actual, particular people may experience the Spirit in formation in their learning and in the many networks of PC Christianity.[300]

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[298] Christine Rosen addresses how the use of online technologies shifts expectations from seeing people as individuals to seeing them as users who lose sight of valuable human experiences: she asks what kind of person is formed in an increasingly digitized, hyperconnected, algorithmically governed world? What is gained and lost? Cf. Rosen, *The Extinction of Experience: Being Human in a Disembodied World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2024), 4; cf. Hubert L. Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2009), 2-3.
[299] Dreyfus, *On the Internet,* 3.
[300] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 11.

4.3 Engaging Smith's Liturgical Formation Model

James K.A. Smith is a Reformed theologian with a Pentecostal background in the Assemblies of God, teaching at Calvin University in Michigan. Selecting Smith's model may not appear pneumatically evident, as his work has been criticized as 'Cinderella-like' regarding the Holy Spirit. [301]Yet, his three-volume liturgical formation project speaks to pneumato-logical matters, and his *Thinking in Tongues* wrestles with epistemological and pedagogical implications of foregrounding the Holy Spirit in theological education. His critiques of higher education in the American context also provide valuable insights into issues about the formation of local pastors.

Smith grounds his liturgical-formation model in the triune God, particularly the Holy Spirit. Like Yong, Smith argues that the Holy Spirit, who animated the disciples and apostles on Pentecost, remains actively present in the church and throughout all creation.[302] In addition, there is an 'incarnational logic' that influences the Spirit's work: the Spirit's work rhymes with Christ, even though the Spirit is free (Jn. 3:8).[303] The transcendent God takes on imminence in the Incarnation, choosing flesh in Jesus as the particular location of God's presence. This immanence in creation is the 'arena of the Holy Spirit's unfolding.'[304]

Yet such 'immanent presence,' as Smith states, does not mean that the Holy Spirit is identified with or the same as God's creation. Instead, the Holy Spirit can vary in *intensity* from place to place and person to person, most notably in the 'hot spots' of the Spirit in creation.[305] That is, for Smith, all creation (i.e., all that 'is') participates in God, though not everything or everyone participates in God in the same way or to the same degree.[306] Instead, there is a difference between what Smith calls 'structural participation of low-grade intensity' and 'directional participation of high-grade intensity.'[307] Structurally, everything in creation

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[301] Amos Yong, 'Radically Orthodox, Reformed, and Pentecostal: Rethinking the Intersections of Post/Modernity and the Religions in Conversation with James K. A. Smith,' in *Pentecostal Journal of Theology* 15.2 (2007), 233-250.
[302] James K.A. Smith, 'Thinking in Tongues,' in *First Things* 182 (2008), 27.
[303] James K. A. Smith, 'Not by Might, but by the Spirit,' *The Mockingbird* (Spring 2025), 14-19; cf., James K.A. Smith, 'A Logic of Incarnation: The Nicene Option in Continental Philosophy of Religion,' in *The Nicene Option: An Incarnational Phenomenology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021), 63-92.
[304] James K.A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2006), 130, 121-22.
[305] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 150.
[306] James K.A. Smith, 'The Spirit, the Religions, and the World as Sacrament: A Response to Amos Yong's Pneumato-logical Assist,' in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15 (2007), 256.
[307] Smith, 'The Spirit, the Religions and the World,' 256; cf., *Desiring the Kingdom*, 150-51.

participates *in* God, but not all that exists in creation is ordered correctly toward God. Participating properly in God is about having God's regenerating Spirit at work in a person's or a community's life, redirecting them toward their proper *telos*, or end, which is love.[308] This means that the Holy Spirit's regenerating power and presence provide the 'subjective conditions of possibility' for correctly perceiving and interpreting God's reality, affecting both personal subjective and contextual cultural faculties, illuminating human understanding, however dimly (1 Cor. 13:12).[309]

But how does this happen? As Smith contends, the Spirit's work happens bodily, or corporeally: the material side of humanity is the 'vehicle' of the Spirit's redirecting activity.[310] As Smith writes: 'If our most basic comportment to the world is pre-cognitive and affective, then such transformation must be channeled through affective, embodied means; i.e., it happens most intensely in the material practices of liturgical formation.'[311] According to Smith, it takes place at the intersection of desire and practice, often without awareness.[312]

This is why, for Smith, there are no neutral spaces when it comes to desire and practices, as all formation occurs in particular cultural locations. Smith's quip that 'I desire, or shop, therefore I am,' or 'I think, therefore I am,' refers to two such cultural locations or 'temples' dominant in North American society: the shopping mall and the university, respectively. Each 'temple' practices a liturgy that teaches a pedagogy of desire.[313] Smith writes:

> Every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us, in all sorts of precognitive ways to be a certain kind of person. Hence, every liturgy is an education and embedded in every liturgy is an implicit worldview or 'understanding of the world.[314]

In short, every pedagogy has an implicit worldview, which communicates a liturgy about

[308] James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 64.
[309] *Desiring the Kingdom*, 51.
[310] Ibid. 58.
[311] James, K.A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*: *Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 72.
[312] *Desiring the Kingdom*, 32, 60-61.
[313] Ibid., 9. 41-43.
[314] Ibid., 25.

what we are to love and worship, and into what we are initiated, as in the background is a social imaginary influencing us.[315]

This way of framing formation, then, helps Smith shift the focus of learning. Like Cahalan and Yong, Smith stipulates that learning is more than reciting a set of beliefs or passing on ideas: learning is about embodying the practices of discipleship as a way of life.[316] The apprentice in the community, engaged with others, rather than the isolated individual before a computer screen or even necessarily in a lecture hall, learns the disciple's craft. This takes place principally, though not totally, in the church's liturgies, which help the apprentice to integrate reason (*episteme*), skill (*techne*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and the imagination (*poetics*).[317] None of these aspects is reducible to the other, and none works by 'adding' Jesus to the mix. Instead, the goal is holistic discipleship, even in higher education. Again, Smith writes,

> The goal of higher education is the same goal of Christian worship: to form radical disciples of Jesus and citizens of the baptismal city who communally take up the creational task of being God's image bearers, unfolding cultural possibilities latent in creation—but doing so empowered by the Spirit, following the example of Jesus' cruciform cultural labor. In other words, if the goal of Christian worship and discipleship is the formation of a peculiar people, then the goal of Christian higher education should be the same.[318]

Similar to Wesleyan theology and practice, then, learning as a disciple involves participating in a comprehensive matrix of affections, practices, and desires that form disciples into the peculiar people they are, all of whom are oriented toward love of God and neighbor.

Smith draws on Craig Dykstra's work at this point to highlight Dykstra's vision of the Christian faith as one practice among many practices. As I shared in Chapter 2, practices for Dykstra are not just something *we* accomplish but are 'habitations of the Spirit': they are the 'off-ramps' into the Spirit's power and presence, through which we may grow in maturity.[319] Christian practices put us in a position to participate in the mysteries of God and provide the arena in which knowledge of God is tested and palpably felt. This does not mean that practices guarantee experiences of God's presence; instead, they offer the conditions for such

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[315] *You Are What You Love*, 1-2.
[316] *Thinking in Tongues*, 77.
[317] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 124.
[318] *Desiring the Kingdom*, 220.
[319] Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith,* 63, 67; cf., Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 68-69.

experiences.[320] Practices are those 'Spirit-charged' activities found primarily, though not exclusively, in the church's liturgies, which disclose God's true *telos*.[321]

Important for Smith, then, is how he views these 'Spirit-charged' practices embedded within the modern university or academy. Smith wants the university (as well as the rest of culture) to know that there is an 'alternative imaginary' to the other imaginaries that inform society.[322] It is why Smith contends that the modern university can learn a great deal from the church's liturgical practices, as such practices can serve to resist modes of instrumental or 'scientific' reasoning, which are often reductionistic and do not resemble God's 'subversive poetics'—or the appreciation of the body's ways of knowing and doing, such as through the imagination, kinesthetics and aesthetics.[323] Institutions of higher education need to receive from the church a range of metaphors and narratives that embody another life of practical wisdom (phronesis) and extend the table of what constitutes 'real knowledge.'[324]

Yet for these practices to intensify in 'heat' in the church or the university, Smith proposes a two-pronged approach: ecumenical liturgical worship on the one hand and monastic spiritual practices on the other. Such forms and practices can move current higher education, including theological education, toward what he calls 'sanctified perception,' in which the centrality of the Holy Spirit's movement can reconfigure worldviews and redirect lives.[325] Through ecumenical worship traditions like those in United Methodism and Anglicanism, and through monastic practices in the Benedictine tradition, the church and the academy can relearn how to *re-story* their worldviews by embodying Word, sacrament, and song, to name three.[326] Indeed, this might sound contrary to Smith's own Pentecostalism, but it isn't. Both Pentecostalism and ecumenical liturgies are simply different embodied 'tactics' for re-narrating the church's practices of formation amid the liturgies of consumerism, academia, and the state.[327]

The same holds for embedding monastic practices in academic settings. Smith sees table fellowship, prayer, and communal study, to name three, as locations where people may

[320] Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith*, 53; Smith, *You Are What You Love,* 77.
[321] *You Are What You Love*, 69.
[322] *Desiring the Kingdom,* 149.
[323] Ibid., 109.
[324] *Imagining the Kingdom,* 24.
[325] Ibid., 170-71.
[326] Ibid., 116.
[327] *Desiring the Kingdom*, 109.

experience God's Spirit. Indeed, he explicitly writes how singing, studying together, eating, and praying are ways to inhabit the Spirit's overarching end of love amidst other forms of habitation that may deny that love.[328] In fact, drawing on the Methodist theologian Don Saliers, Smith wonders why formation in such academic contexts does not include such embodied forms of learning and moving toward what John Wesley called 'practical divinity' or a holistic vision of discipleship, a question that echoes my concern regarding the formation of local pastors in the UMC amidst the social backdrop of an ecclesiastical and academic imaginary.[329]

4.3.1 Reflecting on Smith's Model

The Trinitarian and Incarnational basis of Smith's liturgical model of formation accentuates the theme of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work in redirecting persons toward their true *telos*: love. For Smith, the desire for learning should amplify the affective and emotional dimensions of discipleship within material practices, embodied relationships, worship liturgies, and the Spirit. In particular, Smith's use of Wesleyan themes, such as undergoing conversion, even *after* 'our hearts are strangely warmed,' should be a constant in any aspect of Methodist higher theological education—growing in wisdom and grace for the sake of Christ's love.[330]

Reflecting on Smith's model, I can envision Methodist hymnody and liturgy contributing to my model. I can see how Smith's liturgical formation project offers a constructive way to keep the true end of theological education in the foreground and to move beyond mere cognitive forms of knowing for local pastors. I resonate with the aim to incorporate multisensory forms of teaching and learning to engage local pastors in ministry.[331]

Yet I also see two interrelated issues with Smith's model. First, based on what local pastors shared in my research, I noticed the importance of worship: worship was a place to encounter the Holy Spirit. Yet worship does not always occur consistently in Courses of Study. Some Courses of Study do not practice communal worship as a part of their gathering and learning, while others do. Courses embedded in universities and seminaries tend to involve more worship than those outside them, but even here, it is not regular.

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[328] *You Are What You Love*, 159.
[329] *Desiring the Kingdom*, 170; cf. Don E. Sailers, 'Singing Our Lives,' in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People,* edited by Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 185-86.
[330] *Desiring the Kingdom,* 153; cf. James K. A. Smith, 'Beyond Integration: Re-Narrating Christian Scholarship in Postmodernity,' in *Beyond Integration? Inter/Disciplinary Possibilities for the Future of Christian Higher Education*, edited by Todd C. Ream, Jerry Pattengale, and David L. Riggs (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2012), 37-40.
[331] *You Are What You Love*, 8; *Thinking in Tongues,* 76.

On the other hand, when local pastors did worship, they expressed gratitude. They appreciated the opportunity to worship with others, which reminded them of who they are and how other instructors and fellow students in the Courses modeled leadership by practicing the liturgy. Several shared that they were being renewed by not continually 'being the one to lead worship,' while engaging in contextual forms of worship across cultures. All these aspects of worship were formative of their learning.

Second, in keeping with the practice of worship, there is the interrelationship between worship and pedagogy. Though Smith's model proposes ecumenical forms of worship and monastic practices, which I utilize in my own model, there remains the question of how the practice-oriented model I advocate portends to go beyond simply 'having a worship service' in the Course of Study or as an add-on. As Pete Ward has argued, the sensibilities and habits generated in worship must also be made explicit in classrooms and seminars.[332] It involves more than a worship service in the Course of Study, but a disposition of worship in all forms of learning. Here, I would contend that such a disposition also carries over to the embodiment of the Spirit's blessings in the conference assembly that recognizes the *charisms*, gifts, ministries, indeed, the actual bodies, of local pastors.[333] What does the neglect of *these* bodies teach about what the assembly finds worthy and desirable concerning the place of local pastors in the community? What kind of disposition is being demonstrated?

Yet I also want to share a concern about Smith's liturgical model and ask how empirical qualitative research can enrich education and formation. Ecumenical worship liturgies provide a common framework for Smith, but how do we assess them, especially when addressing other cultural liturgies and forces? Smith's warning against 'idealized' ecclesiology is instructive here, in that liturgies must be practiced contextually. Yet how might the practices, desires, and beliefs he outlines as essential to formation be understood within complex denominational structures?[334] In other words, as Lauren Winner has asked, does the focus on 'practices' deliver what it promises, or do practices themselves not also run the risk of 'repristination' or 'idealization'?[335] Here, Greg Jones has also contended that beliefs, practices, and desires must be continually assessed when praising God and forming leaders: discernment is always part of this educational

[332] Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology*, 20.
[333] Smith, 'Beyond Integration,' 42.
[334] James A. K. Smith, *Awaiting the King*: *Reforming Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 118.
[335] Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice*, 4-5.

and formational equation, as practices themselves can be misused.[336] But what are the criteria of that discernment?

Smith's openness to ethnographic research also suggests that his model can offer a creative horizon for addressing these concerns. In addition, Smith's work is of critical importance to practicing any kind of 'sanctified perception' within any methodological account of the Spirit in practical theological research, as he shows how all experiences of the Spirit are mediated within cultural and linguistic horizons, which can also distort one's perceptions.[337] Yet, as Smith argues, the Spirit does not concede to such cultural or linguistic horizons: God's Spirit creates on God's own terms. The Spirit moves as the Spirit wills (Jn. 3:8). Therefore, experiences of the Spirit do not contain the Spirit but are always encounters *and* reminders that the Spirit always remains other and 'more' than them, which always call for their testing (1 Jn. 4:1).[338]

4.4 Summary

Cahalan, Yong, and Smith represent three scholars whose work foregrounds the Holy Spirit in theological education and formation. They each address current shifts and concerns in forming those who are preparing for ministry and raise questions about what these shifts and concerns entail in practice. I note three overlapping shifts and two critical matters.

First, I view all the scholars above as grounding their approaches to theological education and formation in the Trinity and the Incarnation, emphasizing the Spirit's role rather than subsuming it. In doing so, they base their models on baptism, discipleship, and vocation, with each highlighting the community of the triune God and integrating theology's being, doing, and knowing. As such, each scholar's views resonate with the UMC's mission of 'making disciples for the transformation of the world.'[339] For Cahalan, for example, this involves seeing all disciples as those who learn to integrate knowledge toward practical wisdom and all who minister as leading a disciple-community; for Yong, it entails becoming enrolled in the mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and being a community whose distinctions between laity and

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[336] L. Gregory Jones, 'Beliefs, Desires, Practices, and the Ends of Theological Education,' in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in the Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 188.
[337] *Imagining the Kingdom*, 113.
[338] James K. A. Smith, 'Faith and the Conditions of Possibility of Experience: A Response to Kevin Hart,' in *The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response*, edited by Kevin Hart and Barbara Eileen Wall (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 89-91.
[339] *Discipline,* Preamble: The Constitution*,* 21.

clergy are blurred, if not flattened out; for Smith, it concerns learning through pedagogies of desire in liturgies that establish people in love. All three, in some fashion, 'turn to practice' in the context of the Spirit's presence as part of their reshaping of theological education and formation.

Second, I see all three scholars emphasizing practical theology more as a way of life than a subdiscipline. Cahalan's emphasis on practical theology, for example, as an integrative practice, aims to foster the 'pastoral imagination' or ways of seeing more deeply into ministry contexts: persons gain wisdom over time as novices on the journey toward expertise with others. Yong's approach moves practical theology toward a multidisciplinary, missional practice, beyond the linear application of theory to practice, and into a dynamic interaction between theory and practice indicative of the Spirit's own comprehensive praxis. In this way, Yong shares with Smith a common Pentecostal perspective that emphasizes the power and presence of the Spirit across cultures, and outlines how worship liturgies are not neutral or 'add-ons' but are necessary to orient theological education toward its true end: love.[340]

A third point, critical to all three scholars' pneumato-logical approaches, is the call to embodiment. That is, all three seek ways to move beyond the Enlightenment's focus on abstract or instrumental notions of reason. Cahalan, for example, grounds her model in the triune God's *perichoretic* movement as a community that indwells practices. Yong does so by focusing on Pentecost as the missional community of hospitality and justice, especially for those considered 'disabled.' Smith argues that educational institutions should practice ecumenical 'counter-liturgies' in response to consumeristic and statist liturgies that distort bodily desires. All these arguments require embodied relationality in practice, plus awakened affections and sanctified perceptions that recognize how learning must take on and involve multisensory forms: the Spirit assumes a body to shape the mission — a pneumaformity.[341]

Yet two matters remain open to further reflection: the relationship between 'academic' and formational models, and the role of online learning formats.

In Chapter 2, I shared how the background conversations in the US framed current debates regarding theological education, specifically between what theologians called the Athenian and Berlin approaches. The arguments pertained to whether these approaches are compatible with one another.

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[340] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 108; Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 208.
[341] Mark J. Keown, *Pneumaformity: Transformation by the Spirit in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2024), 4-6.

My research suggests that this binary is more complicated in practice, especially in how local pastors spoke of their experiences of learning in the Course of Study. In other words, I went into the research expecting that local pastors found the Course of Study too academically focused. Indeed, I assumed local pastors were anti-academic. Instead, what I discovered was that what they did not appreciate was the overly condescending intellectualism of instructors, not academic rigor. Their comments suggested another way to frame the relationship between Athens and Berlin.

Indeed, as I explored Smith's work, I realized that what constitutes the 'anti-academic' is not always what it seems; i.e., anti-academic does not simply reflect desires not to learn but rather ways to 'rationalize away' learning within a preconfigured frame of reference: the 'anti-academic' often mimics what it perceives as its opposite: intellectualism or academism.[342] Smith argues that both are captive to aspects of reasoning that either avoid reality on the one hand or manipulate it on the other.[343] However, what I found in my research was not anti-academic local pastors; rather, I saw local pastors committed to the ministry journey, marked by moments of struggle and illumination in the company of others. In other words, local pastors could deal with the 'academic' challenges of the Course of Study because they were with their colleagues, who were also learning. This didn't mean that they didn't struggle with this aspect of learning. Instead, they were disappointed with instructors and students, whom they felt had another 'agenda' or who didn't value the practical aspects of ministry.

Such a framing of models suggests a more complex picture. It also carries over to and applies to online learning. As I noted above, local pastors understood why they were taking classes online, especially during and following the pandemic. What discouraged them was not online learning itself, but poorly executed online learning and instruction. They didn't find much help from instructors who assigned what they felt were unrealistic assignments, or from instructors whose relational skills were not conducive to online *or* in-person learning. In addition, they felt isolated and disliked not being able to gather with other local pastors to worship, share informally, or engage in practices of friendship and fellowship.

These concerns from local pastors highlight ongoing tensions with online learning and economic issues: they understood the need to meet online and how it helped save time and

[342] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 3.
[343] Ibid., 65.

money. Yet it was a mixed bag concerning both.

Here, only Amos Yong engages with online learning formats by expressing enthusiasm for what he calls 'charismatic complexes' that extend to the church's missions to people groups on the margins of the church and society.[344] He champions such 'complexes' as ways to break down old hierarchies in a newly flattened world. However, the questions I have focus on two concerns: the first is the tension between providing access to learning at the expense of embodied forms of learning — does Yong sacrifice embodiment for access? Not to mention, how do people learn a ministry practice and embody it online? What pedagogies are necessary to facilitate such learning? And how do instructors and students attend to the Spirit when this learning occurs?

The second concern I have concerns the nature of 'networked' Christianity, in the guise of charismatic complexes that Yong appears to espouse. Here, as Brad Christerson and Richard Flory have written, the centrality of power in networked Christianity and charismatic complexes is often associated with the rise of independent leaders whose authority goes unchecked.[345] These networks and complexes reflect a binary worldview that oscillates between anti-institutional and institutional forms of authority and is amenable to scandal and abuse. Local pastors in my research indicated that one reason they left Charismatic and Pentecostal churches and networks was the power dynamics within these groups, as well as their views on women and authority, and their relationships with the prosperity gospel. To be sure, Yong writes against such behavior in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.[346] The problem is that he doesn't critically assess what empirically happens in these churches.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage fully with these concerns. They are ongoing. Instead, as all three of the above scholars suggested, to address these and other concerns in theological education and formation, more is needed than instrumental forms of reason. Instead, what is needed is more akin to imagination: what kinds of imagination are needed to cultivate the spaces for local pastors to learn, whether online or in person? Each scholar whose work I reviewed employs the imagination – Cahalan (pastoral imagination), Yong (pneumato-logical imagination), and Smith (liturgical imagination). All note how images and metaphors play an important role in engaging social imaginaries influenced by academia,

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[344] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 16-19.
[345] Brad Christerson and Richard Flory, *The Rise of Network Christianity: How Independent Leaders Are Changing the Religious Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 1.
[346] *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 111.

consumerism, and statist bureaucracies. They also agree that foregrounding the Holy Spirit more intentionally makes learning for ministry participatory, affective, contextual, and missional, among other aspects. I contend that by foregrounding the Spirit's presence, these aspects are necessarily integrated into a more holistic approach to educating and forming local pastors; they offer a broader epistemological repertoire to understand how people learn and know. In addition, they underscore what I see as the importance of those images that speak of the Spirit's presence and power in the everyday, images that can enrich a practice-oriented model of formation.

Chapter 5

Research Methods

5.0 Introduction

I mentioned in Chapter 1 that this project originated from my role as an instructor in the Course of Study. The question I explored was how licensed local pastors might have experienced the Holy Spirit during their formation. I wanted to reflect on these experiences and explore their implications for the education and preparation of local pastors for ministry. I listened to their stories and testimonies and approached the research in line with Mark Cartledge's methodology for researching Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations.[347] As I shared in Chapter 1, Cartledge's work resonated with my research, as I went back and forth over the data within the broader movement of the Spirit.[348]

In this chapter, I break down the methods I used to collect and analyze the data within this movement. Here are the specific methods:

5.1 Explaining the Research and Gaining Access
5.2 Inviting People to Participate
5.3 Using a Questionnaire
5.4 Leading Sharing Groups Online
5.5 Using Visuals to Share
5.6 Using *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* in Thematic Analysis
5.7 Summary

I conclude the chapter by reflecting on how these methods were useful and identifying potential shortcomings.

5.1 Explaining the Research and Gaining Access

Getting started on the research involved figuring out how to gain access to local pastors in the Courses of Study across the country. As an instructor, I knew many Courses were connected to seminaries. When I consulted the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, I discovered 23 Courses of Study.[349] Initially, I planned to contact the seminaries, which I did, to

[347] I explain how I used Cartledge's approach in Chapter 1; Nicola Slee also speaks of how practical theology is about a movement of 'to-ing and fro-ing' amidst the particulars of research, in *Fragments for Fractured Times,* 13.
[348] Mark J. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives*, 20-26,
[349] Go to the website of GBHEM at www.gbhem.org to the section on the Course of Study.

explore the possibility of visiting local pastors as they took their classes and setting up focus groups. However, I quickly realized that I would not be able to make in-person visits due to logistical constraints, time limitations, and financial considerations. I would need to conduct the 'focus groups,' or what I call the Sharing Groups, online, and work with the directors of the Courses of Study to share information about my research and gain access to the local pastors. This step proved beneficial, as the directors of the Courses of Study helped me make my research project known.

Alan Bryman calls this approach of gaining access to potential participants 'researcher-driven recruitment' or 'snowball' sampling: as a researcher, I learned to collaborate with those who have a stake in the research and obtain their support.[350] This also meant demonstrating that I had ethical approval from Durham University for the directors of the Courses of Study and the leaders of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, which oversees the Course of Study and the seminaries. The email I sent to the Course of Study directors outlined what I was doing, the process I was following, and the goals I was pursuing. I also made information about myself and my supervisors' contact information available.[351] I sent the following items to the directors, which I have also placed in the Appendices:

Appendix B Letter/Email to the Directors of the Courses of Study

Appendix C Letter/Email of Invitation to Local Pastors from the Directors

Appendix D My Personal Letter to Local Pastors to Participate

Appendix E Personal Information Form to Describe Research

Appendix F Consent Form for Local Pastors

Appendix G Management Data Form to Explain Confidentiality and Data Storage

5.2 Inviting People to Participate

The process went as follows: I emailed the Directors first to share my research (Appendix B). Once I had the Directors' permission to contact local pastors, I drafted a letter for them to use to notify local pastors that I would be contacting them (Appendix C). Once complete, I then sent my personal letter/email inviting local pastors to participate in the research (Appendix D). This letter/email described my study and provided contact information for those interested in sharing (Appendix E). I also outlined how the research complied with Durham University's guidelines

[350] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods,* Fifth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 509, 696.
[351] I made available my *resume/vita* if necessary.

(Appendix E). The next step was to receive the names of those who wanted to attend an online sharing group. Once I had the names, I emailed them and explained the role of consent and data management.

Appendix F Consent Form

Appendix G Management Ethical Form

After the participants filled out and read the above regarding Consent and Data Management, agreeing to the format, I sent the email/letter and explained how to use the links to respond to the Questionnaire and to select pictures:

Appendix I Email/Letter with links to the Questionnaire and the Pictures

This email instructed local pastors to complete the Questionnaire and select two 'cards' or pictures based on the following questions:

- Choose a picture that describes your learning experience in the Course of Study.
- Choose a picture that describes how you may have experienced the Holy Spirit as part of your formation.
- If these pictures do not resonate with you, choose an image that does and bring it to the group when it meets online to share.

I left a blank space in the visuals to indicate that a local pastor could bring a picture. The links are described in the following:

Appendix J Questionnaire (Survey Monkey Platform)

Appendix K Pictures to Select

Once the local pastors completed the Questionnaire and selected pictures, we scheduled a time to meet online via Zoom. During the Sharing Groups, my goal as host and facilitator was to practice hospitality and moderate the discussions, providing a consistent yet open format, flexible yet not overly rigid, as described in Appendix L: Sharing Group Format.[352]

The challenge during this Sharing Group phase was finding time across multiple time zones to meet and going back and forth via email. Other people across the country also agreed and responded, creating more opportunities, bringing the total to 13 Sharing Groups.

[352] Jenny Kitzinger, 'The Methodology of Focus Groups: The Importance of Interaction between Research Participants,' in *Sociology of Health and Illness* 16 (1994), 105.

5.3 Using a Questionnaire

The purpose of the Questionnaire was to collect basic information from participants. Here, I collected general demographic data via SurveyMonkey, including age, racial and ethnic composition, gender, and educational background. I also wanted to know other aspects, such as where respondents served as local pastors and what positions they held in the church (if any) before entering local pastor ministry. The Questionnaire also provided a foundation for the semi-structured interviews with the Sharing Groups, enabling me to triangulate the data with the other parts of the research.[353]

The Questionnaire had five parts, with thirty-five questions, taking approximately fifteen minutes to complete:

1. Background Questions (1-4)

2. Information about Membership in The UMC (5-10)

3. Information about Years in Course of Study and Licensed to Preach (11-15)
   Place the Course of Study Meets (16)
   Learning Needs (17)
   Forms of Learning (18)
   Any Classes Not Helpful (19)
   Formal and Informal Learning (20)
   Financial Support (21)

4. Questions about Holy Spirit, Worship, Vocational Support (22-26)

5. Consent and Confidentiality (27-35)

Putting myself in their shoes as a pastor was a factor in this phase: I wanted to be considerate of their time. Yet, I also wanted to gain a sense of how they would respond to other aspects of ministerial formation that had been emerging in discussions in the broader United Methodist Church (UMC) about theological education, e.g., places where the Courses met (16), learning needs (17), usefulness of different learning formats (18), informal and formal learning moments (20), concerns about financial support (21).[354]

Questions about the Holy Spirit, worship, and vocational support were part of the next-to-

[353] Triangulation allows researchers to use multiple sources and methods to corroborate evidence to shed light on particular themes or perspectives. See John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches,* Third Edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013), 251; and Bryman*, Social Research Methods,* 697.
[354] 'Foundation Document: A Wesleyan Vision for Theological Education and Leadership Formation for the 21st Century' (1998). Access at www.gbhem.org/sites.default/files.

last section (22-26).

The final section was about consent and confidentiality (27-35).[355]

All local pastors in the Sharing Groups completed the questionnaire. I break down their responses in Chapter 6: Data Chapter and provide information in Appendix M.

5.4 Leading Online Sharing Groups

I adopted and adapted a focus group format as a central part of this research. Such a method was well suited to my study of how people thought and felt about their formative experiences of the Spirit and of learning in the Course of Study.[356]

However, I changed the term from 'focus group' to 'sharing group' because it resonated more with local pastors than other forms of small-group work within the UMC's ministerial education process. I did so because I felt the language of 'sharing' was more inviting than the sterile language of 'focus' or 'research' group. 'Sharing' implied greater involvement than the language of 'focusing,' though I was focused on what they were expressing by asking follow-up questions. There was also some semblance of a covenant or band group model at work, where participants were invited to express themselves in a non-threatening and safe environment, a format local pastors would know through their Mentoring Groups.[357]

This format, however, had both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was that I could reach many more people online from different jurisdictions and Courses of Study throughout the country. Local pastors had become accustomed to holding frequent Zoom meetings during the pandemic and had begun to learn how to utilize the technology. As I mentioned earlier, this move also meant incurring no financial costs. Instead, a larger-than-expected number of local pastors responded to my invitation to participate online.[358]

A disadvantage to this approach was that I could not always pick up on body language and physical gestures. I could not participate in a local Course of Study. However, by welcoming folks, sharing who I was and what I was trying to do, and providing information about the group process itself—e.g., praying together, showing the visuals online, and exploring questions—I

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[355] 'Foundation Document: A Wesleyan Vision for Theological Education and Leadership Formation for the 21st Century' (1998). Access at www.gbhem.org/sites.default/files.

[356] Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,* Fourth Edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009), 27-30; and Svend Brinkmann, *Qualitative Interviewing: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26-27.

[357] Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), chapter 1.

[358] Byram, *Social Research Methods,* 520.

was able to create a sense of 'online space.'[359]

Indeed, I noticed from the responses I gathered and recorded how everyone participated fully. From my standpoint, as host and facilitator, it was about ensuring everyone felt heard and seen and clarifying any misunderstandings. I also worked to notice facial expressions that might prompt further exploration, as well as individuals who raised their hands in the chat box. I always sought to ask others for their perspective with questions like, 'That was one point; does anyone else have something else to share?'[360] I had no problem with someone dominating the group. One person, however, did not choose to share pictures.[361] One of my tasks was to remain faithful to the covenant of staying on time and keeping the group sharing to approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

I conducted 13 sharing groups with 40 local pastors over six months, from April 2021 to October 2021 (Appendix A). All were online. The largest group consisted of five people, while the other groups averaged three people. One session had one person. Yet, because I wanted to honor her commitment, I followed the sharing format and listened to what she had to say. Richard Krueger and Mary Anne Casey recommend an ideal focus group size of 5 to 6 people.[362] This would have been beneficial. However, due to scheduling challenges and the need to accommodate people from across the country, I worked with those who could attend. This often meant that people from different Courses of Study would interact as well.

I coded the participants in the Sharing Groups as follows: I assigned a number (#) to each person based on the information I received upon completion of the Questionnaire. When I conducted a Sharing Group, for example, I noted it in abbreviated form (Sharing Group = SG and Participant = P). Sharing Groups were numbered in date order. Participants were numbered as well, with a new name given to protect the person's identity, and the names arranged alphabetically within each group, with Sharing Group 1 names starting with A and so forth, as another way to identify the material in terms of pictures and transcripts, and keep track of the local pastors. If a local pastor could not attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict but still completed the Questionnaire, I coded them as follows: DNA/P41 with their name. DNA referred to Did Not Attend. P referred to Participant with their assigned number: e.g., DNA/P41 - 'Nina.'

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[359] Ibid., 518.
[360] Ibid., 522.
[361] 'Larry' in Sharing Group 13, Participant 37 (coded as SG13/P37 in Appendix A).
[362] Krueger and Casey, *Focus Groups*, 31.

See Appendix A for the breakdown of the Sharing Groups. This approach helped me review and organize the data.

Therefore, as noted above, all participants completed the Questionnaire before the meeting and selected visuals. They also all knew that I would be recording the sessions and keeping the recordings and written transcripts safe as part of my process of revisiting the research and listening to what they shared and chose to share (Appendix G). However, once the Sharing Group met, I emailed a note of thanks and invited them to read and complete the Debriefing Form (Appendix H). Here, I addressed any further privacy questions and explained that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

I concluded all the sessions with prayer and encouragement, always asking how we could pray for mutual support in our ministries (Appendix L).

The number of local pastors in this research exceeded my initial expectations—40 for the sharing groups and 46 who completed the questionnaire. It exceeded the sampling size for most approaches to qualitative inquiry.[363] Yet it also provided more than enough data to obtain a good cross-sectional sampling.[364]

5.5 Using Visuals to Share

In *The Art of Theological Reflection*, Patricia O'Connell and John de Beer discuss using images in theological reflection and research, and how images can symbolize experience.[365] They argue that images can capture the totality of a person's felt responses to reality in a given situation and elicit reactions that are often potent with meaning, yet usually remain unaware. Images can provide an imaginative medium to discover what we might find novel.[366]

I chose to use visuals to encourage participants to share and speak about their experiences of formation within the Course of Study. Initially, I considered using Lego Play as a multi-sensory approach, but I found it impractical when I decided to conduct the sharing groups online. Sending Legos in the mail to all the participants to construct figures would not have worked. Instead, using photographs would be a sensory or embodied way to ask about their experience of the Holy Spirit. As O'Connell and de Beer have written, images often operate at different levels

[363] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design,* 157,
[364] Geraldo Marti of Davidson University shared that a research project cannot have enough participants. It is part of the inherent messiness of the research process. The larger sample also means the researcher can use the data for future projects (email from September 25, 2023).
[365] Patricia O'Connell and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 2006), 37.
[366] Ibid.

of conception; they are more total and more closely tied to emotions and feelings, and can prompt a more affective but less intellectualized way of responding, encouraging active participation.[367] Visual imagery offered a concrete, relational medium, in keeping with the research's epistemological assumptions – relational, embodied, and connectional. It allowed for a creative way to engage senses beyond the cognitive in formative experiences in the Course of Study.[368]

I also employed this method because I was aware of the power dynamics between local pastors and elders within the UMC. Even though we are part of the 'priesthood of all believers,' there is a different status among UM ministers, with ordained elders and deacons at the top and licensed local pastors 'in-between,' or sometimes considered as 'less than' or not as 'real pastors.'[369] In addition, I was conscious of my role and status as a white, male elder and as someone in positions of leadership, including as an instructor in the Course of Study. Using visual narration drew attention away from me by providing what Parker Palmer calls a 'third thing,' or a shared object outside the group.[370] It was also another form of connection among participants, a way of doing theological reflection with rather than for, and a catalyst for empirical investigation.[371] As Henri Nouwen suggests, such visuals are like icons or windows into God's presence, evoking deeper emotional responses, both seen and unseen.[372]

I do, however, qualify the use of this method. I sent 26 images via email to invite participants to choose (Appendix K). I left one picture 'blank,' with instructions to bring photos to the sharing group that would describe their experiences. Two local pastors brought pictures to share, which I have also placed in Appendix K and in the next chapter.[373]

The 26 images I used were from Snapshot Playing Cards, a company that provides

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[367] Ibid.
[368] Sarah Dunlop, 'Visual Ethnography,' in *The Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, edited by Pete Ward and Knut Tveitereid (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2022), 419.
[369] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Increasing Interest in Bi-vocational Ministry,' Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., 18-19; www.churchleadership.com.
[370] Parker J. Parmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Self* (Oxford: Wiley, 2024), 91.
[371] Tammie Plouffe, *The Art of Connection: Using Images in Training Facilitation* (Training Industry, 2018); go to www.trainingindustry.com/articles/content-development.
[372] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987), 4. In addition, I use the words 'here' and 'unseen' from the Nicene Creed as a possible way to understand how the stories local pastors shared brought together theological references to the material (incarnational) and the invisible (pneumatological).
[373] 'Kala' (SG11/P29) and 'Linda' (SG 11/P 33).

images for educational and religious purposes.[374] I have used such cards in youth group settings, in spiritual direction, in college classes, and during staff training retreats. I picked cards that captured as broad a range of experiences as possible without overloading the participants. I tried to select images from different cultures and ethnic groups, for example. Yet I also recognize that even this apparent 'universality' is culturally conditioned and that the images are cultural artifacts, with the potential to limit participants' responses. My intention with these particular images was to create an online format that was as accessible as possible, yet also to offer space for conversation and follow-up to express what they sensed was essential to their formation. Pete Ward and Sarah Dunlop have also written that, whether people bring an image to share or the image is supplied, their responses cannot be reduced to a single issue or matter; instead, they offer the opportunity to narrate their experiences and interpretations in the context of their reality.[375]

In this phase, I noticed that the feedback I received from the card images was overwhelmingly positive and generated the kind of discussion I sought. I did not have to resort to constant prompting or interruptions. Instead, I guided the conversations as both host and listener, asking clarifying questions (Appendix L). The challenge was to allow everyone to contribute.

However, the pictures I selected and included in the email/letter (Appendix I) inevitably affected the outcomes. I did not realize until two groups into the sharing group phase in the research that I could have invited people to bring their own photographs instead of supplying them. This was a change I made, and it could have led to different responses and been seen as a limitation; it could have opened up more possibilities for what local pastors narrated.[376]

Yet I did not experience it that way. My goal was to create both a process and a space that enabled participants to access the photocards easily without unnecessary hurdles. I also wanted to have the best possible nationwide response. This element in the process was an aspect

[374] Snap-Shot Cards at www.snapshot.cards.

[375] Pete Ward and Sarah Dunlop, 'Narrated Photography: Visual Representations of the Sacred among Young Polish Migrants in England,' in *Fieldwork in Religion*, 9.1 (2014), 47.

[376] Ward and Dunlop argue that not allowing people to bring a photograph can limit the use of visuals in empirical research; however, they also write that using visuals increases the potential for 'crossing cultural boundaries' (see 'Narrated Photography,' 47). In this research, I saw the use of visuals as a potential for communicating with a wider audience of local pastors and for eliciting responses from them on matters of experience and faith, while keeping power dynamics among us in mind. I did not experience visuals as a limiting factor but as an opening to further discussion; cf. Elli Wort, *Faith Pictures: Using Images in Evangelism* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2024), 4.

of the research's messiness.[377]

Nevertheless, the images served their intended purpose: in-depth conversation. Once sharing began and people started communicating, the discussions ensued. Local pastors spoke openly about their experiences and responded to other questions as they arose. My aim was to find ways to ensure people felt heard and to foster participation. I always thanked those who attended for their involvement. I also noted how they could contact me and what the next research phase entailed (Appendix H).

Once I completed this Sharing Group phase, I transcribed the Zoom calls and compiled a booklet of chapters, with each Sharing Group represented by a chapter and the participants' names. I also began, as noted in the Questionnaire phase, to go back and forth between the respondents' Questionnaire answers and their responses in the transcripts. I put together short paragraphs of information for each local pastor based on what they shared. This allowed me to reference and double-reference the data. The process of attending to or going back and forth over the data took time, including the Questionnaires, transcripts, and images. It was also during this period that I began to realize that what I was doing was learning to abide in the research, seeking and finding patterns or themes among the different participants. I had moved from collecting the data to learning how to analyze it, interpret it, and indeed indwell or abide with it.

5.6 Using *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* with Thematic Analysis

I noted earlier in Chapter 1 and above that I did not have a predetermined methodology in mind at the outset of this research. Instead, as the research progressed, I recognized how Mark Cartledge's approach to studying Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations and their experiences of the Spirit resonated with what I was doing. I began to see how my methods could operate within this broader research framework in relation to the data.[378] Here, I also sensed an affinity between my methodology and my concerns for pedagogy: I realized that what I was doing was learning to abide with or indwell the material as I returned to the pictures, transcripts,

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[377] I thank Sarah Dunlop for this feedback on the unavoidability of how the selection of visuals affects possible research outcomes and its accompanying messiness in research (email from December 11, 2023).

[378] Natasha Mauther and Adrea Doucet, 'Reflections on a Voice-Centered Relational Method: Analyzing Maternal and Domestic Voices,' in *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Researching Data Collection to Analysis: Public Knowledge and Private Lives,* edited by Anne Ribbens and Rosalind Edwards (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 136; cf. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,' in *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3.2 (2006), 87-88.

and my own position as a researcher.[379] Cartledge's framework helped me see how I was moving through and amidst the data, yielding insights and surprises.

Yet, as I shared, as part of using *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina*, I also employed a thematic analysis method, which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts and Questionnaire responses and relating them to the visuals and so on. I recognized that what I was doing here had much in common with the practice of 'contemplative attention' rather than simple data analysis.[380] There was 'more' to listening and attending to what people shared, without precluding what they offered by slotting them into prescribed categories or having a fixed methodology in mind from the start. Instead, I was searching for ways to comprehend what local pastors had communicated about their formative experiences in specific contexts.[381] Therefore, I did not find the methods of coding and recoding – e.g., chunking, lumping, reducing, analyzing, and fracturing – helpful for capturing and understanding the experiences of local pastors in the Course of Study.[382]

Instead, employing thematic analysis, as used in the Relational Voice Center Method (RVCM), offered a more relational and reflexive, even contemplative, approach to the material, as one of learning to attend to the information.[383] Here was a method that could help me cluster what I was reading thematically through the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina,* to shed light on the multilayered meanings, relationships, and even contradictions in the experiences of local pastors.[384] It also assisted me in moving from collection to analysis in a more receptive posture, while paying attention to the 'I voice' of participants as they spoke for themselves before I would say for them.[385] Indeed, by using the photographs, I could also begin to identify responses along the lines of the pictures local pastors chose. Here, however, I also began to

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[379] Nicola Slee, *Fragments for Fractured Times,* 13; cf. Bernadette Flanagan, '*Quaestio Divina*: Research as a Spiritual Practice,' in *The Way* 53.4 (2014), 126-136; and Mary Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2018), 194-195.
[380] Catherine Sexton, 'Method as Contemplative Inquiry: From Holy Listening to Sacred Reading and Shared Horizons,' in *Practical Theology*, 12.1 (2019), 47; and Mary Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy: Re-Appropriating Monastic Practice for the Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2018), 94-96.
[381] Ibid., 47-48.
[382] Nicola Slee, 'Feminist Qualitative Research as Spiritual Practice,' 21-22; cf. Jane Leach, 'Pastoral Theology as Attention,' in *Practical Theology* 1.152 (2007), 19-32.
[383] Mauther and Doucet, 'Reflections on a Voice-Centered Relational Method,' 136.
[384] Pete Ward and Sarah Dunlop, 'Narrated Photography,' 48.
[385] Mauther and Doucet, 'Reflections on a Voice-Centered Relational Method,' 136; cf. Julia Lunn, 'Paying Attention: The Task of Attending in Spiritual Direction and Practical Theology,' in *Practical Theology* 2.2 (2009), 222-223.

notice that I could not separate the practices of Thematic Analysis, Visio Divina, and Lectio Divina: I was constantly moving among the different poles of the research, paying attention to the various voices and noticing emerging themes.[386] Indeed, over time, I identified and clustered the recurring themes as the process unfolded. For example, as I adapted thematic analysis as part of (RVCM) using *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina*, I followed the following pattern of reading and contemplating:

- In my first reading of transcripts and pictures, I reviewed the material and noted which picture cards local pastors chose. This gave me an immediate way to organize what they shared in response to these questions: a) What picture best describes your learning experiences in the Course of Study? b) What picture best describes your experience of the Holy Spirit as part of your formation in the Course of Study?

  I began creating sections for each chosen picture, with participants' responses listed under the corresponding image. I coded each person and numbered them according to the Sharing group and Participant—e.g., Sharing Group 1, Participant 1 = SG1/P1 (Appendix A). I recorded the participant with their two pictures and noted their transcript responses in my first written document.

- The second reading involved revisiting the transcripts and attending to the 'I voice,' listening again to how they responded, what they said, and what I had missed. I began exploring and considering other personal factors, such as place, gender, race, and age.

  I also began to bring their responses to bear on their answers to the Questionnaire, triangulating and cross-referencing them. Because I had a separate document for each person with the above codes, I reviewed my initial reading to identify any other emerging patterns. An example of this is how often I noticed participants using specific words, such as 'overwhelmed' or 'support,' to describe their feelings. Another word used was 'immersed' to explain how they experienced the Course of Study.

- The third central reading involved analyzing the transcripts through the lens of relationships, focusing on participants' discussions of essential connections, such as their relationship with God, the wider church, the Course of Study, their local congregation, family, and friends.

  Here, I grouped major themes into more specific 'thematic sections,' noting the themes mentioned and how they were communicated through

[386] Leach, 'Pastoral Theology as Attention,' 24-28.

the visuals and transcripts. In this phase, I paid particular attention to participants' responses to the second question about the Spirit, noting any patterns and then making 'two different trails' of responses–one regarding responses to the first question about learning, and the other about the Spirit. Recording these responses, I could then begin to notice what, if any, the implications for formation were and what other differences or similarities there might be. For example, what images and themes regarding learning and the Spirit were surfacing, overlapping, or different?

- The fourth reading addressed participants' interactions with broader cultural and institutional factors. Here, I was interested not only in what was said but also in what was not. Throughout the Sharing Group phase, for example, I was mindful of the schism taking place in the UMC, as well as anecdotal experiences I had with local pastors, in which I heard frustration at being treated as 'second-class' citizens in the church and at the problems the UMC was facing. Would these issues come up in the Sharing Groups?[387]

  The same concerns apply to geographical differences: folks from the Native American Course of Study in the upper Midwest, for example, shared that their views of the Holy Spirit were evolving, as were their thoughts on the colonial nature of theological education in the UMC. What did this entail for their education and formation regarding other broader institutional and cultural processes?[388]

These many readings helped me to create a picture of how local pastors felt they had experienced their learning and the Spirit in the Course of Study. Indeed, the last form of reading, in particular when I began noting the major themes, brought together the critical and contemplative to frame another way of understanding their experiences: i.e., I noticed what James K. A. Smith has called moments of 'intensity,' or how themes related to 'intensity' emerged around things such as worship and friendship, as well as around frustration with a lack of progress in integrating their learning for ministry into practice, or with concerns about vocation and finances.[389] It made me realize that 'more' was happening between what they said and what they didn't say, concerning their experiences of the Spirit.

Therefore, as I began using these methods to analyze my findings, I tried to avoid reducing the people I had interviewed to anonymous data points. I also wanted to resist utilizing different data software to code and identify themes. I felt that these methods detached me from

[387] McClure, 'Pastoral Theology as the Art of Paying Attention: Widening the Horizons,' 198-200.
[388] Sexton, 'Method as Contemplative Inquiry,' 46-47; and Braun and Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis,' 87.
[389] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works,* 111-112.

the material and the participants' ‘life-worlds’. Parsing words through a computer program didn’t work for me. Instead, I wanted to focus on recurring themes and images in the booklets I had created as reflection journals. In doing so, I could start to diagram where themes overlapped and diverged. My primary concern was to honor the realities and perceptions expressed by local pastors, noting where and how they had sensed the Spirit’s presence and what they felt about their learning.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, I described how I employed specific research methods to gather my data. I also shared how I moved within my large methodological framework, adopting it from Mark Cartledge to approach and analyze the data. In doing so, I spent time reviewing the material within the research's poles, keeping the larger movement in mind. In doing so, I felt that my methodology and concerns for pedagogy intersected in focusing on the movement or the ‘dialectics’ of Cartledge’s model.

Yet the methods I used had strengths and weaknesses. The online Sharing Groups, for example, allowed me to engage with, listen to, and respond to a relatively large number of local pastors across the county. I gained access and learned from a significant cross-section. However, I was also unable to be present for or participate in what they experienced, except for the Case Study I shared, which I observed as a participant observer. This kind of participation could have provided a whole other angle to the Spirit’s encounter, bodily and emotionally, by seeing immediate experiences in a classroom or worship setting, among others.

Using visuals as a method also served as a creative and practical catalyst for theological reflection and empirical research. The visuals brought forth insights and surprises I could attend to. This method also allowed me to elicit a wide range of responses and begin developing cluster themes based on the images, while also triangulating with other methods, such as the Questionnaire and transcripts. A potential weakness, however, was that I could have encouraged local pastors to bring their own photographs on the front end or to draw a picture to increase the repertoire of responses. This could have added more to the emerging themes. Instead, my goal of not creating too many barriers to participation played a role in that decision. There was also a sense that the pictures I used offered a natural way to notice and organize the material. Regardless, the cards were helpful because they allowed people to share; they elicited more information than I expected.

The methods I used to analyze the data, such as thematic analysis, along with the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina,* helped me realize that I had a large amount of written and visual material. The way I set up my booklets or journals allowed me to sit with the material over time. Here, I discerned and reflected on what local pastors shared about their experiences of the Spirit as part of their formation in the Course of Study. Referring to Henri Nouwen, the visuals were like small icons of what was happening among local pastors, offering a glimpse of what they had experienced of the Spirit and of what they had learned for ministry.[390] Going back and forth between the pictures, transcripts, and Questionnaire, I began to notice recurring themes. Indeed, as I reviewed material from the Sharing Groups, I realized early on that I had reached saturation, particularly after the fifth.[391]

These methods of accessing, collecting, organizing, and attending to the data, then, offered a way to conduct this research over a six to seven-month period. The process was one of constant movement in contemplation, a movement that allowed themes to emerge regarding how local pastors had sensed they had encountered the Holy Spirit as part of their formation in the Course of Study, and what they shared about their learning. Bringing the data and themes together more thematically is what I now turn to in Chapter 6.

[390] Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons,* 29-32.
[391] Egon G. Guba and Yvonne S. Lincoln, 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research,' in *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* edited by Denzin Lincoln (London: SAGE, 1994), 230.

Chapter 6:
Data Chapter: Questionnaire Summary and Image Responses

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I share the data from the Questionnaire and the Sharing Groups, noting how local pastors in my sample responded to the questions I asked and the visuals I presented: the aim is to highlight how I went further into the themes that emerged and to understand how these themes clustered together regarding their experiences of the Holy Spirit as part of their learning and formation in the Course of Study.

In addition, I introduce the four following themes that I saw surfacing from the method of thematic analysis and the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina*: a) the practice of worship, which local pastors shared as a place of encounter of the Holy Spirit, b) the role of friendship, which created the bonds for the journey into learning for ministry, c) pedagogies that were geared toward learning ministry, and 4) vocational stewardship, which arose as a decision to enroll in the Course of Study and not seminary due to financial costs. Over time, I identified these themes and came to realize that local pastors not only experienced the Spirit's presence in these particular ways, but also, I claim, are indwelt by the Spirit in these experiences as they journey through the Course of Study: i.e., as participants shared, they experienced the Spirit as they met and learned together, placing great value on the everyday aspects of their education and formation.

I break down the chapter as follows:

Readers will see that, for each Question in sections 6.4.1 and 6.5.1, I have identified the following four areas or themes, with the pictures and comments representative of each. These sections look like this in abbreviated form:

Themes to Question 1 (Learning) *Themes to Question 2 (Spirit)*

A. Learning as a journey
B. Learning as a challenge
C. Learning as friendship
D. Learning as a Novice

A. Spirit in worship & friendship
B. Spirit as illuminated experience
C. Spirit experienced amidst growth
D. Spirit as experienced in diversity

I conclude with a summary and suggest that local pastors' experiences of the Spirit point to the Spirit's indwelling in the ordinary, and that attending to these experiences enriches theological education as part of a broader process of formation.

6.1 Research Sample in Context of the UMC Figures

Forty-six licensed local pastors from 21 states and 15 Courses of Study participated in this research by taking the Questionnaire; 40 local pastors participated in the Sharing Groups.[392] The discrepancy between these two numbers is due to scheduling conflicts during the times when the Sharing Groups met.

Of all the participants in the research (Questionnaire and Sharing Groups), 26 were female, and 20 were male. However, the following information indicates the number of people who actually took part:

- 44 Licensed Local Pastors (LLPs) completed the Questionnaire.
- Of these 44, 38 completed the Questionnaire *and* participated in the Sharing Groups.

  *2 local pastors did not complete a Questionnaire but attended a Sharing Group.

The *status* of these local pastors with the *Questionnaire* broke down accordingly:

- 25 full-time
- 19 part-time - [393]

The *status* of the local pastors in the *Sharing Groups* was as follows:

- 22 full-time
- 18 part-time

[392] There are 18 Courses of Study in the United States, divided into Regional Schools and their Extension Sites. New satellites are emerging, enabling seminaries to extend Course of Study classes to other locations and demographic groups, such as Hispanic and Pacific Islander communities. In addition, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry has developed Courses of Study for persons who speak Portuguese, Korean, and French.

[393] Part-time denotes pastors who work in occupations beyond the local church, bi-vocationally or multi-vocationally. Full-time refers to those who are employed by a local church and who might itinerate, though not always in the United Methodist Church, because I reached a saturation point early, the themes,

To see how my research sample relates to broader trends and figures in the United Methodist Church (UMC), I utilized several sources: the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, which bases its reports on the General Council of Finance and Administration (GCFA), and WesPath (the insurance and pension company for UMC clergy). These entities record the following numbers about clergy in the UMC: as of 2023, there are currently 6,107 LLPs, compared to 10,010 elders and 906 deacons.[394] Approximately 40% of *all* UMC pastors are now LLPs, serving approximately one-third of all UM churches, a number, according to Lovett Weems, that will only grow.[395]

In 2019, before the disaffiliation process in the UMC began, the Religious Workforce Project reflected the following numbers concerning LLPs:

- 3,774 licensed pastors were full-time.
- 6,729 were part-time.[396]

The project shared that LLPs might serve two or more churches, leading to their being counted twice. However, another factor in not knowing exactly how many LLPs there are is that, in the UMC, *Wespath,* the entity overseeing pastoral benefits, may include part-time pastors who do not qualify for pensions, depending on annual conference policies. Such pastors are also not always counted.[397] In addition, as the Lewis Center at Wesley Theological Seminary has documented, many LLPs have left the UMC since 2020 and 2021.[398] Disaffiliation contributed to this process following the Special Called General Conference in 2019 that opened the door for UM churches to leave the denomination over questions related to sexuality and same-sex weddings.[399] The UMC lost nearly one-quarter of its membership, or 1.5 million people.

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[394] The General Commission on Finance and Administration is responsible for assembling data from churches and conferences throughout the UMC. Conferences rely on this information but also use statistics from groups like Gallup and Pew, which often lead to variations in the data. WesPath is the organization that serves pastors and churches with insurance and pensions, keeping data on these parts of the UMC's ministry; cf., Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church: 2023 Report' (Lewis Center Report on Elders, Deacons, and Local Pastors) at www.churchleadership.com.

[395] Weems, 'Clergy Trends in the United Methodist Church: 2023 Report'; cf. Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Circuit Riders for New Frontiers: The Rise of Local Pastors.' Paper given at the Tapestry Conference sponsored by Wespath on November 10, 2025. Sent to me by the author on December 19, 2025.

[396] 'Religious Workforce Project Report from Lewis Center for Church Leadership: 2022 Report' at the www.churchleadership.com and personal email by Lovett H. Weems, Jr. (August 19, 2024).

[397] I owe this insight regarding *Wespath* to Lovett Weems in an email (October 3, 2024).

[398] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Twenty-Five Percent of Churches Disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church' (January 16, 2024) at www.churchleadership.com.

[399] The 2019 General Conference approved a 'gracious exit' with Petition 90066, adding ¶ 2553 to the *Discipline*, which allowed congregations to leave the UMC with a two-thirds vote of a local church.

However, over a third of the churches that left the UMC through disaffiliation were led by local pastors.[400] That is, over 4,300 LLPs left from 2020 through 2021, many of whom were in the southeastern and southcentral parts of the United States. However, even with this information, it is difficult to locate the exact numbers of churches, congregants, and pastors that disaffiliated.[401] Of all the participants in my sample, no local pastor left. Indeed, during the Sharing Group phase, no local pastors ever spoke about disaffiliation.[402]

Yet overall, these numbers reflect a growing trend among those serving as bi-vocational or multi-vocational pastors across all denominations in the US: bi-vocational pastors now serve close to one-third of all congregations, and 30% of all seminary graduates plan to serve as bi- or multi-vocational pastors.[403] However, again, few denominations and independent groups track the number of bi-vocational or multi-vocational clergy despite a growing recognition of their roles in the church.[404]

As noted, these national trends overlap with those in LLPs within the UMC. Many, but not all, LLPs serve churches with an average weekly worship attendance of fewer than 50.[405] However, LLPs in the UMC do not serve only small-membership churches. As several respondents in my sample indicated, they serve on large church staffs, lead medium-sized churches (200 or more in worship), or head up staff on larger circuits of small congregations; they also serve in numerous contexts amidst demographic shifts, including multicultural settings, numerical and financial decline, and disaffiliation.[406]

6.2 Questionnaire Breakdown and Composition of Research Sample

I divided the Questionnaire into five sections, which I have placed in Appendix J. The first part (Questions 1-4) collected basic demographic data on age, gender, ethnic background,

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[400] Ibid.

[401] I have learned, from serving on the GBHEM Task Force for Reviewing and Revamping the Course of Study, that the UMC does not have a reliable accounting of pastors serving in general and licensed local pastors in particular, making this information difficult to obtain (December 4, 2025); cf. 'Twenty-Five Percent of Churches Disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church.'

[402] I make this point because I did not ask about disaffiliation during the Sharing Groups, unless local pastors brought it up. Only one local pastor shared that a church she was serving was going to leave. She, however, was not.

[403] Stephens, *Beyond Bi-vocational and Multi-vocational Ministry*, 5.

[404] Weems, 'Increasing Interest in Bi-vocational Ministry,' 12.

[405] It is hard to gauge the number of churches. Still, from 2000 to 2019, the number of congregations with fewer than twenty-five people in worship increased by 2,059, from 8,530 in 2000 to 10,589 in 2019—data from the General Council on Finance and Administration in the UMC, or www.gcfa.com.

[406] 'Religious Workforce Project: Part II–Types of Pastors Deployed to Serve,' from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at www.churchleadership.com.

and prior education. The second section (Questions 5-10) focused on previous ministerial and ecclesial experiences. The third section (Questions 11-21) addressed items on learning in the Course of Study. The fourth section (22-26) asked questions about encountering or experiencing the Holy Spirit, worship, and vocation in ministry. The fifth section addressed confidentiality and consent, a reminder to reinforce previous communications (Appendix G).

The average portrait of a participant from these two parts of the research, Questionnaire and Sharing Groups, is that of a well-educated, college-educated, white female in her early sixties, serving smaller churches in the midwestern *US*.[407] This portrait runs counter to the UMC national average, where over 60% of LLPs are male and just over 35% are female.[408] My research sample was reversed: 60% were female and 40% male.

- Questionnaire - 28 females and 16 males
- Sharing Groups - 22 females and 18 males

My research sample, however, is closer to the UMC's national average in terms of age breakdown. Again, according to the Lewis Center, the average age of *all* LLPs in the UMC is 55, and the median age is 58.[409]

The median age in my research was 59**.** This point is an estimate, as I did not specifically ask for an age. Instead, I had people tell me where they fell within age ranges (Appendix J: Question 1).[410] I also had four people who did not answer the question, all of whom were women. According to Lifeway Research, the average age of all US pastors, full-time and part-time, is 57, and they are predominantly white males, over 60%.[411]

Lastly, my research sample was predominantly white. Nationally, 74% of LLPs identify as white, with 4.6% identifying as African-American, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic/Latino, and less

[407] Roberto Fernandez Morales, 'United Methodist Church: Bi-vocational Local Pastor Study' (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church Research Services, 2024).
[408] Weems, 'Clergy Trends in the UMC: 2023 Report,' 15.
[409] Ibid., 16.
[410] To arrive at these numbers, I took the middle numbers of my age brackets and found what I thought was the approximate number 59. When I took the lowest number, it came to 52. Splitting the difference comes to about 55, close to the average. This is not exact, but it is within the range of my overall sample.
[411] 'Faith Communities Today: Twenty Years of the Congregational Church: The 2020 Faith Communities Overview,' 17; go to www.faithcommunitiestoday.org.

than 2% multiracial or ethnic/Native-American or other. Yet in the UMC as a whole, 83% of all clergy identify as white and Caucasian.[412] My samples looked like the following:

Questionnaire	*Sharing Groups*
Caucasian - 34	Caucasian - 32
African American - 2	African American - 3
Asian - 1	Asian - 1
Hispanic - 2	Hispanic - 2
Multiethnic - 5	Multiethnic - 2

All the multiethnic and Asian participants in both the Questionnaire and the Sharing Groups were female. All the Hispanic and African American participants in both research phases were male, meaning 22 women and 12 men identified as white and Caucasian in the Questionnaire, and 29 women and 15 men were white and Caucasian in the Sharing Groups. The sample is indicative of the larger racial trends in the UMC, predominantly white.[413]

In Questions 5-10, I wanted to learn how local pastors came to ministry. Here, I asked about their previous religious backgrounds and service in the UMC or other ecclesial bodies. I discovered that nearly half came from different denominations, including Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic (Appendix J: Question 5). Many were active as leaders, Sunday school teachers, and in other roles, including music and trustee positions, as well as youth leadership. The primary takeaway was that the local church provided the basis for their call to ministry (Appendix J: Question 8).

Regardless of ecclesial background, the participants in my research shared how they had served in ministry from five to more than 15 years, with an average of 10.2 years as local pastors, with this average of having served at least three churches, e.g., as members of a staff, multiple charges, multiethnic, cooperative, and yoked churches, or extension ministries (Appendix J: Questions 6 and 7).

Except for one participant, all respondents in my sample had served in various occupations before entering ministry, including teachers, attorneys, college professors, business owners, and government workers (Appendix J: Questions 4 and 5).[414] The picture I began to see *emerging was that of a vocational journey beginning in the local church and winding through*

[412] Amanda Mountain, 'Analysis of Race/Ethnicity of United Methodist Clergy,' in *United Methodist Communications* (2024) at www.gcsrw.org. See pages 3 and 6.
[413] Ibid, 1-2.
[414] 'Nora' (QO3/P44).

some form of education and employment, sensing God's call, moving into licensed ministry, and finally returning to serve the local church (Appendix J: Question 9).

Questions 11-21 were aimed at finding out how long local pastors had been in the Course of Study, where their Courses of Study met, and how they viewed their formation and learning for ministry. I wanted to discover what they thought and felt about the different classes they attended. For example, the first four questions addressed the longevity of participation and the number of remaining classes (Appendix J: Questions 11-14), but I also asked about their experiences in the License to Preach School, which everyone must take; all respondents reported having taken it (Question 11). On average, however, respondents to these questions reported that they had begun the Course of Study within the past 10 years, though one person began in 1997 and the most recent in 2021 (Appendix J: Question 12).[415]

Of the 44 people who responded to the Questionnaire, 21 had completed all twenty classes (Appendix J: Question 14). Of these 21, however, only two went on to the Advanced Course of Study.[416] The other twenty-three respondents were still working to finish their coursework, from one class to seventeen classes remaining. Two people indicated that they did not know when they would complete the Course. One individual revealed he had been taking classes in the Course of Study for twenty years.[417]

In this section, I also wanted to know where the Courses took place. Here, the top two places were colleges and seminaries (Appendix J: Question 15). A couple of Courses of Study met in UM congregations (e.g., Indiana and Great Plains Conferences). Courses of Study embedded in seminaries and universities, called Regional Schools, meet in the following seminaries: Claremont, Candler School of Theology, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, St. Paul's School of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Duke Divinity School, Wesley Theological Seminary, and Methodist Theological School of Ohio. Fourteen respondents also shared that they attend Extension Sites, or sites connected to a seminary that meet elsewhere, such as the Native American Course of Study (NACOS) and the Appalachian Course of Study (ACOS).[418] There is now also a Portuguese Course of Study for those who will be ministering

[415] 'Betty' (SG2/P3) began in 1997, and 'Amber' began in 2021 (SG/P1) at the time of this research.
[416] 'Faye' (SG6/P15) from the Southcentral Jurisdiction and 'Kennedy' (SG12/P31) from Northcentral Jurisdiction.
[417] 'Larry' (SG12/P37) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction.
[418] Go to www.gbhem.org/courseofstudy to see the Extension Sites.

among the Portuguese population in the northeastern United States.[419]

Yet another part of the Questionnaire concerned learning modalities and possible challenges to learning. Here, I learned that 10% of the people in my sample reported having dyslexia and/or special learning needs (Appendix J: Question 16). They also noted that they did not receive formal support from their respective Courses of Study; instead, informal support made the difference (Question 17). 26 people answered this question.

Concerning learning modalities, I found out that the lecture format was the most commonly mentioned. However, the messages were also mixed, ranging from instructors who lacked engagement to those who encouraged feedback (Appendix J: Question 18). Two pastors, for example, noted frustration with seminary instructors they felt had an 'agenda,' other than teaching toward ministry.[420] That agenda, as they expressed it, regarded how instructors were sharing information beyond what the class syllabus covered. Responses to online learning formats also varied. Some local pastors wrote that some of their professors captured their attention by engaging them online in creative ways; others felt their instructors did not allow dialogue and struggled with technical computer issues.[421]

A key finding, however, was how a great deal of learning for ministry occurred outside the formal classes, or with alternative pedagogies, such as circle discussions in NACOS, with passing the 'talking stick' when they began Course of Study in silence and sat in a circle to listen and receive what others shared. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and case studies were also enthusiastically mentioned, along with learning projects such as study groups, film studies, and breakout groups (Appendix J: Question 19). Local pastors shared how they preferred more 'hands-on' pedagogies.[422]

These insights coincided with observations from the Sharing Groups that much of

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[419] I learned this from Trip Lowery, one of the directors of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, at the Task Force Meeting to Review the Course of Study in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 4-5, of which I am a member.

[420] 'Amy' (SG1/P2) from the Southeastern Jurisdiction and 'Debbie' (SG4/P10) from the Southcentral Jurisdiction made particular references to instructors who they felt departed from the course objectives to share views that really did not pertain to the practice of ministry. 'Amy' (SG1/P2), for example, stated how her instructor spoke about liberation for Latin American peoples, but didn't make connections with how to share in ministry with her own local church.

[421] 'Glenna' (SG7/19) and 'Kathrine' (SG11/P30) are examples of this sentiment. They expressed appreciation for instructors who created space for learning and frustration with those who did not know how to use online learning formats to engage students.

[422] I left Question 19 open so local pastors could answer. They shared these and other answers, which also came out in the sharing groups.

learning for ministry occurs informally and experientially (Appendix J: Question 20). Local pastors spoke of formative experiences outside the formal classroom, across a broader range of contexts, including meals, everyday conversations, and travel time with others. According to the Questionnaire respondents, all these informal moments benefited their learning experiences.[423]

These responses also raised questions about teaching and learning more generally: when local pastors found they could integrate the material into their ministry contexts, they appeared grateful. As one pastor indicated, 'All of the classes were helpful in some way, even when they were not geared toward ministry. I grew from every class.'[424]

Yet another finding from the Questionnaire was how local pastors experienced their instructors: some didn't respond to their concerns about ministry; others didn't respond to their requests or questions by email; and one stated that he would rather do research in a library than teach in the Course of Study.[425] Other respondents shared how they felt when an instructor 'ghosted' them or when a teacher did not follow their learning objectives.[426] These frustrations also emerged in the Sharing Groups, reinforcing a bias among local pastors about how instructors treated them as 'ordinands' or 'seminarians.'[427]

Yet others LLPs reported how their professors told them how much they loved teaching local pastors rather than seminarians: local pastors 'got it' and seminarians didn't, as local pastors had 'life experiences' that seminarians didn't.[428]

A theme that emerged in both the Questionnaire *and* Sharing Groups concerned finances. While seminaries often offer financial assistance, LLPs may not have the same support. Indeed, I asked if they received any financial aid on the questionnaire (Appendix J: Question 21). The vast majority reported receiving help from their local church and, sometimes, from their annual conferences. Others who worked outside the church adopted a 'tentmaking' attitude and took pride in supporting themselves financially, meaning they received no support from the church.[429]

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[423] Local pastors expressed these frustrations in writing. When local pastors found they could use and integrate the material in their ministries, they expressed gratitude.
[424] 'Hank' from the Southeastern Jurisdiction made this statement (SG8/P22). As the lead pastor, 'Hank' serves a medium-sized church (150 more in worship).
[425] 'Caroline' from the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SG3/P6).
[426] 'Kala' from the Northcentral Jurisdiction (SG11/Participant 29).
[427] 'Gabriel' (SG7/P20) from the NACOS and 'Kathrine' (SG 11/P30) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction mentioned how they perceived instructors who viewed the Course of Study as 'second-rate' theological education. They resented this viewpoint because they had both gone to seminary. They didn't see much difference between the two.
[428] 'Amy' (SG1/P2) from the Southeastern Jurisdiction.
[429] 'Maurice'(SG13/P39) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction

Most respondents, however, received some kind of financial help, though two part-time pastors struggled with costs due to their lower income.[430]

The final section of the Questionnaire, which addressed the Course of Study, covered the Spirit, worship, and vocation (Appendix J: Questions 22-26). As I shared above, I wanted to find out how and where local pastors felt they had encountered the Holy Spirit during formation in the Course of Study. The answers revealed a variety of responses, many of which are in keeping with the informal ways of learning and were raised in the Sharing Groups. Here, however, the answers underscored the importance of worship and reiterated the significance of friendship and experiential, or hands-on, pedagogies. 35 of the 44 respondents identified 'worship' as a key location for experiencing the Holy Spirit.

However, one local pastor wrote about a time when she felt the Holy Spirit was not experienced: she noted that she found the coursework too academic and the instructors unresponsive to her concerns.[431] Yet 'Ed' from New England stated that he felt the question was difficult to answer because he believed the Holy Spirit was always present.[432]

These answers paralleled other responses that I noticed in the Sharing Groups, as participants felt the more 'academic' approaches to teaching tended to blunt the Spirit, especially, for example, when teachers did not embody prayer in class, discouraged discussion, or failed to take time to respond to their students' questions.[433] Two examples of this sentiment are as follows:

- 'Danielle' (SG4/P8) from Southeastern Jurisdiction: '*I felt that less learning occurred online and much less in a seminary, as there is little personal interaction. It was mixed, to be sure. I have taken classes in all these settings — the Course of Study, seminary, and online. Seminary was mostly a 'head trip,' and online, we don't connect.'*

- 'Grace' (SG7/P18) from the NACOS in the Northcentral Jurisdiction: Serving a multiple-staff congregation, noted how she attended seven classes in a seminary setting and took classes in the Course of Study.*'* She said she felt the *'seminary context was too institutional, as it did not allow the Spirit to move. It was linear in teaching, which differs from the NACOS, which practices circular learning, i.e.,*

[430] 'Issac' (SG9/P24) from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and 'Jerry' (SG10/P28) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction.
[431] 'Laura' (SG12/P35) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction felt this way when instructors did not return emails.
[432] 'Ed' (SG5/P11) from the Northeastern Jurisdiction.
[433] 'Linda' (SG12/P33) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction.

allows the Holy Spirit to be experienced more and learning in a circle, face-to-face.'

Yet in the Questionnaire, I also began to see other themes coalescing: the first concerned the importance of informal gatherings in cultivating friendships for learning ministry. This was especially true in the License to Preach School and the Course of Study.

The second was the practice of worship: LLPs appreciated worshipping together and learning how to share in worship and prayer as part of their formative experiences, having the opportunity to encounter God's Spirit.

The third concerned questions about online and in-person pedagogies: there was ambivalence toward online learning, especially following the pandemic, and this was more evident in the Sharing Groups, where several said that pedagogies such as case studies, CPE, and class sharing helped their learning more than 'book learning.' One LLP in particular questioned the ordering of the classes, seeking more practical courses near the beginning when they were first entering a local church.[434] 'Harry,' for example, from Virginia, put it this way:

- Harry (SG8/P23) --- *'We know we need more academic classes, but we also need to rethink the order of the classes and what we need at the beginning of our ministries to be more effective; we need to focus on that rather than focus on completing academic requirements. The academics will come.'*

The last recurring theme with the Questionnaire was the role of finances in vocational decision-making: local pastors expressed concerns about stewarding resources, time, family, and employment. It was a factor in enrolling in the Course of Study and part of a larger issue in discerning where to serve in the UMC: why go into debt by attending a seminary when you can participate in the Course of Study? The Course of Study does not cost as much as a seminary. After all, isn't the Course of Study *like* a seminary? If so, why bother with seminary?

Such questions, I discovered, were part of broader issues at the intersection of vocation and education, raising further questions about the Course of Study, the stewardship of local pastors' financial resources, and the extent to which the wider UMC will invest in local pastors' ministries.

[434] 'Faye' (SG6/P16) from the Northcentral Jurisdiction makes reference to how she would have appreciated classes on preaching and pastoral care at the beginning, especially when confronted with the death of a child and a family dealing with addictions.

6.3 Composition of Sharing Groups Compared to Questionnaire

During the Sharing Group phase of the research, 40 participants took part. My Sharing Group research sample showed a few variations among the respondents to the Questionnaire. There was no difference in age variance. It was predominantly female, though fewer than the Questionnaire, mostly located in the Midwestern US.

One difference was that six women who completed the Questionnaire did not participate in the Sharing Groups due to scheduling conflicts. Of these six, three identified as multiethnic ('Nancy,' 'Naomi,' 'Nina') and three as Caucasian ('Nora,' 'Nicole,' 'Natalie').[435] Five were from the Northcentral Jurisdiction (Midwest) ('Nancy,' 'Naomi,' 'Nina,' 'Nora,' and 'Nicole') and one from the Southeastern Jurisdiction ('Natalie').

The ages of these six women who did not participate in the Sharing Group ranged from 31 to 66. The youngest, 31, held a full-time appointment; she also held a high school diploma ('Natalie'). The other women's educational backgrounds were as follows: three had bachelor's degrees ('Nora,' 'Nicole,' 'Nina'), one had a postgraduate degree ('Nancy'), and one had vocational training ('Naomi'). Four served full-time ('Natalie,' 'Nora,' 'Nina,' 'Nancy'), and two part-time ('Naomi' and 'Nicole').[436]

I mention these women here because I realized how their presence in the Sharing Groups could have influenced what was communicated, given that a large number of participants were Caucasian, and how I didn't have as many LLPs from different ethnic backgrounds.

Yet two males who did not complete the Questionnaire *did* participate in the Sharing Groups: one white ('Lou'- SG12/P34) and one African American ('Jerry' - SG10/P28). 'Lou' served a church full-time in Ohio, age 45, with a bachelor's degree. 'Jerry' served part-time in Indiana at age 65 and was vocationally trained, working at General Electric. 'Jerry' was near completing the Course of Study. 'Lou' had patched together his classes in various Courses of Study to complete his requirements sooner, going to Appalachian Course of Study (ACOS), United Theological Seminary (UTS), and General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM).

I mention these differences to indicate, as I shared above, that my Sharing Group sample

[435] I coded the six people who were questionnaires only as follows: Questionnaire Only = QO: 'Nina' (QO/P41), 'Naomi' (QO/P42), 'Nancy' (Q/P43), 'Nora' (QO/P44), 'Nyla' (QO/P45), 'Neriah' (QO/P46). See Appendix A.
[436] Full-time were 'Naomi,' 'Nancy,' 'Nora, and 'Nyla'; part-time were 'Neriah' and 'Nina.' See Appendix A.

remained predominantly white and Caucasian, and that participants in the 13 online groups were mostly from the Midwest, highly educated, and female.

6.4. Responses to Visuals in Sharing Groups

I stipulated in Chapter 5 that I wanted to use pictures to ask local pastors how they would describe their learning and experiences of the Spirit during their formation in the Course of Study. Using images helped me discern and reflect on what local pastors shared. In addition, I began to lean into what Sarah Pink has written about 'ethnographic hunches' in research, which entail intuition and reflexivity, and in which the interaction between participants and researcher is oriented toward dialogue and outcomes not determined in advance.[437] I found Pink's 'ethnographic hunch' to be in keeping with the contemplative practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* as I attended to the data, which focused on engaging all my senses.

I break down local pastors' responses to the visual images into two phases: first, responses to Question 1; and second, responses to Question 2. In doing so, however, I organize the pictures into the four themes that emerged among the participants, predominantly along the lines of worship, friendship, and pedagogies (ways of learning). Broadly, these themes surfaced as local pastors spoke of their experiences in the Course of Study. The economic or financial issue was part of the conversation, but it was not mentioned in the initial response. It emerged during the group sharing.

I have kept the responses to the next two sections separate because I was interested in seeing how there might be overlap. I want to highlight the process by which I arrived at the dominant themes expressed in the Sharing Groups, as well as how I brought their responses into conversation with the Questionnaire.

6.4.1 Responses and Themes to Question 1 in Sharing Groups

I noted in Chapter 5 that I asked local pastors two questions to elicit responses: first, 'What picture would you choose to describe your experiences of learning in the Course of Study?' And second, 'What picture would you choose to describe how you may or may not have experienced the Holy Spirit as part of your formation in the Course of Study?' These questions were intended to generate feedback from local pastors, without me as the researcher 'getting in

[437] Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography,* Fourth Edition (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2021), 94; cf., Sarah Dunlop and Pete Ward, 'Narrated Photography: Visual Representation of the Saints among Young Polish People,' 35.

the way.' That is, I wanted to allow conversation and attend to what participants shared.[438]

The following are the pictures, from left to right, that local pastors chose when they answered Question 1; the number at the bottom of each photograph indicates how many people chose it and commented on it. This is the first step that helped to organize what they expressed:

9 **5** **4** **4** **3** **3** **2**

2 **1** **1** **1** **1** **1***

Figure #1

One individual did not choose a picture, and one person brought a photo (the picture of the children with the teacher around the table*).

Going back and forth between the images and attending to the transcripts, I noticed four areas that seemed to cluster around how local pastors described their *learning:*

- First, learning as a journey together (e.g., rowing, hiking, two hands grasping): communal emphasis and support, but in motion.
- Second, learning but with frustration (e.g., boy with hands on head, girl with head on books, clock/not enough time): individual challenges.
- Third, learning as part of fellowship with others (e.g., table with friends, hiking with others): hospitality.
- Fourth, learning as a novice but growing despite challenges (e.g., candles, light bulb, going up the ladder, baby in hospital, infant on the back of a person): 'Aha moments.'

[438] Sexton, 'Method as Contemplative Inquiry,' 53.

6.4.2 Learning as Journey: Communal Focus

 *Learning as a journey of friends together*: This photograph sparked a great deal of conversation, depicting learning as a journey. Two people shared the following as examples of their responses:

- *'*Cameron' (SG3/P4) from California: '*Learning was a difficult journey for me, but we were a community walking together in the same direction, making it joyful along the way.'*

- 'Hank' (SG8/P22), serving a congregation in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, likened this picture to *'circuit riders moving through the country together.'* He noted the *'deep bonds of friendship'* as he traveled to and from the Course of Study with others and made friends with so many.

Other local pastors who chose this photo explicitly referenced the learning experience as walking with others in a particular direction, oriented toward growing as pastors.

 *Learning as supportive relationships*: Rowing captured the community feeling of being in the same boat and going in the same direction.

- 'Candy' (SG3/P5) from Nevada, a former state official in the state education department, noticed in this picture the importance of '*community-building and moving in one direction together. I was not alone. I needed support.'*

- 'Isaac' (SG9/P24) from Kentucky, serving a small church, indicated how the learning was more like '*rowing against the stream*.' 'Isaac' felt he would '*never finish the classes. Yet, I rowed and rowed with others, even though I always felt behind. I was glad I had company!'*

 *Learning as a community of friends*: Four people described this picture as expressing how learning, as practiced in formal or informal meals, shaped their experiences in the Course of Study.

- 'Abby' (SG1/P1) from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, serving a small church in North Carolina, referred to the number of LLPs who stayed at a hotel during the

Course of Study. She spoke about how this picture described her experience of studying with others from the Congo, New Mexico, Texas, and Maine. She said the picture prompted the *'importance of eating and learning together. I needed this exposure to people not like myself.'*

- 'Harry' (SG8/P23) noted that he had completed several Courses of Study at various Extension Schools and the Advanced Course of Study offered by the GBHEM. He felt that fellowship enabled him to meet people from across the country. As Harry put it: '*Around tables, we ate and shared. It allowed for a practical form of learning to take place,'* as that's where *'aspects of ministry were fleshed out as opposed to just sitting in a classroom or reading a book.'*

 *Learning in a welcoming community*: When connected to learning, this image elicited the response about the importance of hospitality. The Course of Study was where local pastors could meet others and learn in a safe environment:

- 'Franco' (SG6/P15), a Hispanic pastor in Nebraska serving a declining Caucasian church and a new Hispanic church plant to reach the growing Latino population, spoke of the hands of welcome and support in the Course of Study: 'I *was isolated in the Southern Baptist Church, but recognized and affirmed in the UMC. I looked forward to the Course of Study as a place to meet my friends.'*

6.4.3 Learning but with Frustration: Individual Challenges

Local pastors noted how learning in the Course of Study was challenging in several different ways.

 *Learning with frustration*: This image evoked frustration, primarily with assignments or instructors. The word 'overwhelmed' was used to describe these feelings. For example,

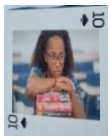
- 'Lacy' (SG 12/P36), serving two small congregations in Illinois, noted how taking classes online was not a good fit for her. She got frustrated because she had not met in person for classes since she began the Course of Study during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, she had a doctoral student as an instructor who she said '*had never taught a class on ministry, assigning 500 pages to read and then not referring to the pages in class. It was a waste of time.'*

- ‘Debbie’ (SG 4/P10), from Texas, alluded to another aspect of frustration: the bureaucratic maze of denominational obligations and the logistical challenges of just getting to and from the Course of Study. These hurdles were constant, Debbie said, *‘first, there were the inconsistencies of my conference leaders who gave conflicting messages, from ‘Take the courses now’ to ‘Take your time.’ What was it? And then, there were challenges concerning the time to drive to class and not getting responses from instructors.’*

 *Learning amidst challenges of time*: The clock image conveyed to respondents the challenge of ‘*getting things done on time*’ and *‘stress.’*

- ‘Daniele’ (SG4/P8), a retired part-time pastor serving two churches in Texas, shared how she always felt the ‘*crunch of the clock in the Course of Study: papers due, professors to please, churches to lead.’* She commented, ‘*We have five to eight years to complete our work. The clock is always ticking.’*

- ‘Jerry’ from Indiana (SG10/P28), a part-time local pastor serving a small African American congregation, felt the pressure of working in a factory, attending school, running a martial arts business, and pastoring a church. The experience of learning, he said, was *‘overwhelming*, *but I had to figure it out*: *after all, the clock was ticking.’*

 *Learning as a challenge through book learning:* This picture of the girl with her hands on the book served as a bridge to other themes of learning. The girl represented ‘deep learning’ and ‘meditation.’ To others, like ‘Ivy,’ it depicted a challenge with the Course of Study.

- ‘Caroline’ (SG3/P6) from California, a ‘legacy Methodist,’ said this picture conjured up her ‘*love of learning*.’ She was drawn to the library at Claremont to access books and journals; she felt that the professors in her classes enriched her learning, and she said, ‘*These books are like friends.’*

- ‘Ivy’ (SG9/P25) from North Carolina, however, serving as a part-time pastor of a ‘yoked’ charge of AME and UMC churches. She perceived the girl as ‘*bummed out’* and shared how the enormous number of books was not good financial stewardship*: ‘It sums up how I feel about the books I never opened. That’s what my face looks like when I get them and sit there. It also sums up my feelings about my learning: for what purpose? How do I read them all? I am pastoring two*

churches, married, and have two kids. I work full-time, and I don't get a refund for my classes. It feels overwhelming.'

6.4.4 Learning as Part of Fellowship: Friendship

Though many, as noted above, saw these pictures as important for formal learning, others saw them as providing informal ways to connect with others, even in classes, which was a big part of their learning experiences in the Course of Study.

 *Appreciating Each Other's Gifts in the Course of Study*

- 'Gabriel' (SG7/20), from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, spoke of how appreciation for others' gifts in the groups helped him to feel accepted: *'I knew I could gather at the table and receive and give support, and it made all the difference in how I understood who I was as a pastor.'*

- 'Emily' (SG5/P13), serving two churches on Cape Cod, felt this picture communicated what she called the *'non-hierarchical feeling of the classroom, as knowledge in my classes occurred as part of ongoing conversations and not the top-down directions as in the Roman Catholic Church*.'

 *Learning as feeling safe in a place of hospitality.*

- 'Glenna' (SG7/P19), from Minnesota, stated that, in NACOS, she had a difficult time with the academic coursework as a 61-year-old woman, but that *'NACOS also offered me a safe space to express myself and learn. It was a place for us all as we all had our backpacks of wisdom.'*

- *'*Joe' (SG10/P26), from the westside of Indianapolis, serving in a large suburban church, spoke of how the Course of Study was a place where he learned to feel welcomed, so much so that he shared how '*it was a place where many of us as pastors carried heavy loads, and then, there were more loads to carry because of the assignments in the Course of Study, but we felt we could help each other.'*

6.4.5 Learning as a Novice: 'Aha Moments'

When asked to describe their learning experiences, local pastors referred to multiple pictures that clustered around pedagogy, instruction, and teaching.

 *Learning as illumination*: The theme of light and illumination, not only in this picture but also in two others—the light bulb and the candles. Five pastors spoke of learning as the image of the sunrise or sunset, as a sense of 'before' and 'after'--'Aha moments.'

- 'Klee' (SG11/P32) from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference made a similar statement. An Asian American pastor serving a full-time appointment, 'Klee' said that the picture reminded her of illumination: *'I began with one view of pastoral care and ended up with a new, more helpful understanding.'*

 *Learning as moving towards God*: The ladder photo conjured images of climbing upward. Two people identified it with worshipping and growing in faith.

- 'Maurice' (SG13/P39), an African American pastor from Indianapolis, spoke of the solid foundation of the courses and how the ladder was a tool for climbing toward understanding God's mission. The tool was the Course of Study, which helped him develop as a minister.

 *Learning as growing from childhood to adulthood*: The image of a baby receiving care prompted discussion about how several LLPs felt they were moving from childhood to adulthood, or novice to expert:

- 'Ezekiel' (SG5/P14), a Hispanic pastor in Pennsylvania, stated, '*I felt like a baby when I began the Course of Study. Yet I grew. I learned how to receive support and help from others. I learned something new in every class that helped me to pastor better.*'

 *Learning amidst isolation*: This light image prompted several responses ranging from 'Aha' moments to deep contemplation, and the need for space to reflect:

- 'Evan' (SG5/P12) referred to this image: '*The Course of Study provided light for me as a pastor of a small church in rural Vermont. I am part-time but isolated. The classes have been valuable. I could connect, even online, with others, though I prefer in-person because of the community.'*

 *Learning growing as a spiritual baby*: This photo evoked themes of dependence and was associated with the need for others to learn:

- Serving a circuit of five churches in rural Illinois with his wife, 'Max' (SG13/P40) spoke of how this picture reminded him of growing as a 'spiritual baby' and how '*the Spirit carried me, helping me grow in preaching and scriptural interpretation. Even after 'boot camp' (License to Preach School), I was a baby, but I feel I have grown as a pastor, though it has not been easy.'*

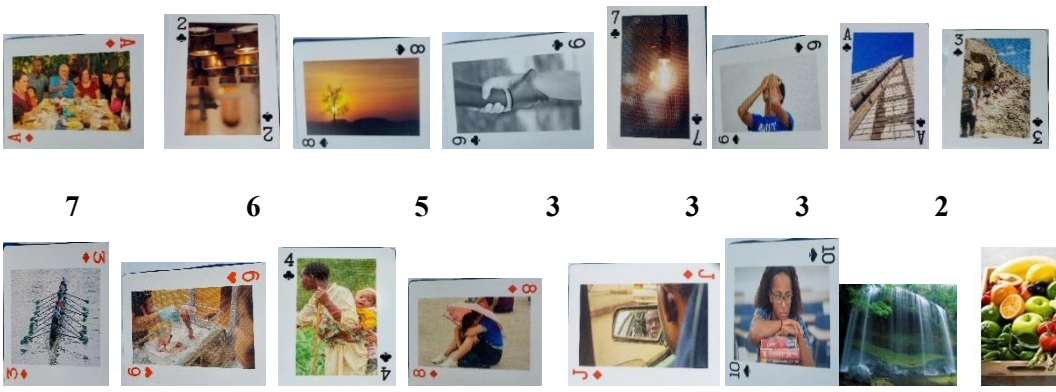
 *Learning as a child*: Similar to the image of the child in the hospital, this picture was used to describe the Course of Study:

- 'Faith' (SG6/P17), a former Roman Catholic, shared: *'I felt like a child again when I went to the Course of Study. I didn't realize how much I love learning, but I did learn together with others as a child. There was no condescension in the classes. I loved our instructors and students.'*

Brief Summary: Within this matrix of responses, I noticed how many local pastors viewed their learning as a journey, punctuated by moments of frustration and illumination. Some shared feelings of being overwhelmed by work and time commitments, but also valued immersive experiences that fostered friendships. A strong communal emphasis was important, as well as the affirmation of their gifts and fellowship with others, experienced as hospitality. Local pastors felt that this kind of learning space enabled them to move from knowing little about ministry to more mature views of what it means to be a pastor as they experienced God's Spirit.

6.5.1 Responses and Themes to Question 2 in the Sharing Groups

The second question I asked in the Sharing Groups was, 'What picture would you choose that describes your experience of the Holy Spirit?' Similar to above, I note how many local pastors chose the following pictures, with the number at the bottom of each photograph.



7 6 5 3 3 3 2 2

1 1 1 1 1 1 1* 1**

Figure #2

One person did not choose a picture, and one person brought two images (waterfall* and fruit and vegetables**). The following images were *not* selected for either question in the sharing groups:

Figure #3

Going back and forth between the images and attending to the transcripts, I noticed four areas that seemed to cluster around how local pastors described their experiences of the *Spirit:*

- First, the Spirit as experienced in worship and friendship.
- Second, the Spirit illuminates the experience of learning.
- Third, the Spirit as understanding, especially when feeling inadequate and moving from childhood to wisdom.
- Fourth, the Spirit as an experience of diversity.

6.5.2 The Spirit as Experienced in Worship and Friendship

The Spirit as experienced in friendship: This image was chosen by seven people to highlight the intersection of friendship and the Spirit.

- ‘Craig’ (SG3/P7) from California, noted this common theme by sharing how *‘sitting around the table eating with others before, during, and after class built lifelong friendships and allowed enriching fellowship to occur, not to mention learning in class. I felt the Spirit helped us to bond together throughout.’*

- ‘Jane’ (SG10/P27), from northern Indiana, spoke of how she experienced *‘the Spirit at work in conversations, formally in class, and informally at lunch; there is a community where we lift each other up, especially in worship. I came to appreciate how we had space to catch up and share.’*

 *The Spirit as light experienced in worship*: Six respondents associated this picture with worship.

- ‘Craig’ (SG3/P7), from California, made this association: ‘*Having time to pray, meditate, and worship in the chapel at Claremont was important for me to learn. The morning prayer was indispensable.’*

- ‘Betty’ (SG@/P3) from Chattanooga, Tennessee, recalling a monastic reference at a convent, felt the candles captured the experience of the Spirit: *‘The light guided me toward God. I should have been a nun! Humility is what characterizes learning as Spirit and light: when we worship at the Course, I feel God’s nearness.’*

‘Dakota’ (SG4/P9) from East Texas, however, noted that she had no reference to these pictures, as the Holy Spirit was not mentioned in her Course of Study: professors did not pray, and worship was not offered. The focus was on ‘academics.’ Nevertheless, this picture reminded ‘Dakota’ of God’s presence with her, despite the lack of attention.

 *The Spirit as light experienced in worship.*

- ‘Emily’ (SG5/P13) described herself, like ‘Betty,’ as a ‘mystic’ who sees the tension in all learning with worship. The light prompted contemplation on the ‘*deep things of God*,’ especially when worshipping: ‘*We all as pastors were in proximity with each other, and we were sharing a common endeavor: the Light came through in worship.’*

 *The Spirit experienced as being ‘taken up’ into God’s presence in worship*:

- ‘Ezekiel’ (SG5/P14), a Hispanic pastor, communicated, *‘The ladder is going up, and that’s where we are going as God’s people: moving up into God’s presence. This is why I value worship in the Course of Study. God lifts us in worship, and we lift each other up. We grow. We learn as the Spirit moves us. I could also take ideas from the worship services for my churches.’*

- ‘Hank’ (SG8/P22) from Virginia made a similar connection: *‘The worship services in the Course of Study lifted us after a week of serving in the local church. It was a relief to share in worship and receive support. I didn’t have to lead worship, but felt I could worship.’*


The Spirit flows in worship and learning: One individual, ‘Faith,’ brought this picture to share, describing her experience of the Holy Spirit. She felt the Spirit present in moments of learning challenges and worship. The two experiences were not mutually exclusive:

- ‘Faith’ (SG6/P17) stated how she sensed the outpouring of the Spirit, even during challenging moments: ‘*God was present during those times when I was struggling with the assignments, but when I went to worship, I sensed the flow of the Spirit through the whole process. I was challenged and comforted.’*

6.5.3 The Spirit Experienced in Illumination when Learning

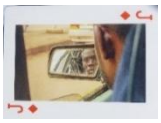

The Spirit experienced as ‘Aha’ Moments: The light bulb triggered responses that resonated with the theme of illumination and the Spirit:

- ‘Klee’ (SG11/P32), noting a language bearer as an Asian woman, remarked that ‘*the Holy Spirit illuminated and helped me understand what I was doing. It was difficult, but the Spirit guided me all the way. The Spirit was my friend. The Spirit was like a bridge.’*

- ‘Georgia’ (SG7/P21) mentioned how, in some classes, there was more ‘light’ than in others. For example, courses on spiritual formation and pastoral care geared toward ministry provided ‘light’ when she was pastoring, whereas classes on theology and history were less so, as they were ‘*highly academic*.’ She also remarked that the Holy Spirit helped her to make sense of the work, even, as she put it, *‘she made her way in the darkness of the Course of Study.’*

 *The Spirit experienced as God's holding on to us*: The theme was God's loving presence, holding on to them in times of uncertainty in ministry and the Course of Study:

- 'Kennedy' (SG11/P31) serves what she describes as 'Metho-Baptist' churches in Illinois. She shared how she experienced the Holy Spirit as a '*grip, having a deep connection, or two hands embracing me*.' She felt the Holy Spirit say to her, *'I got you. I am not letting you go as you go through the Course of Study and the challenges of ministry.'*

 *The Holy Spirit as the One who calls to self-reflection*: The person who chose this picture offered vocational questions about his experience of God's Spirit, noting that he felt the Course of Study provided light to explore these questions.

- 'Mike' (SG13/P38), an African American pastor serving in a changing neighborhood, shared how *'this image prompted vocational questions, even with the crack in the mirror. The Course of Study offered me moments to reflect deeply on my ministry: Why am I here? Where am I going? I felt comforted by the Spirit and others in my classes in doing so.'*

6.5.4 The Spirit Experienced as Growth when Feeling Inadequate

 *The Spirit was experienced as growing, even amid frustration:*

- 'Jerry' (SG10/P28), a part-time African American pastor from southern Indiana, asked, '*What have I gotten into? What am I doing here? Can I do this? Yet the longer I was in the Course of Study, the more the Spirit grew in me, even though I struggled. I was learning. I could have quit, but I didn't.'*

 *Spirit experienced as nourisher and life-giver*:

- 'Danielle' (SG4/P8) said, *'I feel like a babe in Christ when I am in the Course of Study, so I rely on the Spirit of God to help me grow. God keeps me nourished even though I am unsure about what I am doing as a pastor.'*

 *Spirit experienced as a new life for learning*:

- 'Georgia' (SG7/P21): *'The Holy Spirit was saying to me: it doesn't matter how old you are, I have a new way of life for you, and this birth into a new life is what God wants you to know: God will carry you through the struggles. God has you on his back: you are not alone.'*

 *The Holy Spirit experienced as a protective presence*: The feelings of a person who looked dejected prompted the following:

- 'Grace' (SG7/P21) from Wisconsin shared, *'I felt the Spirit protecting and shielding me, even during difficult times in the Course of Study and ministry, especially when I was tired or distressed with my church. The coursework was also hard for me, but I made it. I am thankful for God's protection along the journey. It was a challenge for me as an older woman in ministry.'*

6.5.5 The Spirit Experienced amidst Diversity

 *Walking in the Spirit of diversity:*

- 'Gabriel' (SG7/P20) from the Native American Course of Study felt the following way about his experience of the Spirit: '*The Holy Spirit walked with us as we journeyed in different places along the path: we were diverse, from many peoples, yet still were one together. The Spirit enriched this experience with others.*'

- 'Harry' (SG8/P23) made a similar reference: *'I sensed God's Spirit working through the Course of Study, all the teachers and students; there was a sense of assurance, especially in the Advanced Course of Study, where people from diverse backgrounds and ideas were many. It was a gift. The Spirit held us together even when we disagreed. I needed to hear from my African American friends!'*

The Holy Spirit experienced as a diverse, colorful presence: 'Lacy' brought this picture and expressed having 'imposter syndrome' regarding the Course of Study and need for friends:

- 'Lacy' (SG12/P26): *'Despite the poor teaching and lousy grading by our instructors, I experienced the Holy Spirit in fresh and colorful ways. I grew as a pastor and a person. My 'imposter syndrome' didn't get the best of me. I felt assured and thanked God and my colleagues for the support during the classes. That diversity was a gift, despite the monochrome liberal theology.'*

Rowing with others in the Spirit: 'Kala' indicated how she felt the Spirit's presence in the rhythm of life:

- 'Kala' (SG11/P29) shared that '*the Holy Spirit was with us as we moved in the same direction in the Course of Study: we came from different backgrounds. I was not alone, but with other pastors. We were helping each other, and I found that as a gift, even from the people I disagreed with.'*

Brief Summary: The responses to the second question clustered around two areas, prompting me to organize them into two key categories: worship and friendship. Local pastors stressed in all the Sharing Groups that these experiences were highly formative for them and for the community of fellow local pastors. The ethos of hospitality, as stressed above, overlapped with what they felt was the Spirit's support from other local pastors and instructors. This played an important role in their learning for ministry, which they testified as the Spirit's presence: they were able to grow and mature. These experiences of the Spirit were further reinforced by engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, which contributed to their overall learning.

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, I presented the material that emerged from the responses to the Questionnaire and the Sharing Groups. The aim of the Questionnaire was to collect demographic information and to provide a way to triangulate material from the Sharing Groups. The photos provided a medium for local pastors to share freely. I was able to 'get out of the way' and listen

to what local pastors had to share. The pictures also helped me organize the material, as they demanded my attention and prompted further reflection on what Terry Veling calls the 'compelling nature of the research.'[439]

Therefore, from the Questionnaire and Sharing Groups, I gained a general picture of the people who responded to the invitation to participate. I learned that my sample was not fully representative of local pastors nationwide, especially in terms of racial and ethnic breakdowns, but it was representative in terms of age.[440] My other general takeaway was that the average participant was predominantly female, well-educated, and white or Caucasian, with an average age of 63. I was able to see how my sample differed from the dominant US image of local pastors as male, Caucasian, and older.[441]

Yet the themes that emerged quickly began to overlap, reaching saturation.[442] As I shared above, I realized two significant themes: the first, the communal bonds of friendship, and the second, the importance of worship. These themes were significant for learning.

The other two themes I noticed overlapping between the two questions clustered around pedagogy and learning, as well as what I call vocational stewardship. I say "pedagogy" because the images of light, children, a ladder, and books, among others, pointed to how many local pastors had experienced significant struggle with academic modes of learning and ambivalence toward online learning formats. Issues related to course presentation, curriculum, and time constraints were critical factors that were cited as affecting how local pastors felt about their learning. However, I also realized that local pastors did not dismiss 'academics' outright; rather, they disliked the condescending or dismissive attitudes of those who instructed them. Whether online or in person, local pastors emphasized the importance of experiential, hands-on pedagogical approaches that enhanced their learning for ministry and enriched their ministry practice.

The other theme, about stewardship and the financial costs, was a surprise. This concern came up in all the sharing groups, unprompted by an image, though it was a question on the

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[439] Terry Veling, 'Listening to the Voices on the Pages and Combining the Letters: Spiritual Practices of Reading and Writing,' in *Religious Education* 102.2 (2007), 213; cf. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,' 77-78.
[440] 'Religious Workforce Project Report for Church Leadership: 2022 Report' at www.churchleadership.com.
[441] Ibid.
[442] John C. Creswell and David Creswell argue that the saturation point occurs when fresh data no longer sparks new insights; I felt I had hit the saturation point after five sharing groups; cf. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth Edition (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), 186.

Questionnaire (Appendix J: Question 21). It was also one of the primary reasons local pastors enrolled in the Course of Study: it was a vocational decision, or, as they reasoned, 'Why bother with seminary when I can attend the Course of Study and receive a seminary-like education and not go into debt, or move my family? I can pastor and take classes.'

Therefore, upon reviewing the data, I began to notice how formation occurs at multiple levels for local pastors, both formally and informally. Many dimensions, such as family demands, economic challenges, ecclesial frustrations, personal growth, and academic requirements, are significant aspects in their formation. All impacts how they learn. However, looking back, I wish I had pursued the responses concerning learning challenges. Those matters did not come up in the Sharing Groups (Appendix J: Question 16).

Yet, as I went over the material, I also started to realize that the Course of Study was not simply a place for attaining a grade, which I had assumed, but was a community of pastors who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and live that indwelling in the everyday or ordinary: local pastors indwell their vocations, in the Spirit, despite numerous challenges, inside and outside the church. They learn by doing and place great importance on experiential and affective pedagogies, and rely heavily on the support of their friends and colleagues.

In other words, what I came to see was how local pastors indwell and are indwelt by the Spirit as they journey into ministry in the UMC: their experiences testify to how they learn for ministry, mainly outside the classroom, but also how they value a learning environment that reminds them of who they are as people and pastors: local pastors find ways to support each other as they live by and abide in the Spirit despite frustrations with requirements, curriculum, and instructors who feel detached from the everyday challenges of ministry. Such embodied experiences are both formal and informal, and suggest that attending to them can offer ways to reenvision education and the formation of local pastors. I want to propose that what can enrich this 'revision' are the stories and images in John's Gospel and First Letter: the four themes that emerged above - a) worship, b) friendship, c) pedagogy, and d) vocational stewardship – serve as pieces of scaffolding that can support what I will call a Methodist Meeting House of Formation.

Chapter 7

Evaluation and Discussion Chapter:

The Scaffolding for a Practice-Oriented Model of Formation

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I evaluate the data from Chapter 5 and place them in dialogue with my literature review in Chapter 4. I address the four themes that emerged from my research sample and propose new ways to reimagine the Course of Study as a practice-oriented model of formation. The four themes I discovered in my research were the centrality of worship, the practice of friendship, relational pedagogies, and stewardship of economic resources. The central claim of the chapter is that the notion of God's indwelling Spirit, as disclosed in John's Gospel and First Letter, enriches my proposal for a new model, offering rich images, stories, and metaphors to ground and guide the formation of local pastors. I have divided the chapter into the following sections:

In the first section, I explain why I use Johannine material and how it provides the 'scaffolding' to support my proposal for a practice-oriented model, framed by the image of a Methodist Meeting House. John's concept of 'indwelling' or 'abiding' is central to this scaffolding and offers the pneumatological framework for formation.

The other four sections address the Holy Spirit's indwelling or abiding presence by utilizing the Johannine material. Each section follows a basic pattern to elucidate the above themes:

- Summarizing Theme and Responses of Local Pastors
- Scaffolding of the Spirit for Being Indwelt by the Spirit
- Implications for Shaping Pastoral Wisdom or Know-How

I conclude by summarizing the insights I consider essential to my model of formation.

7.1 Enriching Formation with John's Gospel and First Letter

Alan Ecclestone's image of the 'scaffolding of Spirit' in John's Gospel suggests a helpful metaphor to guide my theological reflections on the empirical data of my research.[443] I use this metaphor to highlight what I see as a critical aspect of *how local pastors experienced the Spirit during their formation in the Course of Study*: the Spirit's presence provides scaffolding for the various ways local pastors learned to indwell and were indwelt by the Spirit. The scaffolding offered the metaphor to build on the Johannine themes that overlap in the areas of Christology, ecclesiology, and Christology: God indwelling Jesus and Jesus indwelling or abiding in God finds an analogy in Jesus indwelling or abiding in the disciples and the disciples indwelling in Jesus (Jn. 15): the Spirit indwells the disciples as Jesus breathes on them his Spirit forming a new community (Jn. 20:22). The connection of these themes with the verb *menein* (or indwelling or abiding) reinforces the mutual relations that occurs in God's household.

I draw on Ecclestone's scaffolding image to indicate how 'scaffolding' brings to mind something we might not be able to see, but that remains unfinished: scaffolding might remain hidden, yet it yields glimpses of something new in the making.[444] It may also refer to a building like a 'house not made with hands,' but of the Holy Spirit, in that it is a gift, but requires a response (2 Cor. 5:1). In John's Gospel, the 'house' is what the writer or poet sees, while the craftsman builds: seeing goes with building.[445]

David Ford builds on this notion of seeing and building. According to Ford, at the heart of John's Gospel is the two-fold drama of the Spirit's indwelling or abiding presence with Jesus in union with God (seeing), and the continual intimacy of the Holy Spirit with the disciple community (building).[446] The Greek word that Ford points to John using to describe this dynamic presence is *menein*, which provides the image of God's work: the deepest secret of reality between the Father and Son, and the Son and the disciples, is one of love indwelling or abiding.[447] The word *menein* invites readers to see how God's love becomes the 'unsurpassable horizon' of 'all things,' indeed, 'all people' (Jn. 3:16; Jn. 1:7). As Ford argues, *menein* is one of the most essential words in John's Gospel, pointing to the mystical relationship between God and

[443] Alan Ecclestone, T*he Scaffolding of Spirit: Reflections on the Gospel of John* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1987), 1-2.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid., 2.
[446] David F. Ford, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 32.
[447] Ibid., 32.

Jesus, Jesus and the Spirit, and the Spirit and the disciples. Its richness denotes not just indwelling or abiding, but also *resting, dwelling, living, staying, embodying, lasting, persevering, and awaiting*. In this research, I became aware of how local pastors learned to indwell and are indwelt by God's Spirit on multiple levels.[448]

According to Ford, this understanding of *menein* develops early in John's Gospel when Jesus forms around him a 'learning community': Jesus's followers come to know more about what it means to abide in or live in him in love, as Jesus's teaching and modeling of *meinen* educate them in the desire to participate in his way, truth, and life wholeheartedly (Jn. 14:6).[449] The pedagogical emphasis is on 'the rich, close, face-to-face interpersonal relationships that will encompass the disciples in all contexts' (1:36).[450] The concrete dimensions to thinking, doing, and being serve the disciples in becoming wise together.

I utilize the verb *menein*, meaning 'indwelling' and 'abiding,' to enrich my proposal for a practice-oriented model of ministry formation. I note how local pastors learn to indwell and be indwelt by the Spirit in the lived, ordinary aspects of their educational experiences in the Course of Study. They connect with each other in ways that embody the Spirit's enduring love, transcending what Pete Ward calls the liberal-conservative divide in how they accompany one another and are accompanied by the Spirit.[451]

In this thesis, I bring my qualitative data of local pastors' experiences and the Johannine material into dialogue with the scholars whose work I have reviewed, and work amidst what I see as the Spirit's scaffolding, highlighting in four sections the following:

- *Indwelt by the Spirit in Worship* (John 4) — John's Gospel may be understood as an extended prayer on God's abiding presence in Christ and the disciples as they worship God in Spirit and truth (Jn. 4:24).[452] In this research, I discovered that local pastors emphasized the importance of worship and prayer for their formation, especially in worship that instructed them in serving as pastors.

- *Indwelt by the Spirit in Friendship* (John 15, John 17) — A second theme that emerged in the research was the significance of friendship for the journey into

[448] Ibid., 53; cf. Ben Quash, *Abiding*, 1-3, 211-213.
[449] Ford, *The Gospel of John,* 276; cf. Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 73.
[450] Ibid., 53-54.
[451] Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology,*
[452] Dorothy Lee, 'In the Spirit of Truth: Worship and Prayer in the Gospel of John and the Early Fathers,' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004), 220.

ministry as local pastors. Friendships were crucial for learning how to minister among those I interviewed: as indwelt by the Spirit, local pastors noted that friendship was central to abiding in Christ's Spirit communally.

- *Indwelt by the Spirit in Learning and Teaching* (John 13) — Jesus models for the disciples what ministry entails when he washes their feet and instructs them in prayer (17). A core issue for local pastors was learning to minister while leading their churches. Learning to be indwelled by the Spirit was about contending with ministerial challenges and also about desiring instruction that guided them in how to serve.

- *Indwelt by the Spirit: Vocational Stewardship* (John 6) – The Spirit's abiding presence is never divorced from the everyday and contextual concerns, notably economics and politics, or from matters in the community (1 Jn. 3:17). Local pastors in all the sharing groups referred to the economics of attending the Course of Study. It was a vocational decision that involved weighing all their life concerns, especially the need to avoid debt.

These four themes emerged as I went back and forth between the pictures and transcripts, contemplating the Spirit's presence; they represent essential components of my practice-oriented model of formation in light of John's overlapping of Christology, ecclesiology, and pneumatology: i.e., they point to the scaffolding of John's pneumatic ecclesiology of a learning community for the sake of participating in Jesus' ministry; it is the kind of 'scaffolding' that will serve to bolster my Methodist Meeting House of Formation that I will propose more extensively in Chapter 8.[453]

7.2 Indwelt by the Spirit in Worship

7.2.1 Summary of Theme and Responses of Local Pastors

Local pastors in my research spoke to the importance of worship as a place where they encountered the Holy Spirit as part of their formation. Central to my practice-oriented model of formation is the significance of worship as an embodied practice for knowing God and educating local pastors. Through worship, local pastors learned both to indwell the Spirit and be indwelt by the Spirit for serving, suggesting that the ground of learning is doxological and involves more than just the cognitive, but also the bodily, the affections, and the senses, the kind of knowledge

[453] Mary L. Coloe, *Dwelling in the Household of God: Johannine Ecclesiology and Spirituality* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2007), 57.

that can only be acquired by participating in it.[454]

As noted in Chapter 6, local pastors expressed appreciation for the opportunities to worship, as it enabled them to embody their faith and vocation.[455] Among pastors in the Native American Course of Study, in particular, worship was contextualized to express indigenous sensibilities, thereby expanding their experiences of the 'other.'[456] Other local pastors spoke of worshipping in African American and Hispanic traditions.[457] Yet all the pastors whose Courses celebrated worship indicated that it was formative, regardless of style, even though most were more traditionally focused.[458] Those whose Courses of Study were embedded in seminary settings also mentioned the importance of the space for prayer, meditation, and contemplation, all of which were valued.[459] They expressed appreciation when others in the Course of Study, such as teachers and fellow pastors, also modeled good liturgical practices.[460]

These responses are essential for understanding how worship as a form of indwelling God's Spirit discloses the significance of the relational and liturgical dimensions of learning. As I will claim in the next chapter, worship is also a foundational Methodist practice of theological formation: we learn who God is and who we are in worship through song, proclamation of the Word, Eucharist, scripture, and prayer, in short, by the means of grace.[461] Learning how to pastor is cultivated when worship is cultivated as the paradigm for all other ministry practices.[462]

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[454] Susan K. Wood, 'Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy,' 29.1 *Studia Liturgica* (1999), 29-30.

[455] 'Glenna' (SG7/P19) was one local pastor who spoke about how the Native American Course of Study began in worship and ended in prayer, and then gathered in the circle for communal sharing. 'Grace' (SG7/P18) shared that, in the NACOS, the classes would worship at the sites of Native American gatherings to contextualize the experience.

[456] 'Gabriel' (SG7/P20) was a local pastor who spoke of worship in the Course of Study as mini-Pentecost, where local pastors came from different backgrounds to experience the Spirit and each other.'

[457] 'Katherine' (SG11/P30), for example, stated how, in her Course of Study, worship took on contextual relevance from different traditions. Local pastors, in particular, were exposed to Hispanic and African American traditions. 'Katherine' shared how important this was for her as she was serving in a large suburban church.

[458] The answers to Question 24 on the Questionnaire regarding worship styles indicated that the vast majority of local pastors felt their worship services in the Course of Study were more 'traditional,' but that it was an important way to begin their classes together (Appendix J).

[459] 'Caroline' (SG3/P6) from California was one of the most outspoken local pastors who enjoyed meeting at the Claremont School of Theology. She shared how important it was to her to attend the chapel for formation. For 'Betty,' (SG2/P3) from North Carolina, shared a similar experience about the chapel at Duke Divinity School. It was in the chapel that she felt more connected to God and others.

[460] 'Ezekial' (SG5/P14) and 'Franco'(SG6/P15) were two Hispanic local pastors who expressed the value of worship in the Course of Study in that it allowed them to worship while also seeing others model good liturgy.

[461] Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), 201-204.

[462] Smith, *You Are What You Love,* chapter 3.

7.2.2. Scaffolding: Indwelt by the Spirit in Worship

To build on the scaffolding metaphor to construct a practice-oriented model of formation, I turn to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4. Two key aspects of this story shape this section: the first is that it focuses on the body as central to worship; people learn bodily in and for ministry. The second is that it addresses issues related to 'territory,' or marking who is 'in' and 'out.' Both of these overlapping themes concern the Spirit as a key factor in the formation of local pastors.

In his book *A Body of Praise: Understanding the Role of Our Physical Bodies in Worship*, Anglican priest W. David O. Taylor argues that two competing interpretive traditions have characterized the church's response to Jesus' words in John 4:23-24 concerning the worship of God, where Jesus addresses the Samaritan woman:

> Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You will worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth (4:23-24).

According to Taylor, the first interpretative tradition of this passage emphasizes more 'interior' feelings than 'outward' rituals.[463] Quoting John Piper, Taylor contends that in this tradition, worship is understood as an 'inward experience of the heart and nothing more.'[464]

The second interpretative tradition highlights places of worship within God's creation, set aside with a sense of sacramental purpose.[465] Drawing on Lesslie Newbigin, Taylor writes how this interpretation argues that 'that which is invisible, *from above*, is God's action for the world, as God seeks true worshippers out of all nations and draws out people to worship him.' The Spirit abides in specific places, though the Spirit is not identical with them.[466]

As Taylor points out, however, there is a third alternative: more than the 'feelings of

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[463] W. David O. Taylor, *A Body of Praise: Understanding the Role of Our Physical Bodies in Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023), 57.
[464] Ibid., 57; cf. John Piper, 'Worship God,' given on November 9, 1997, at www.desiringgod.org/Resources.
[465] Ibid., 58; cf. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 53; cf. Marianne Meye Thompsom, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 216-217.
[466] Ibid., 62.

worshippers' or 'places of worship,' Jesus' words point to the work of Christ and the Spirit who make worship possible.[467] Here, a distinct Christological and pneumatic shape emerges in the worshiping community: true worshippers of God are to worship *in* Spirit and truth, and not merely *of* spirit and truth, regardless of where they are or who they are; i.e., they are to worship *by* the Spirit, and not just *any* spirit wherever they may be.[468]

Taylor argues that a 'trinitarian grammar' is evident in the formation of the community that is symbolically and materially mediated, a grammar that is embodied in practices like foot-washing (13:1-20) and baptism (1:32-33), to name two.[469] This is how and where 'abundant life' is grounded, in the particular and palpable (10:10)*;* indeed, it witnesses, as Taylor notes, to the 'tabernacled' of God's Word made flesh, in the lived (1:18).[470]

These dimensions of a trinitarian grammar are all directly related to worship; as stated earlier, the Fourth Gospel is scaffolded as a form of prayer and worship: the confessional, sacramental-liturgical, and ethical aspects of worship in the divine life are present from beginning to end.[471] Throughout, the Spirit finds expression in a dynamic range of practices concerning worship, such as hymns (1:1-5), doxologies (1:29), and confession (20:28). Ritual actions, such as immersion and cleansing in baptism (1:29-35), and Eucharistic events, such as the feeding of the five-thousand (6:1-14, 6:53-55), shape the community to keep Jesus' new commandment of loving one another (13:34-35). All of the aspects of worship --- the confessional, liturgical, and ethical –- disclose what it means to worship God in Spirit and truth (4:23), glorifying God in God's own household (14:4).[472]

A second matter concerns territoriality. According to Jean Kyoung Kim, at the heart of Jesus' response to the Samaritan woman is how Jesus will become the locus of the true worship of God (4:23).[473] In the story, the unnamed woman engages Jesus about the 'right place' for worship, whereupon Jesus responds to her by saying that 'it does not matter where people

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[467] Ibid., 60-61, 162; cf. Rogers, *After the Spirit*, 2005, 200.
[468] Taylor, *A Body of Praise*, 60; cf. John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of John: Worship for the Divine Life Eternal* (Eugene: Cascade, 2015), 107.
[469] Ibid., 60; Amos Yong also refers to John's Gospel as proto-trinitarian in *Mission After Pentecost*, 250.
[470] Ibid., 61.
[471] Ecclestone, *The Scaffolding of Spirit,* 3; cf. Heil, *The Gospel of John,* 1-2.
[472] Thomas John Hastings, *Worshiping, Witnessing, and Wondering: Christian Wisdom for Participating in the Mission of God* (Eugene: Cascade, 2022), chapter 5.
[473] Jean Kyoung Kim, *Woman and Nation: An Inter-contextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Post-colonist Feminist Perspective* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 93.

worship, neither here nor there,' but that a 'time is coming when all will worship together.'[474]

Here, as Kim notes, the question of territory, or territorialism, surfaces. Territories are those places defined by laws, rules, and borders. They are owned and possessed, and set off by power arrangements.[475] Likewise, liturgical and worship spaces can have regulations and boundaries regarding 'ownership' that create imbalances and lead to injustices.[476] This is especially true historically in the church, where questions of gender, race, age, and other factors have long been raised. The gifts and *charisms* of women and people of color in particular have often been neglected or disregarded, marking off who was 'in' and 'out.'

Indeed, such 'territorialism' is more than a matter of inward experience: it is also a matter of the body --- the worship of God depends on actual bodies.[477] Jesus' admonition that the church worships in Spirit and truth is a call to realize how, in his body and all bodies everywhere, the church shares in abundant life (10:10). Jesus' followers are to see in the bodies and faces of all God's image and recognize that God's love extends beyond such territorial-liturgical borders (4:21).[478] In other words, embodied worship, characterized by being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, invites and entails that everyone, regardless of place or status, is present together in Christ. No one is marginalized. As the pericope teaches, the very ones the wider church and society consider 'outside' ultimately prove to be the true worshippers and witnesses to Christ, with implications for the formation of local pastors within the UMC.

7.2.3. *Practical Implications of Being Indwelt by the Spirit in Worship*

Two practical implications, one micro- and the other macro-, speak to the centrality of worship for the formation of local pastors: the micro highlights the importance of worship for formation *in* the Course of Study; the macro speaks to the role of liturgy as an initiatory public practice as part *of* the assembly of the annual conference.

The first micro-level concern, stemming from Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, encourages a learning community to overcome the epistemological divide between the

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[474] Ibid., 94; cf. Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III, *The Spirit and Race in John's Gospel: Belonging to the People of God* (Eugene: Cascade, 2025), 49-54.
[475] Ibid.; cf. Claudio Carvalhaes, 'In Spirit and in Truth: The Liturgical Space as Territory' in *Common Worship in Theological Education,* edited by Siobhan Garringan and Todd E. Johnson (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 122-23.
[476] Carvalhaes, 'In Spirit and in Truth,' 128; cf. Estrada III, *The Spirit and Race,* 51.
[477] Taylor, *A Body of Praise*, 60.
[478] Kim, *Woman and Nation*, 94.

lived and the theoretical, the classroom and the sanctuary, the subject and the object.[479] In other words, as James K. A. Smith has argued, the chapel does not just offer a worship service or is added on to a classroom education, but serves to constitute learning itself: learning to indwell the Spirit entails participating or being drawn into a deeper communion with God, not as 'distant observation' but as assuming a particular communal shape.[480] Susan K. Wood describes this kind of knowing in worship and liturgy:

> Participatory knowledge within the liturgy [of worship] is a personal knowledge in the biblical sense of knowing. It is experiential knowledge acquired by entering into a relationship. We cannot know without being known. Thus, it is not an acquisition of an object, something we call knowledge, but an expansion of a relationship, a broadening horizon…Personal knowledge is characterized by reciprocity.[481]

In other words, Christian liturgies have a pedagogical dimension, providing an alternative to social imaginaries that seek to isolate and fragment; they offer spaces for integrating learning and practice.[482]

The second practical implication concerns the *macro*-level of how indwelling Christ's Spirit can call forth a reevaluation of liturgical territorialism and unnecessary division among clergy in the UMC. Utilizing Smith's liturgical insights, I ask: what are local pastors really being initiated into? What is the liturgy that local pastors learn as they come into ministry? Does it indicate that they are lesser than ordinands? In addition, as Jean Kim states above, is there a territorialism at work, indicating who is 'in' and 'out'?

As I suggested in Chapter 1, using the Case Study, what is happening and what is not in the ordination liturgy of an annual conference? What takes place in a graduation service in the Course of Study? Where do these services take place and why? What voices are heard and not heard, and faces seen and not seen? What bodies are present and not present? Whose hands are laid upon whom, by whom, and why? Who receives the Holy Spirit's blessing, the Bible, and the

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[479] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 165; cf. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 198-99; and Susan K. Wood, 'Participatory Knowledge of God in the Liturgy,' 31.
[480] Wood, 'Participatory Knowledge of God,' 30; cf. Robert K. Martin, 'Theological Education in Epistemological Perspective: The Significance of Michael Polanyi's Personal Knowledge for a Theological Orientation of Theological Education,' in *Teaching Theology and Religion* 1.3 (1998), 148.
[481] Wood, 'Participatory Knowledge of God,' 30.
[482] Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 24-24, 39-40.

commission stole, and who doesn't?[483] As James Smith has argued, every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches a desire: embedded in every liturgy is an implicit worldview that communicates what kind of community gathers.[484]

Here, I see two things happening: at the macro-level and micro-levels are liturgies that teach local pastors mixed messages—on the one hand, there is the ordination liturgy that teaches by relegating local pastors – their bodies, vocations, and *charisms* – to a place of distant observer when ordination occurs in the assembly of the annual conference. As E. Bryon Anderson argues, this is a sign of the annual conference's lack of dependence on God, as the church overlooks key servants.[485] On the one hand, when local pastors gather to worship in the Course of Study, they learn to participate with God and others, of being indwelt by the Spirit, as a sign of the Course's worshiping of God in all places.

These mixed messages, I contend, get to what Don Sailers has argued about liturgical practices in the church: they are necessary for knowing who God is and who we are, as there is no knowledge of God without the form of life that corresponds to how God is known.[486] In other words, the church must take on a concrete, particular shape. In the UMC, however, this form of life and the corresponding knowledge are misaligned: the UMC does not follow its own historical precedents or its own ecumenical commitments. In this way, I contend it does fully indwell, as well as being indwelt by, the Spirit's presence in time and space.

To be sure, I did not pursue the UMC's polity at the outset of my research. I focused on how local pastors were being prepared for ministry in the Course of Study. Yet as I have come to realize, in light of John 4, worshipping God in Spirit and truth in the UMC must also entail that all those set aside for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Witness should receive the Spirit's blessings and be sent out to minister in Christ's name.[487] Their bodies matter.

Therefore, adopting the practice-oriented model of formation I am advocating not only involves worshipping God *in* the Course of Study as integral to learning, but also understanding

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[483] Ibid., 24-25.
[484] Ibid., 25.
[485] E. Bryon Anderson, 'Sacramental Ministry in the United Methodist Church: Postscript - Elders and Local Pastors (November 18, 2009) at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.
[486] Don E. Sailers, 'Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited' in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God,* edited by E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 218-219.
[487] *Sent in Love: A United Methodist Understanding of the Church* (Committee on Faith and Order, 2019), paragraphs 106 and 107: go to www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/files/websites/.

how, in our practices *at* annual conferences, local pastors publicly receive the Spirit's invocation as essential to the church's apostolic and catholic mission.[488] Both of these aspects concern the ways of the Spirit in community and the reality of being fully indwelt by the Spirit, which involves affirming local pastors in the covenant of Christ's ministry in the UMC and being open to the Spirit's challenges for everyone.[489]

7.3. Indwelt by the Spirit in Friendship

7.3.1 Summary of Theme and Responses of Local Pastors

In Chapter 6, I shared that a central theme that emerged was friendship. Local pastors communicated the importance of friendship through various activities, including sharing meals, studying and traveling together, and worshiping. It was a total process, with both formal and informal relational dimensions, inside and outside the classroom. In the transcripts, local pastors expressed how friendships became central to their growth and to their ministry of learning. They indicated how both the Course of Study and the License to Preach School offered 'meeting places' for them to 'endure' together, especially as many had come from other denominational backgrounds.[490] As one local pastor put it, 'My new friends and I were on the same journey together. We felt like we were walking in the same direction.'[491]

In this section, I advance my argument for a practice-oriented model of formation that includes friendship as an essential piece of the Spirit's scaffolding. Such a piece not only sets the stage for learning but also creates the conditions for encountering the Holy Spirit, which is part of a holistic perspective on theological education. As Jo Whitehead has written, such expectations of experiencing the Spirit should not be incongruous with theological education but a vital part of it, drawing as she does from John V. Taylor's *The Go-Between God* on the Holy Spirit as the 'third party who stands between me and the other, making us mutually aware.'[492]

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[488] Anderson, 'Sacramental Ministry.'

[489] Ibid.

[490] 'Dakota' (SG4/P9) from Texas is an example of a local pastor who came from an ecclesial tradition other than the UMC and found the License to Preach School and the Course of Study as places where she met others for the journey, and how these places were key to her formation. 'Ed' (SG5/P11) and 'Evan' (SG5/P12) from New England also spoke of how important it was to meet others on the journey into ministry in the UMC, especially at the License to Preach School.

[491] 'Joe' (SG10/P26), serving on staff at a large suburban church, indicated that friendship is key to his learning for ministry.

[492] Jo Whitehead, 'Toward a Practical Theology of Whole Person Learning: Enriching Youth Ministry Formation through Pneumatological Perspectives' in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 11.1 (2014), 69; and John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972), 1.

Such awareness is crucial for experiencing the Spirit as well as cultivating the desire to participate Christ's ministry: even though the Holy Spirit is unmanageable and cannot be controlled (Jn. 3:8), the Spirt is *necessary* for formation and creating and reflecting on the conditions concerning the total processes by particular people come to practice the way of Jesus (14:6).[493] In this sense, friendship serves to shift theological education away from merely learning *what* is essential for ministry (which is significant) to considering with whom, where, and how learning occurs (which denotes mutuality and receptivity), of ongoing collaboration with others at all levels of formation.[494]

7.3.2 Scaffolding: Friendship as Being Indwelt by the Spirit

In *Introducing the Practice of Ministry,* Kathleen Cahalan refers to how Jesus establishes new relational arrangements among his followers by emphasizing radical, inclusive, and mutual love for one another (Jn.13:34, 15:4).[495] These new arrangements serve to invert older ones between servants and slaves, particularly in the foot washing scene in John's Gospel (13:1-20) as well as Jesus' discourse on the vine and branches (15:1-17). Cahalan writes that Jesus teaches the disciples by modeling actions for them (as seen in 13:14) and by communicating what it means to love one another as friends who abide in him and he in them (as exemplified in 15:12-14; cf., 1 Jn. 4:16).[496] In these 'sign-acts' and discourse, Jesus is the model-teacher who transcends the dominant attitudes and practices concerning servanthood and reveals what it entails to indwell the Spirit in him and be indwelt by him (Jn.15:9, 1 Jn. 2:24).[497]

In such a setting, New Testament scholar Sandra Schneiders' insights are significant in outlining how Jesus' example and teaching on friendship serves as the new model for leadership, as it overturns relational patterns of domination, superiority, and inferiority: i.e., Jesus embodies pedagogical Wisdom that integrates baptism (immersed into his death) and discipleship (following his cross) and establishes the horizon for reimagining ministry (living in God's household through the church).[498] It occurs before a meal and in a small-group setting, which

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[493] Pazmiño, *By What Authority,* 68; cf. Lewis S. Mudge and James M. Poling, in 'Introduction,' xvii.
[494] Maria Liu Wong, *On Becoming Wise Together* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023), 3-4, and chapter 3.
[495] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry,* 93.
[496] Ibid.
[497] John Christopher Thomas, *Foot-washing in John 13 and the Johannie Community,* Second Edition (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014), 74; John C. Thomas, *He Loved Them Until the End* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2015), 20-22.
[498] Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 169-70; and Sharon H. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends: Community and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: John Knox/Westminster, 1999), 94.

reinforces the intimacy in the learning and the importance of relationships for learning (15:13).[499]

These insights also offer a basis for a practice-oriented model of formation as they indicate that Jesus' instruction to practice friendship as mutually abiding with each other subverts the power structures and dynamics between servant and master. They do so by disclosing three different 'servant' models.

First, there is the model of servanthood, where the 'servers' or servants must serve the served because of the power the served are understood to have. That is, servers are obligated to serve, as in patriarchal cultures where women must serve men. A fundamental inequality exists between servants and the served, which the service only reinforces and is central to the structures of superiority and inferiority in the culture.[500]

The second model views servers or servants as serving freely because of some perceived 'need' in those served that servers may feel they have the power to meet; for instance, the service of a mother to a child, or the rich to the poor. This model, however, as Schneiders observes, still hints at inequality, for what appears altruistic can conceal servers acting out of superiority, if not moving toward forms of control, such as parents who make their children into the answer for their 'need to be needed' or pastors whose 'self-importance' to caring for their sheep hides control over the sheep. Such a subtle, if not perverse, 'service model' still maintains the *status quo* of subordination, if not inequality.[501]

The third model sees friendship among equals. Here, Jesus establishes a new horizon of ministry by abolishing and reestablishing unequal power dynamics (Jn. 15:13). This model views serving as a movement of the self in the Spirit as a 'gift' to share with others rather than as denying the self in terms of diminishing the self or seeking to control others.[502] According to this model, serving does not create a 'return on debts by holding it over others,' but strives for a 'reciprocity between equals gesturing toward abundant life' (10:10).[503]

In this research, I discovered how such friendships occurred when local pastors celebrated the non-hierarchical ways in which teachers facilitated their classes and where they

[499] Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe*, 169.
[500] Ibid., 170.
[501] Ibid., 172.
[502] Ibid., 172.
[503] Ibid., 173.

felt they were allowed to contribute.[504] These experiences provided opportunities to consider alternative viewpoints in class, which were highly valued. At the other extreme, though, were moments when an instructor shut down conversation or communicated a lack of interest in ministry or when another colleague in ministry made reference to a local pastor's status as inferior.[505] Such experiences were taken as condescending to the status of local pastors.

The critical aspect of the Spirit's scaffolding for learning I want to highlight reinforces this aspect of Jesus' teaching, recentering ministry on what Christ's followers do out of such mutual love, acting as friends, rather than on their status as servants or masters alone.[506] It's a theological horizon that opens the classroom and the conference assembly to new opportunities to be indwelt by the Spirit in practice.

7.3.3 Practical Implications for Shaping Pastoral Wisdom

John's pericope on friendship (John 15) and the vine-and-branches imagery (John 15) animate the practice-oriented formation model I am advocating, serving as an integrative and normative framework for shaping pastoral wisdom or know-how. I address two practical implications here: the first concerns the importance of friendship in pedagogy, and the second treats it as a category of leadership.

The first is Jesus' view of friendship for learning: he abides in them, and they in him (Jn. 15:4). The whole thrust is toward unity, if not communion, in God, which emphasizes the relational importance of all approaches to learning and teaching (Jn. 15). Local pastors in this research valued those who fostered community and creativity, as well as instructors who took time to accompany them along the way. Indeed, as one local pastor shared, instructors who demonstrated love and care in her Course of Study became the 'relational glue' for her 'sticking with,' or 'persevering in,' ministry.[507] Two other pastors also spoke of their ongoing

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[504] 'Emily' (SG5/P13) from Massachusetts is an example of a local pastor who spoke about how formative her classes were in the Course of Study because the instructors created a community she felt was non-hierarchical.
[505] 'Amy' (SG1/P2) from North Carolina shared that a graduate assistant in her Course of Study, embedded in Duke Divinity School, expressed that he would rather spend time in the library than teach local pastors. The class members complained, and the grad assistant no longer teaches in the Course of Study. However, another incident occurred at Duke regarding worship, in which the worship team canceled services for local pastors because some team members were running a marathon. This made an impression on 'Ivy' (SG9/P25), suggesting the Course of Study was unimportant.
[506] Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe,* 172-73; cf. Ringe, *Wisdom's Friends*, 94.
[507] 'Laura' (SG12/P35) from Illinois stated that she felt like quitting ministry until her teacher provided encouragement along the way. This affects her continued ministry and the Course of Study.

relationships with those who taught and attended the Course of Study.[508] These conditions were critical to encountering the Spirit while learning for ministry.

Indeed, in adult forms of learning, for example, friendship and collaboration have been shown to encourage knowledge sharing and academic engagement.[509] Working cooperatively with fellow instructors *and* students portends a safe place of trust while allowing for occasions of vulnerability.[510] This was particularly the case among local pastors in the Native American Course of Study, where they shared how the circle of friendship and 'talking stick' comprised an indispensable aspect of learning: it wasn't just about *what* was being learned, but also about *with whom, where, how*, and *for what purpose* learning was occurring.[511] These pneumatic dimensions of theological education were essential to a comprehensive formative process, both formally and informally, for local pastors in the Course of Study. They involved integrating the 'doing with' and 'being in' with the 'knowing about' of the different aspects of ministry.[512]

The second implication of this passage addresses how Jesus' invitation to practicing friendship offers a vision of pastoral leadership that challenges other dominant servant-leadership models and what that might mean for the formation of local pastors.[513] For example, current discussions of 'servant leadership,' as demonstrated by Chloe Lynch and Maria Lu Wong, do not always offer a holistic approach to ministry and can uncritically adopt dispositions that risk losing sight of collaborative sensibilities. Jesus's teaching on friendship, they point out, provides an alternative to such servant leadership models, especially as espoused by Robert Greenleaf.[514]

In addition, Edward Zaragoza has written that the paradigm of servant leadership often reinforces an 'executive image' of dominance in churches, as pastors, primarily white and male,

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[508] 'Cameron' (SG3/P4) and 'Candy' (SG/P5) were in the Course of Study in Claremont School of Theology. They spoke of the community they encountered while taking classes there, especially the support from professors that made a difference.
[509] Turki, A. Alotaibi, et.al. 'The Benefit of Friendships in Academic Settings: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis**,**' *Cureus Journal of Medical Science* (December 22, 2023). Access at www.cureus.com and DOI: 10.7759/cureus.50946.
[510] Mike Higton, *Vulnerable Learning: Thinking Theologically about Higher Education* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2006), 13-14.
[511] Wong, *On Becoming Wise Together,* 5.
[512] Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, xi; Yong, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education,* 9.
[513] Chloe Lynch, *Ecclesial Leadership as Friendship* (London: Routledge, 2019), 104-107.
[514] Ibid.

come to be viewed as 'having the right answers for success.'[515] Pastors within a 'servant leadership model' can often be regarded as the lone 'servant' who comes to define the organization as 'he' makes things work: American individualism, if not outright pragmatism and instrumental reasoning, comes to define the contours of ministerial effectiveness.[516] As Chloe Lynch has also argued, Greenleaf's servant leadership model often becomes conflated with biblical understandings of servanthood, resulting in nuances being missed and a basis for a deep-seated clericalism that perpetuates divisions among clergy and laity, women and men, with ordained men often wielding control: Jesus as male continues to define the pastoral role as male, reinforcing codes of dominance.[517]

My purpose here is not to disavow servant leadership and ministry. Instead, it is to express that John's understanding of the church as the Spirit's indwelling of God's household among his followers, as friends, offers ways to reimagine the formation of local pastors in that household and situates it within a larger relational scaffolding.[518] Such scaffolding is about learning to abide in God and being indwelt by the Spirit because God is love, sharing that love mutually (1 John 4:13, 16; John 15:4). Indeed, it is about building upon the critical principle of the Trinity as the *perichoretic* indwelling of the Spirit for Christ's sake in the church, articulated by Catherine LuCugna's insight that…

> …the doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for a trinitarian [doctrine of the church], might not specify the exact forms of structure and community appropriate to the church, but it does provide the critical principle against which we can measure present institutional arrangements. Very simply, we may ask whether our institutions, rituals, and administrative practices foster elitism, discrimination, and competition, or any of several 'archisms,' or whether the church is run like a household: a domain of inclusiveness, interdependence, and cooperation, structured according to the model of *perichoresis* among persons.[519]

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[515] Edward C. Zaragoza, *No Longer Servants, but Friends: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 49; cf. Lynch, *Ecclesial Leadership as Friendship*, 63, 188-189.
[516] Zaragoza, *No Longer Servants, but Friends*, 54.
[517] Lynch, *Ecclesial Leadership as Friendship*, 63; cf. Carter Heywood, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1989), 35.
[518] Coloe, *Dwelling in the Household of God,* 8-9.
[519] LaCugna, *God for Us,* 402; cf. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry,* 154; Yong, *Mission After Pentecost*, 250. This argument brings up Karen Kilby's critique of social doctrines of the Trinity as a matter of projection. I would contend that in dealing with John's Gospel, the whole notion of mutual indwelling as a key to participating in God is foregrounded in such a way as to offer ongoing reflection. Projection is probably unavoidable to some level: cf. Karen Kilby, '*Perichoresis* and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,' in *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000), 65-77.

This image of the Spirit indwelling God's Household, where 'friends' meet and participate in God's redemptive mission as they learn pastoral know-how, is generative, then, of the Methodist Meeting House of Formation I will propose in Chapter 8 and suggestive of what it may entail to live in the tensions of the church as institution and as social means of grace.

7.4. Indwelt by the Spirit in Teaching and Learning

7.4.1 *Summary of Theme and Responses of Local Pastors*

As we saw in the Data Chapter, local pastors had a great deal to say about their formation and how they struggled at times with the more 'academic' aspects of the Course of Study. These struggles took various forms, as noted above, including instructors expressing, in class or online, reluctance to teach local pastors, as well as challenges associated with online learning.[520]

Yet other comments counterbalanced these sentiments: e.g., instructors who loved teaching local pastors because local pastors were 'mature adults' and 'got it,' unlike seminary students who didn't, or with instructors who took time to demonstrate a ministerial practice, like exegesis, for preaching and teaching, or classes where a 'safe space' was created to learn and share dialogically.[521]

These participant responses offset the more 'academic' aspects of the Course of Study. Yet, as I shared above, local pastors were not 'anti-intellectual' or 'anti-academic.' Instead, they expressed a desire to learn and find ways to integrate what they were learning. Here, I learned that the question was not a simple dichotomy between the academic and the practical, but rather involved a complex ethos of formation, both inside and outside the classroom.

The goal of this section is to continue outlining what a practice-oriented formation model entails for pedagogy and curricular development. In doing so, I suggest that a critical aspect of the model is to indwell the Spirit by fully embodying pedagogies and contextualizing curricula in learning ministry practices. I illustrate this aspect by focusing on John's account of Jesus' foot-washing, in which Jesus' indwelling presence provides 'scaffolding' for cultivating pastoral know-how, whether in person or online, to shape local pastors.

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[520] 'Lou' (SG12/P34) from Iowa expressed what several local pastors noted in the sharing groups about online learning. 'Lou' was serving a circuit of small churches in a rural area of Iowa and liked the fact that he didn't have to travel to the classes. However, he also recognized that he was secluded from others when he didn't attend in person. This was a common refrain among local pastors concerning online learning.

[521] 'Kala' (SG11/P29) was grateful for the way her New Testament professor worked 'tirelessly' to teach her class how to exegete a passage, walking through the steps and sharing this know-how. It served her well as she led her churches. This was an example of how an instructor took the time to be with her students.

7.4.2 *Scaffolding: Indwelt by Spirit for Pedagogy and Curriculum*

In his *The Gospel of John: A Commentary,* Frederick Bruner has argued that the Farewell Discourses in John 13-17 are uniquely oriented to future discipleship and ministry. Rather than calling them 'Farewell Discourses,' Bruner states that they comprise 'Jesus's Discipleship Course': the focus is on forming an ongoing learning community and a ministry-focused mission. Michael Gorman has also written something similar: understanding of these chapters concerns 'discipleship' and 'mission' rather than simply 'goodbye.'[522] The pneumatic-ecclesial impulse centers on how the Spirit will lead the disciples in following Jesus, especially in five key passages where Jesus speaks of the Spirit as the advocate and comforter who will guide them (Jn. 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, 16:12-15).[523] The pneumatological scaffolding is both implicit and explicit. Indeed, referring to David Ford again, what Jesus is establishing is a 'learning community' as the 'hour' of his death and resurrection draws near: learning to remain in and continue with Jesus by the Spirit is the main topic of instruction (Jn. 12:23).[524]

These insights provide the horizon within which to view the foot-washing scene in John's Gospel as generative for the scaffolding of this section. The intra-textual richness of the passages highlights possibilities for reimagining how teaching and learning can occur in the Course of Study. For example, as Sandra Schneiders has written, the washing of the disciples' feet serves as a form of 'catechesis': Jesus models what eucharistic participation in God's mission entails, glorifying God while encouraging the disciples.[525] The passage helps reflect not only on what happened to Jesus in the past, but also in creating 'horizons of meaning' for those who later come to be indwelt by the Spirit in following Jesus.[526]

These 'horizons of meaning' offer a pedagogical framework for forming local pastors and opening up conversations about how people might learn ministry as a spiritual practice, where the Holy Spirit, as One who abides, moves the disciples toward what Ford calls the 'summit of love,' or the goal of the Christian life.[527] It's this summit that reinforces how the disciples will

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[522] Michael J. Gorman, *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, Cascade: 2018), 8-9.
[523] Jackie David Johns, *The Pedagogy of the Holy Spirit: According to Early Christian Tradition* (Cleveland, TN: Center for Pentecostal Ministries, 2012), 44-46; cf. Hans Windisch, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 1-26.
[524] Ford, *The Gospel of John,* 50-51.
[525] Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe,* 167.
[526] Ibid., 166.
[527] Ford, *The Gospel of John,* 252.

live and abide in the Spirit in unity for the sake of God's mission in the world (Jn. 17).

Therefore, the foot-washing scene offers possible pedagogical keys or insights for current practice: e.g., when Jesus refers to 'what I have done for you,' the 'you' is not simply the 'you' of the disciples, but the 'you' of the reader (Jn. 13:12). The forming of the learning community implies that the readers of this Gospel are also themselves enrolled in the drama, which is not past, but an ever-present reality and ongoing, with the following logic: 'As the Father does, so does the Son; as the Son does, so the disciples are to do; as the Spirit abides, so the disciples– indeed, *you*, the reader must abide, wherever you are.[528]

Again, as I mentioned earlier, John's logic discloses the 'heart' of the Johannine material for understanding the ecclesial, pneumatic, and Christological themes of abiding or indwelling that I am seeking to draw on for my Methodist Meeting House, making them explicit as part of the scaffolding: i.e., the Father's indwelling Jesus cannot be separated from Jesus's indwelling the disciples, and the disciples, being indwelt by Jesus, cannot be separated from either. The connection of these themes reinforces the mutual relations within which the Spirit indwells and is indwelt by followers in Christ's new ecclesia. Or, to put it yet another way, in John's Gospel, John's 'pneumatology' is blind without his 'Christology'; but his 'Christology' is lifeless without his 'pneumatology', and his ecclesiology is empty altogether without his Christology and pneumatology together. The whole mission of John's church is grounded in the overlapping of these themes.

Therefore, the overlapping of these themes offers a way to reimagine pedagogy theologically along the lines of a practice-oriented model of formation. Here, four themes emerge that address how learning and teaching can build a learning community among local pastors:

- *Setting the Conditions to Learn:* A critical aspect of the foot-washing scene is how Jesus sets the conditions for learning by reminding the disciples of the context itself within the drama of salvation --- the time is Passover and the place is a room in Jerusalem. A meal provides the opportunity for face-to-face dialogue around the table. Indeed, the setting is such that Jesus knows the hearts of those around him, including the one who will betray him (Jn. 13:2). Yet Jesus' love for the disciples sets the conditions for the possibility of receiving the instruction as he loves them

[528] Ibid., 9.

to the end (13:1), preparing them for God's mission (13:1).

- *Modeling the Practice for Others:* Jesus models what is involved in practicing ministry. He shows what ministry will look like by taking off his outer robe, tying a towel around himself, and pouring water into a basin (13:4-5). He demonstrates a practice the disciples will later follow as he kneels and wipes their feet (13:5), one that involves not simply cognition but also kinesthetics, which require movement, senses, and affections. The moment is experiential, stimulating the feet, hands, and even the head (13:9-10)! However, it's also marked by ambiguity, as Jesus says, 'You do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand' — a practice that will take time to learn as its true significance will be grasped later within the Spirit's presence and participation in ministry (Jn. 13:7).[529]

- *Contending with Resistance to Learning:* A third aspect of the foot-washing pericope is the resistance to learning. Peter's reaction to Jesus washing his feet, for example, suggests that Peter himself wants to be in control and not vulnerable to what Jesus is inviting him to learn, until Jesus says what 'sharing' in life with him entails: intimate friendship (13:8, 15:4) and life abundance (10:10, 14:6). Peter will later understand and have his own 'Aha, moment,' even after denying Jesus, but only after learning that the foot-washing practice itself refers to Jesus' death and resurrection (13:8). Peter will learn to see the 'more' of Jesus' love, but in time (Jn. 21:15-19).

- *Reflecting on Ministry:* A fourth pedagogical theme involves reflection on Jesus' question to the disciples, 'Do you know what I have done to you?' Here, as a teacher, Jesus translates his actions to the disciples and wants to instill in them the idea that their teaching in his name will also entail participating in his life, creating not just an ethos of knowledge but an ethic of action.[530] His challenge, 'You should also do as I have done to you' (Jn. 13:16), models not imply exact repetition but invites variation as the disciples will need to consider the challenges of their own ministry contexts as they abide in Christ's Spirit, but always in a posture of ongoing theological reflection (13:8).[531]

[529] Ibid., 260.
[530] Ibid., 260.
[531] Ibid., 260

Each of these dimensions of Jesus' foot-washing modeling offers insights into how local pastors may learn to practice ministry.

7.4.3 *Practical Implications for Being Indwelt by the Spirit: Pedagogy and Curriculum*

The foot-washing passage raises practical implications for shaping local pastors, especially regarding the goal of theological education as gaining in pastoral wisdom and shaping the curriculum and pedagogies in the Course of Study. Two themes in particular overlap: first, the need for contextual curricular and embodied pedagogies; and second, the need to revisit how online learning tests what it means to attend to the Spirit in embodied ways in light of everyday experiences.

The first implication pertains to how a practice-oriented model of education moves toward contextual curricula and embodied pedagogies. Here, I draw on three people to tease out the implications. First, Marilyn Naidoo, working in South Africa, has written about the inheritance of what she calls the fourfold European model of curriculum development, and how it lacks contextual relevance for many preparing for ministry. She argues that such curricula often assume an individualist, competitive framework, prescribed in advance of any contextual concerns.[532]

Similarly, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier has expressed that many in Latinx communities continue to struggle with the 'siloed nature of theological knowledge' within the fourfold curriculum.[533] She also explains that curricula always function within institutional structures, where the ecclesial and the institutional, the formal and the informal, consistently reinforce each other to the point that they often ignore other voices, often unaware. As such, they tend to serve the academy more than the church.[534]

In addition, practical theologian Katherine Turpin has raised concerns that pedagogies are not always embodied in theological education settings. She reminds educators that the task of teaching toward practice is to 'teach about teaching by teaching' by modeling good pedagogy; both teachers and students need to create the expectation that they are participating in the

[532] Marilyn Naidoo, 'Exploring Integrative Ministerial Education in African Theological Institutions,' in *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46.2 (2022), 227.
[533] Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Atando Cabos: Latinx Contributions to Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2021), 51.
[534] Ibid., 80.

establishment of a learning community.[535] Courses should engage students in a variety of learning modes and forms, including cognitive, affective, social, experiential, and spiritual. In other words, it is not simply about passing on information, but about engaging in the practice together, involving the whole community.[536]

These arguments by Naidoo, Conde-Frazier, and Turpin shed light on pedagogies and curriculum in the Course of Study and on the experiences of local pastors in my research: being indwelt by the Spirit means shifting to a contextually aware pedagogy that models learning how to practice ministry. This contextual awareness also entails how theological knowledge itself is generated from and exists in varied situations. Throughout the group research phase, local pastors shared how they wrestled with learning ministry while facing ministerial challenges for which they felt unprepared. This was not a criticism of the Course of Study so much as a cry about how classes were staggered, mostly vertically.[537] Local pastors wondered how the Course could have more quickly integrated ministerial practices and reflection.[538]

Such concerns, I contend, are generated by the *praxis* and desires of local pastors and open up space for discerning the need to attend to ministry contexts to evaluate curricula and pedagogies, rather than relying on a prescribed curricular blueprint. That is, drawing on insights from Methodist theologian Orlando Costas, the formational and educational task is more about attending to and contemplating the Spirit in the settings where local pastors find themselves than about adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.[539]

To be sure, such contexts are complex, but they are also not simply unidirectional either. These concerns pertain to instructors in the Course of Study as well, who, themselves, are called to embody pastoral wisdom — wisdom cultivated and employed collaboratively by viewing local pastors as fellow co-conspirators in formation, not passive recipients—and certainly not second-

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[535] Katherine Turpin, 'Distinctive Pedagogies in Religious Education,' in *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12 (2008), 37-38.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Cahalan, 'Integration in Theological Education,' 391.
[538] 'Amber' (SG1/P1) communicated how she wished more 'pastoral' classes were at the beginning of the Course of Study curriculum. Being new to local ministry, she had to contend with two situations she felt unprepared for: the death of a six-year-old child and a family conflict involving mental illness. Both of these events left her wondering why more pastoral care classes hadn't been offered sooner.
[539] Orlando E. Costas, 'Contextualization and Incarnation,' in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 29 (1979), 23-24; cf. Elisabeth M. Kimball, 'Pentecost Pedagogy: Religious Educators Speaking Many Languages of Hope,' in *Religious Education* 111.3 (2016), 251.

class.[540]

The second practical implication of the foot-washing scene concerns online and distance learning. I define online learning as that which occurs through the internet, encompassing both synchronous and asynchronous methods. However, it is also essential in the Course of Study to understand that all learning formats include some form of distance learning, which may involve traveling to and from an extension site or seminary campus for a weekend or a compressed period. All local pastors referred to this as part of their learning and, in doing so, discovered how important those moments are for encountering the Spirit.[541]

The prominent theme of online learning emerged during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many pastors appreciated the opportunity to take classes from home during this time, which helped them to stay put and accelerate their completion of the Course of Study. However, other local pastors expressed frustration with instructors' poor pedagogy and the lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues and teachers.[542]

Such concerns speak to my proposal for a practice-oriented model of formation and to the scaffolding of the Holy Spirit as the framework for learning ministry: how do pastors learn ministry practice online? What constitutes embodied forms of learning? How do educators and students attend to the Spirit via screen technologies? Indeed, in light of the Dreyfus-Benner model of skill acquisition, which consists of cultivating specific bodily and affective practices for ministry, how is online learning incorporated into bodily and affective relationships? Or how might such embodiment and affectivity need to be rethought?[543]

Neil Postman's caution regarding technology's influence situates these questions within a broader framework for describing the mixed blessings of online technology and education: what is possible does not equal what is desirable.[544] Yet, as I shared above, a set of issues surrounds

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[540] Anne L. Tomlinson, *Training God's Spies: A Contact Pastoral Monograph* (Edinburgh: Print Project Management, 2001), 40-41.
[541] Ian McIntosh, 'Formation in the Margins: The Holy Spirit and Living with Transitions in Part-Residential Theological Education,' in *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 11.2 (2014), 139-149.
[542] Like 'Lou' above in Footnote 76, 'Kala' (SG11/P29) was another local pastor who indicated frustration with online learning, stating that her instructor in a theology class failed to respond or provide guidance to her questions about the class and the use of technology. She wasn't opposed to online learning, but she felt the instructor didn't want to teach the class at all, especially online.
[543] Andrew Ray Williams, 'Silicon Valley Meets Azusa Street: Opportunities and Obstacles to a Pentecost Cyber-Ecclesiology in Pneumatological Perspective,' in *The Pentecostal Educator* 3.1 (2016), 9-18.
[544] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 155-158.

the nature of embodiment, affectivity, relationality, and learning: how do pastors gain knowledge and wisdom through embodied material practices in online learning? What kind of epistemology is at work when we engage with this kind of learning?[545]

Philosopher Dave Ward's insights may help: when assessing the potential scope of online learning, we also need to ask more specific questions about what precisely is being learned — a skill, a habit, a fact, a desire, a practice? It is not as simple as a yes-or-no answer.[546]

Yet I also return to Hubert Dreyfus's point that embodied interactions are essential for the emotional engagement required to progress from novice to competency to expertise in learning a craft.[547] Accordingly, online learning cannot facilitate this process, as it remains confined to the competence stage due to the absence of concrete, in-person exchanges that foster growth. Online learning remains a solitary endeavor, always pulled toward reduction or mere cognitive content.[548]

I find in Dreyfus's concerns words of caution, especially in light of a pneumatological frame of reference for learning. For example, Amos Yong expressed enthusiasm about how online learning can serve the Spirit's mission by reaching new people groups and flattening older hierarchies: online charismatic networks are the new Roman Roads upon which the mission of the church advances.[549] Yet, in light of Dreyfus' criticisms, how might Yong's and others' enthusiasm for what I call 'missional access' come at the price of 'embodied relationality' in learning pastoral wisdom or know-how?

I ask this question to highlight another possible way to propose my practice-oriented model: building on Carol Lakey Hess's argument about online learning, I suggest that other questions surrounding online learning extend beyond a simple binary of online versus in-person. In other words, the question of online learning forces educators themselves to confront pedagogical questions head-on: how are teachers and students learning to pay attention to the Holy Spirit, whether in person or online, in the chapel or the classroom?[550] As Lakey Hess notes,

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[545] Ibid., chapter 2.
[546] Dave Ward, 'What's Lacking in Online Learning? Dreyfus, Merleau-Ponty, and Bodily Affective Understanding,' in *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 52.3 (2018), 434.
[547] Hubert L. Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, Second Edition (London, Routledge, 2009), 26-27.
[548] Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'Anonymity versus Commitment: The Dangers of Education on the Internet,' in *Ethics and Information Technology* 1.1 (1999), 15-21.
[549] Yong, *By the Renewing of the Spirit,* 16-17.
[550] Carol Lakey Hess, 'Attending to Embodiedness in Online, Theologically Focused Learning,' Luther Seminary Paper (October 2000), 1-15: access go to www.semanticscholar.org/paper/1.

meeting in person does not guarantee that embodied or relational pedagogies are engaging, nor does it ensure that they are contextually provocative for students, or that they encounter the Spirit.[551] It is more complex. That is, learning itself is different, calling forth a new set of questions and a new kind of attention: e.g., what kind of embodied-ness is happening in online learning? How does one attend to the Spirit in online engagement? How is online learning different from in-person learning?[552]

Lakey Hess's insights and questions draw out the Johannine tension of being in the world and not of the world (Jn. 17:4-5): technology as a tool in education raises questions about the medium and content of the tool in use and how it changes what is precisely being learned, creating new ways of abiding in and being indwelt by the Spirit.[553] If the Spirit is omnipresent, the Spirit is surely present in online learning. My claim, however, is that local pastors in this research sample intuitively sensed these tensions between the cyber and the material: they knew they were learning in a new way, but yearned for another way in person. Here, what Roger Shinn has called a 'forced option' became apparent: on the one hand, local pastors *had* to learn to move online because of the pandemic, but on the other hand, they desired more in-person contact and relational opportunities; i.e., they felt they were missing out on other formative practices of in-person community, such as worship, friendships, and informal gatherings.[554] Yet they also recognized the economic and logistical benefits of online formats. They felt caught in having to make this choice.

I share this insight as a cautionary concern about online forms of learning, in light of Jesus' foot-washing and the responses of local pastors: all learning environments have limitations and opportunities to attend to and be indwelt by the Spirit. Reckoning with each modality is now part and parcel of reconfiguring theological education and of dealing with these choices. However, at the core, my concern remains with the contested issues of disembodiment raised by Hubert Dreyfus and Christine Rosen, and with how people learn to practice ministry over time, and with cultivating people's nascent emotional and affective capacities to move

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[551] Hess, 'Attending to Embodiedness,' 7.
[552] Ibid., 8.
[553] Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, 26.
[554] Roger L. Shinn defines a 'forced option' as a decision that allows no escape. People must decide one way or the other: indecision is also a decision. The question is not whether the church decides to adopt online learning formats, but how it will use them and whether it does so at the expense of in-person learning; cf. Roger L. Shinn, *Forced Options: Social Decisions for the Twenty-First Century* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1991), 1.

toward pastoral know-how or wisdom.[555] Here, local pastors are already raising cautionary flags as they enroll in the Course of Study.

Yet I also value, as part of my proposal, Lakey Hess's question about attending to the Spirit: online and in-person learning modalities constitute different forms of knowledge and education, and therefore, of attending to the Spirit, often in ways not fully comprehended.[556] Each learning modality brings different sensibilities into play, which remain contested. As such, I see two intersecting issues in the future: one is the cumulative effect of online technologies on the human mind and spirit, not knowing their full impact on our being, doing, and thinking; and the second is how such forms of learning, along with pre-described curricula, may fail to grapple with the contextual challenges of ministry and theological education. The worry is that both aspects or modes of learning can reduce theological education to mere efficiency, often failing to see how the Spirit is indwelt bodily and practically in the formation of local pastors.

7.5 Indwelt by the Spirit: Vocational Stewardship

7.5.1 *Summary of Theme and Responses of Local Pastors*

A surprising discovery in this research was the economic status of local pastors. Here, I observed how local pastors made vocational decisions by enrolling in the Course of Study due to financial concerns and by navigating the terrain of ministerial formation across its various phases. I had not considered how intertwined these issues were - the vocational and the financial. Indeed, during the sharing groups, several local pastors indicated that they did not see a difference between attending seminary and the Course of Study, as they perceived that the teachers in both were the same, and, in many cases, they were.[557] Several had also gone to seminary and didn't see much difference between seminary and the Course of Study. Therefore, why go into debt? Why move and disrupt family life? These were contributing factors in attending the Course of Study, serving as local pastors, and living out their vocations.

Therefore, even though the vast majority of local pastors in the research found ways to secure financial support, they saw the local-pastor route as the most practical for pursuing ministry. Indeed, almost all of them received some kind of support from their local churches,

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[555] Dreyfus, *On the Internet*, 26; Christine Rosen, *The Extinction of Experience,* 4.

[556] Hess, 'Attending to Embodiedness,' 13-14.

[557] 'Kennedy' (SG11/P31) from Illinois had attended seminary classes at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and classes in the Course of Study there. She noted how she felt the classes were similar with the same professors. This was a major reason why she chose the Course of Study and local pastor route. She didn't see a difference between either the Course of Study or seminary.

whether full-time or part-time. Still others had small stipends from their annual conferences, while others worked second or third jobs and took pride in the 'tent-making' aspect of paying for their coursework.[558] There was no consistent pattern. Instead, there was recognition of the financial resources required to attend and participate in the Course of Study. In every sharing group, the issue arose from the cost of seminary education.

7.5.2 *Scaffolding: Indwelt by the Spirit of Abundance amidst Scarcity and Precarity*

The feeding of the five thousand in John's Gospel provides a lens through which to address economic and political issues about the Course of Study. The scaffolding of God's abundance speaks to the Spirit's presence as a matter of trust amidst economic scarcity and political precarity. As David Ford has argued, there are economic and political dynamics at work in the Gospel of John that can inform our understanding of ministry, which involves a broader framework for the integration of the sacramental, ethical, and liturgical: the life-giving presence of Jesus cannot be separated from the life-giving Spirit in the calling of the church to be a life-giving community itself (6:63).[559]

The pericope of Jesus feeding the five thousand discloses Jesus' eucharistic enactment of God's abundance on the broader community: abundance is not merely spiritual but material.[560] Jesus's words during the Passover event speaks to the coming hour of his death (13:1), but they also provide the occasion for thanksgiving at the distribution of bread and fish, which all point to Jesus as the Bread of life (6:11, 14:6). It is an invocation and gesture that Ramsey Michaels has commented has wider socio-economic implications: many in the crowd probably could not, or at least did not want to, journey to Jerusalem for the Passover festival as issues of disenfranchisement appear to be present.[561] Jesus' reaction to seeing the people hungry (6:15) and their desire to make him king (6:26) only serves to remind the crowd (and the reader) that these implications have consequences: the Spirit's presence in Jesus highlights the political and economic dimensions at play in God's new household of faith, where people receive provisions

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[558] Two African American local pastors, 'Maurice' (SG13/P39) and 'Jerry' (SG 10/P28), in particular, shared how they supported themselves through the Course of Study. They took pride in knowing that they didn't have to rely on their churches to pay the tuition or other costs.

[559] Ford, *The Gospel of John*, 151-157; cf. James K. A. Smith, 'Not by Might, but by the Spirit: Discerning What Power is For,' in *The Mockingbird* (Spring 2025), 18.

[560] Ford, *The Gospel of John,* 43; cf. Matthew N. Williams, *'Good News to the Poor'? Socio-Economic Ethics in the Gospel of John* (Durham Theses: Durham University, 2021), chapter 6 at www.etheses.dur.ac.uk/14207/.

[561] Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 340-341.

of food and are included in Christ's fellowship.[562]

The timing of this event at Passover in John's Gospel also is telling: it is not only about God's deliverance of Israel from bondage as God's covenant people, but also about attending to the future exodus with the new Moses (6:70): God is bringing new conditions of freedom into existence (10:10).

Yet the story also reveals how God's abundant love, demonstrated by and in Jesus, provides hope for those alienated from the Temple establishment (6:71): Jesus as the Bread of Life is a gift to those outside the Temple, fulfilling Isaiah's promise to feed and sustain God's people (Is. 55:1-3).[563]

These observations offer insights about the pneumatic scaffolding of Jesus' indwelling of God's Spirit: in Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, the Spirit is working to create a new household whose center is a meal in which Jesus himself provides the food, and participating in the meal is not defined by social status.[564] The sacramental, ethical, and liturgical are integrated in the One whose Life invokes blessing and worth on those on the margins of society.[565] In this way, the foot-washing, along with the high priestly prayer and calling to friendship in John's 'Mission Discourse,' institutes a holistically missional framework: Jesus is drawing people into himself, where everyone receives a new identity, is sent into the world to bear witness to his name (Jn. 12:32, Jn. 20:21).[566]

Yet, as Alexei Sivertsev has argued, this new identity is not about mere economic pragmatism or what works politically.[567] Instead, it concerns the importance of relationships and the networks of friendship that mediate resources to others. Being 'poor' is not just about whether a person can or cannot produce goods or allocate resources, but how political and economic entities can maintain power to control such goods and resources.[568] Thus, the feeding of the five thousand is not some spiritual experience, divorced from material need, but about how

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[562] Alexei Sivertsev, 'The Household Economy,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine,* edited by Catherine Hezser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 229-245.
[563] Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 85.
[564] Ibid., 108.
[565] Williams, '*Good News to the Poor?*', 264.
[566] Gorman, *Abide and Go,* 40-41.
[567] Sivertsev, 'The Household Economy,' 236,
[568] William's *'Good News to the Poor?',* 260-261; cf. Albert Curry Winn, *A Sense of Mission: Guidance from the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, chapter 6; and Morna Hooker and Frances Young, *Holiness and Mission: Learning from the Early Church about Mission in the City* (London: SCM, 2010), 31-32.

everyone as God's children has a right to access goods and resources (Jn. 1:5). Jesus' call to indwell the Spirit and abide in him, then, is about reconfiguring God's household relationally and spiritually, as well as about ensuring that all may participate economically and politically in God's life abundant in ministry (10:10).

7.5.3 *Practical Implications for Being Indwelt by the Spirit: Abundance amidst Scarcity*

The feeding of the five thousand does not explicitly address economic and political issues. However, as the above analysis suggests, there is a basis for proposing the following for sharing in God's abundance and reflecting on its practical implications for local pastors in the Course of Study: despite the financial challenges they face, local pastors model a vocational path that challenges the standard seminary education.[569] They show how, through depending on a combination of goods and resources, they live out their calling within a broader 'economy of debt,' demonstrating what Ted Smith calls an 'affordance' for a potentially life-giving way of sharing in God's abundant love, and displaying a kind of resiliency amidst precarity.[570] Their testimonies in the sharing groups raise questions about the economics of theological education overall and its vocational implications.

Therefore, reflecting on local pastors' testimonies in light of Jesus' feeding of the five thousand, I propose a model of sharing in God's abundance, as one of gathering, blessing, distributing, and investing of God's gifts. The model assumes that by taking stock of and gathering in the church's current resources, 'more' actually comes into view, not less.

Indeed, as I want to propose, my model is about recalibrating the UMC's approach to the Course of Study, as the ecclesial-cultural and economic-political landscape has changed. The UMC needs to shift its financial investments to include local pastors: no longer are seminaries and colleges the only 'baskets' from which pastoral leaders are educated. Instead, the UMC needs to view the Course of Study and the License to Preach School as on the ecclesial 'front-line,' forming more and more pastors. Increasingly, persons called into ministry cannot attend seminary due to financial and family constraints. The economy of debt, as Ted Smith has rightly noted, inhibits many from entering a seminary or graduate school and moving toward ordination.[571]

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[569] MacDonald, *Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving without Full-Time Clergy,* 112-113.
[570] Smith, *The End of Theological Education*, chapter 5.
[571] Ibid., 150-154.

Yet the model I am advocating stems from recognizing the problem facing the UMC in the first place is: 'Where are we to buy bread for these people?' (Jn. 6:5.) That is, where will the support come from? How will the UMC utilize the resources of its different baskets, so to speak, to support the ministries of local pastors?

It's a difficult question in that, as both Ted Smith and Amos Yong have written, the current economic model of theological education is unraveling: that is, the whole assumption governing the church as a voluntary organization, i.e., as a denomination, was predicated on a social imaginary that lent credence to a civil framework supported by the majority of citizens within it.[572] But what happens when the number of people involved in this denominational project dwindles, and fewer people are engaged? What happens when the civil order fragments and more people disengage from the church, not supporting it? Where will the church find 'bread' to support these people?

The situation of local pastors is telling in how they receive or do not receive support. For example, unlike seminarians, who often receive scholarship assistance, local pastors typically must scrap together resources. For instance, local pastors will pay between $300 and $400 to attend a course, possibly at a Regional School (if they are full-time) or an Extension Site (if they are part-time). They may also take courses through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) for the exact cost. The instructors in the Course of Study receive between $1,500 and $1,700 per course. To run a class, then, a minimum of 5 students is required. However, if a class doesn't reach the required number and a shortfall is apparent, the GBHEM can provide funds to make up the difference, with each Regional or Extension Course of Study receiving up to $20,000 over a year.[573] The seminaries and annual conferences may also offer financial support, but this again depends on the number of students in the Course and on whether the seminary or annual conference is the site of a special Course of Study, e.g., Hispanic, Native American, or Pacific Islander peoples. Larger entities, such as seminaries, annual conferences, and General Church agencies, then, may offer 'baskets' of resources.

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[572] Ibid., 152; and Yong, *By the Renewing of the Spirit,* 71-72.

[573] I base this number on the cost to attend the Course of Study at the Extension Site of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in the Indiana Conference. I have learned, having served on the Task Force to reshape the Course of Study in the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), that these numbers represent the average level of instructor support. The amount from GBHEM for annual conferences may vary, but when there is a shortfall, the $20,000 is used to offset it. This approach constitutes the current economic model: fees from students/local pastors, and funding from GBHEM. Annual Conferences may also have a small pool of funds to give. In Indiana, that amount is $5000 annually.

But what happens if local pastors don't have money even for the tuition? Suppose they work part-time at the local church, like Charles in Chapter 1, earning between $15,000 and $25,000, or probably less.[574] Here, as noted previously, they might receive support from their church to cover the cost of the class. But they also might need travel and room-and-board money. And because the class meets over a three-month period, they will need these funds at least three additional times, and then maybe more during the year, depending on where the local pastor is and what that pastor may need to take. They may apply for Methodist Education Funds if they apply in time, but these are limited.

Yet the same dynamic could also apply to a full-time local pastor, like John, who needs to attend his Course of Study at one of the Regional Schools, embedded in a seminary. Here, depending on John's appointment, he could make up to $48,640 and have a continuing education account.[575] Yet it all depends on the appointment and where John is serving. Like Charles, John may still have related costs to taking classes in his Course of Study, such as room and board and travel. Yet because John is serving three small churches, he will likely have resources to cover class costs, and his conference may, if needed, offer a small stipend for tuition. Yet this scenario may also be moot for John, as the seminary's Course of Study has moved all its classes for full-time local pastors online to reduce costs. But at what relational price? Part-time local pastors may soon follow at Extension Sites.

In short, the UMC has not invested in local pastors at the same rate as it has in seminarians. Yet the demographic of local pastors is radically shifting in the UMC: part-time local pastors and lay servants now serve over half (50%) of UM congregations, up from 36% in

[574] These numbers for local pastors' salaries or support were difficult to attain, partly because of the recent turmoil in the UMC. The other reason it is difficult to estimate salaries is that local pastors' salaries are negotiated, unlike those of deacons and elders, whose base salaries are determined by the annual conference. This would also pertain to insurance costs, as those for a local pastor might be set up in cooperation with a local church or, if a local pastor is bi-vocational, with their employer. This makes it even more difficult to ascertain. In addition, as this research indicated, local pastors serving in California and those serving in Wisconsin have dramatically different economic means. Several local pastors were serving and leading large churches, while others were part-time. The number I have here is context-dependent on my own work as an Associate District Superintendent in Indiana, where the above amount is considered the average.

[575] *Wespath*'s Report on Clergy Salaries in the United States in 2025 stated that the average salary for UM pastors in the UMC was $48,382, with a median of $58,920. *Wespath* gets its numbers from the General Council on Finance and Administration (www.gcfa.org) of the UMC, which uses the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov). This makes it more difficult to determine what local pastors make, as these numbers are for elders, not licensed local pastors. However, the amount of $48,382 is the average used by both groups.

2000.[576] The change calls for a new approach in investing in the ministries of local pastors, which, as he has demonstrated, will only grow.[577]

As I mentioned above, the economic model I am proposing, in line with a practice-oriented approach to formation, abides in God's Spirit amidst an unraveling social imaginary, in which the voluntary-association framework that sustained denominational structures is increasingly difficult to sustain. Instead, the model I am advocating is more intentional about prioritizing local pastors and gathering resources primarily from different baskets, such as local churches, pastors, seminaries, agencies, and annual conferences. It is a model that practices gathering, blessing, distributing, and investing resources according to need and in a manner of justice (Acts 2:45), and that discerns where the local ministry's challenges lie in the mission field, beyond the 'Temple' (Jn. 6:5).

I view this pattern as taking into account long-term trends: the UMC must find ways to address its own unraveling in responsible ways to address the growing shifts in ministry among local pastors while dealing with ongoing cultural assumptions, if not realities, of economic scarcity and political precarity. It will do so not at the expense of seminarians and the seminary track toward ordination, but out of trusting in the abundance of God's own economy, and within a covenantal framework, where more will be enough.[578] This pattern will also require looking across the UMC to see how endowments, investments, and special gifts are not just geared toward enhancing 'academic' research but also serve the church's mission to make disciples.[579]

7.6 Chapter Summary

The primary aim of this chapter was to enrich my practice-oriented model of formation for the Course of Study by utilizing images, stories, and themes from John's Gospel and First Letter and bringing them into conversation with the stories and images of local pastors in my research. I decided to use the Johannine material after, through *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina,* contemplating the pictures and transcripts and discerning the richness of the images and themes that emerged: worship, friendship, pedagogy, and stewardship. These themes lent themselves to

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[576] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Circuit Riders for New Frontiers,' paper given at the Tapestry Conference sponsored by *Wespath* on November 10, 2025. Thanks to Lovett Weems for sharing this information via email on December 19, 2025.
[577] Lovett, H. Weems, Jr. 'Increasing Interest in Bi-vocational Ministry,' at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. Access at www.churchleadership.com.
[578] Ford, *The Gospel of John,* 2.
[579] Yong, *By the Renewing of the Spirit,* 97.

the 'scaffolding' metaphor that was revealing of how I could reimagine the Course of Study in light of John's use of the word *menein* to interpret how local pastors were indwelt by the Spirit on multiple levels, learning to abide in or stay in God's household as they remain loyal to Christ vocationally, participating in practices that were formative for their ministries, in spite of a managerial imaginary in the background.[580]

In bringing these images of local pastors into conversation with the Johannine material, then, I noted how they point to the Spirit's wider influence and local pastors' indwelling of it. For example, over half of those in the sharing groups stated that worship and friendship enhanced their theological education. Pedagogies that indwelt the Spirit helped them to practice ministry in a dialogical format and were valued over one-way lectures, even though lectures were often listed as the dominant format in the questionnaire.[581] Indeed, several local pastors often described learning for ministry as growing like a child, punctuated with 'Aha moments' of illumination.[582] This was especially true of online learning, though local pastors expressed ambivalence about it. Yet the theme of finances was unexpected, unprompted by any picture: local pastors shared several reasons for how they live out their vocations, but one was financial: avoiding debt while staying in place to serve.

I contend that each of these scaffolding themes witnesses to God's presence in the everyday experience of local pastors who are indwelt by the Spirit; local pastors testify to the totality of what formation and education entail. Indeed, as I shared above, I liken these four themes to the parts of a house that fill out my model of formation: each highlights a practice focused on learning to indwell the Spirit and to be indwelt by the Spirit. They each offer a critical dimension for constructing a model oriented toward a holistic approach to theological education, a practice-oriented model in which worship, in particular, marks the center, and friendship provides a frame for learning. Pedagogies that offer a variety of approaches are also critical, as is a curriculum contextualized to address the praxis and missional needs and challenges of local pastors.[583] Yet such 'needs' also entail how the UMC must begin to practice a

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[580] Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 535-536.
[581] See Appendix J on the Questionnaire and Question 18 on teaching formats.
[582] 'Grace' (SG7/P18) from California, for example, selected the 4 Spades with the child on back of the adult walking to indicate how she felt like a child in need of the Spirit's support through the Course of Study: 'God will carry you through' (Appendix K); and 'Ezekiel (SG5/P14) from Pennsylvania also indicated how the child in the incubator was like being a child all over again, learning what is new and depending on others: 'I needed the support and help, and I received it.'
[583] Yong, *By the Renewing of the Spirit*, 97.

pattern of stewardship that brings together what it already has and seeks ways to recalibrate what it will distribute and invest in. Therefore, envisioning a 'house of formation' where Christ's Spirit abides and is practiced, but where collaboration is demonstrated at all levels, is what my model strives to be. Coming from varied ecclesial and educational backgrounds, local pastors discovered a place to meet and journey together to learn ministry.

As I will show in the next chapter, I see these images resonating with another image and metaphor from John Wesley himself, which also conveys the sense of a journey along Christ's way of love and grace: the 'house of religion.'[584] Here, a richness emerges that can also serve to reconceive pedagogies and curricula for shaping local pastors along contextual and relational lines, animated by the Spirit's life-giving presence. I will turn to the image of the 'house of religion' as part of my own constructive proposal for a practice-oriented model.

[584] John Wesley, 'Principles of a Methodist Further Explained,' in *Works,* edited by Rubert E. Davis, Volume 9 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 160-237.

Chapter 8
Constructive Proposal:
Towards a Practice-Oriented Model of Indwelling the Spirit in the Methodist Meeting House of Formation

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the dimensions of the Spirit's scaffolding, as I stipulated in the last chapter, utilizing John's Gospel and First Letter. I propose the Methodist Meeting House as both a metaphor and a venue for the formation of local pastors. I argue that by attending to the experience of local pastors in the sharing group data, and bringing their experiences into conversation with the literature review and Johannine material, a rich image emerges for rescripting the Course of Study: a Methodist Meeting House, with the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence guiding the development of a practice-oriented model of formation. In this House, local pastors, as novices, learn ministry as a spiritual practice as they begin their journey; they begin moving toward pastoral wisdom or know-how as a critical dimension of indwelling the Spirit.

In this House, I see the pneumato-logical scaffolding of worship and friendship, along with a contextual curriculum and experiential forms of learning as critical features of the formation: this House is oriented toward learning ministry as a spiritual practice and understands that attending to the Spirit in formation discloses the importance of formal and informal dimensions to learning. All aspects of formation are entrusted to God's abundance for the life of the church.

Yet I also want to stipulate that my constructive proposal requires additional architectural features: the Methodist Meeting House builds on the Wesleyan 'turn to praxis' as a critical orienting perspective for the theological education of local pastors.[585] This orienting perspective

[585] I am utilizing Randy L. Maddox's argument that a key characteristic of Wesleyan theology is the primacy of praxis in ministry, understood as ongoing reflection and response. There are, of course, among Wesleyan scholars, different understandings of Wesley's practical theology. Ken Collins and Paul Chilcote, for example, would look at how Wesley's approach to practical theology was 'conjunctive' in nature, creatively utilizing a 'both-and' way of theologizing - e.g., grace and works, faith and holiness, evangelism and social justice, etc. I prefer to use Maddox as an interlocutor to propose how to engage in practical theology by foregrounding the Spirit in the life of faith as one of reshaping and reclaiming practice as key part of theology, which is faithful praxis as an orienting perspective; cf., Maddox, 'John Wesley–Practical Theologian?' in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988), 127, Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), Randy L. Maddox, 'The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline,' in *Theological Studies* 51 (1990), 650-671; cf. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), Introduction; and

shapes curriculum and pedagogies while attending to the Spirit's missional impulse to bridge the gap between theory and practice. It also examines how the UMC, both organizationally and liturgically, does not fully embody its own theological commitments regarding the ministry of local pastors.

Therefore, to share my proposal more thoroughly, I break down the chapter as follows:

8.1 - Building on Wesley's 'House of Religion'
8.2 - Situating the Meeting House in Relation to Church and Academy
8.3 - Wesley's Practical Theology Aimed at Gaining Pastoral Wisdom
8.4 - Pneumaformity amidst Organizational Structures
8.5 - Meeting House of a Practice Model of Formation for Local Elders
8.6 - Summary

8.1 Building on John Wesley's 'House of Religion'

John Wesley used the metaphor of a 'house of religion' to envision the Christian life. In his 'Principles of a Methodist Further Explained,' he spoke about the central doctrines of the Methodist movement:

> 'Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three—that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next the door, the third religion itself.'[586]

By religion here, Wesley refers to the life of holiness or sanctification, of loving God and neighbor with one's whole heart, life, and mind. The focus of the Christian life is on a journey into God's love and grace, beginning with repentance (porch), moving through justification (door), and abiding in sanctification (house). As Theodore Runyan has written, in this metaphor, we come to see how Wesley understood salvation as a process, punctuated by key moments of intensity or awakening.[587] From beginning to end, God's grace is active through the Spirit's presence and power to restore the image of God in us by stirring and wooing us to turn to God through prevenient grace (porch) and moving us to being put right with God in justification and new birth (door) and then going on to perfection in living with singleness of aim as we learn to

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Paul W. Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Press, 2003), Chapter 1.

[586] John Wesley, 'Principles of a Methodist Further Explained,' in *The Works of John Wesley,* edited by Rubert E. Davis, Volume 9 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 227; cf. Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), where Heitzenrater speaks of Wesley's 'house' image as containing the 'grand doctrines of Methodism,' or repentance, justification, and sanctification, 156, 204.

[587] Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 27.

dwell in faith with God in holiness and love (house). The whole emphasis is on the divine initiative, eliciting the human response in faith.[588]

These dimensions of the journey are not static or linear, however, but rather dynamic and synergistic, prompting us to seek God's forgiving pardon while growing in grace. In other words, the process has both forensic and therapeutic dimensions as God realigns us to the relationship with God for which we were created in the beginning.[589] The entire pilgrimage is founded upon God's grace operating in two distinct but interrelated ways: first, God's action, making it possible for us to respond because God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19); and second, God's action in us through regeneration and sanctification, as we grow and abide in God (1 Jn. 4:16). As Wesley wrote, God's grace is first of all – that 'free love, that under-merited mercy, by which, I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ am now reconciled to God.'[590] It is what God has done for us in Christ, forgiving and pardoning us, and setting us right with God (forensic). But God's grace is also what God does as the 'power of the Holy Ghost, which worketh in us both to will and to do his [God's] good pleasure.'[591] This is the energy of God in us, transforming and making all life new. For Wesley and the early Methodists, these operations of God's grace take the form of salvation, as the Spirit's activity is experienced as nearness and potency—forgiving sin, quickening the senses and affections, forming the person and community, and empowering the church to move out in mission.[592] Centrifugal and centripetal dynamics are at work, as God's love is perfected among those who indwell the Spirit for the sake of Christ (1 Jn. 3:13-16).[593] As Albert Outler has argued, Wesley's whole approach could be seen as a 'pneumato-centric soteriology': the Holy Spirit's power and presence heal and restore the image of God in us as our image participates in God's own image, revealed in Christ; sanctification is participatory sanctification.[594]

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[588] Ibid., 26.
[589] Ibid., 22.
[590] John Wesley, 'The New Birth,' in *Work*s, edited by Albert Outler, Volume 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 187.
[591] John Wesley, 'The Witness of Our Own Spirit,' in *Works,* edited by Albert Outler, Volume 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 309.
[592] Lycurgus Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 34.
[593] Paul W. Chilcote, 'A Paradigm of Renewal for the Contemporary Church,' in *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal*, edited by Paul W. Chilcote (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 36; cf. Rob L. Staples, 'John Wesley's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 21 (1986), 61-62.
[594] Albert Outler, 'Introduction' to Wesley's *Sermons,* Volume 1, *Works*, 81; cf. Robert C. Bondi, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit from a Methodist Perspective,' in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31/3 (1986), 354-355.

This movement, then, from porch, door, to house is what characterizes the Wesleyan notion of 'heart religion,' or the 'way of salvation,' which, as noted, is the life of holiness shaping the love of God and neighbor.[595] It is not an individualistic endeavor, based on self-work, or a subjective feeling, viewed only as self-focused. Instead, it is grounded entirely in the Spirit's prevenient activity: a movement that doesn't stop but continues in covenant with others, along with acts of piety and mercy, embodied in worship and friendship.[596] The process is social and communal. Indeed, the 'house of religion,' as Wesley described it, is the house or the household wherein God's Spirit dwells, where Jesus is learned and practiced through the Holy Spirit in all aspects of ministry.[597] Here, the forensic and therapeutic metaphors that Wesley uses to describe the Spirit also reveal the 'great end of religion,' or the 'great depositum of the faith' – the renewal of our hearts.[598] They are images not only of standing in a courtroom receiving a verdict of guilt, but also of finding healing in God's sanctuary of praise and in the experience of salvation. [599]

Therefore, in this 'house of religion,' nothing is outside the Holy Spirit's presence (Rom. 8:28). It is why attending to all aspects of learning is a spiritual exercise itself. As I discovered in this research, the experience of the Spirit involved all the senses that local pastors valued, especially as they felt the hospitality of the wider learning community and the openness of class discussions. In fact, in many instances, local pastors in my sample shared that they had entered ministry in the UMC because they found a place where they could use their gifts and graces more fully and meet together. What they often desired, however, was a form of learning that would assist them in the practices of ministry sooner, such as when they were seeking support at the beginning of ministry, for example, during a threshold event like death or illness. They often expressed frustration as they crossed such thresholds alone, without the companionship of others — a form of learning by doing in isolation. The model I am proposing places indwelling practices of ministry, like pastoral care and preaching, sooner, as if upon the porch of a house, understanding that there are many practices of ministry to learn, as well as thresholds to cross and rooms to enter (Jn. 14:4-6).

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[595] Gregory S. Clapper, *As If the Heart Mattered: A Wesleyan Spirituality* (Nashville: Upper Room, 1997), 21.
[596] Ibid., 80-81.
[597] As Wesley put it in the *Preface to the 1739 Hymns and Sacred Poems:* 'The gospel of Jesus Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness but social holiness; cf. John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), Preface, viii.
[598] Runyon, *New Creation*, 28; cf. John Wesley, 'Original Sin,' *Works,* Volume 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 185.
[599] Runyon, *New Creation,* 35.

8.2 Situating the Methodist Meeting House of Formation

One of the challenges prompting this research was understanding and framing the relationship between academic and formative aspects of theological education, or, as I shared in Chapter 2, the tensions between the Berlin and Athens models of education. The relationship, as I discovered, is more complex in practice, as local pastors were not turned off by the 'academic rigor' so much as by intellectual condescension. They knew 'academics' was part of the process and expressed a desire to learn, but they also stated that they needed more of the ingredients of ministerial practice early on, as they moved into the house's porch.

In his book *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection,* Edgardo Colón-Emeric has suggested using Wesley's metaphor of the house of religion to describe the relationship between a house (Wesley) and a cathedral (Aquinas), and to situate the Methodist understanding of Christian perfection or holiness as central to formation in light of Aquinas and the wider Christian tradition.[600] In doing so, he discusses how the three specific doctrines that characterize the Methodist theological tradition, as noted above (repentance, justification, sanctification), can reshape the triadic relationship between house (Methodism), cathedral (ecclesial history), and university (academy).[601] That is, though not Thomas Aquinas' cathedral, which denotes a system of theological thought such as the Summa, Wesley's house of religion provides another way to understand the intensity and goal of Christian formation by the Spirit toward perfect love.[602] According to Colón-Emeric, the house image offers a compelling way to ground Christian formation more broadly and concretely: it keeps the ongoing conversations in theological education within the ecumenical and catholic spirit, as well as within the walls of the university or academy.[603] In other words, Wesley's 'house' doesn't diminish the importance of the Thomas's cathedral, or Schleiermacher's university (for that matter), but engages all in the aim of growing in grace, knowledge, and wisdom — the house, cathedral, and university complement each other in the task of education and formation, providing the 'building blocks' to a life of holiness of heart and life, integrated and whole.

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[600] Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 4-5.
[601] Ibid., 8-9.
[602] Ibid., 7-8.
[603] Ibid., 179-180.

In addition, the house metaphor captures United Methodism's impulse toward formation and mission, where people from diverse backgrounds gather in the Spirit, learn to participate in the means of grace, and grow in love and knowledge of God in practice. As Lester Ruth has written, Methodist Meeting Houses were sites of intense activity where 'heaven' was experienced on earth through passionate preaching, lively worship and singing, love feasts, exhortation, and prayer.[604] A sense of 'constant' communion pervaded the body. The role of lay pastors and speakers, in particular, was essential in guiding the process, as they led local churches, even though the practice of the Lord's Supper and baptism depended on ordained elders. The process was oriented toward forming the entire community within a diaspora context.[605]

Therefore, what makes the Methodist Meeting House distinctive as both a metaphor and a site of formation is its orientation toward the concrete practice of the Spirit's indwelling, from beginning to end, in both formal and informal contexts. A soteriological framework is present as the Holy Spirit's energy infuses Christ's redemptive work, quickening and turning believers toward God, and growing in grace among those who are also walking as Jesus walked. This process is integrated with the means of grace, with a strong sacramental and worshipful 'catholic spirit.'[606] The aim is to mature local pastors in faithful practice that integrates knowledge learned by loving God and neighbor.[607] In this way, the goal of formation involves not only the cognitive aspects of learning, but also the bodily, experiential, affective, and contextual aspects of pastoral know-how. The Meeting House serves as both the concrete place and guiding metaphor for the Spirit's indwelling presence, orienting formation relationally and communally. The practices of friendship and worship, in particular, along with the pedagogies of encounter and reflection, also highlight the critical conditions for encountering the Spirit.[608] Therefore, within this household, the practices of learning ministry contribute to a wider sense of wholeness, including the

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[604] Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2000), 159-160; see also Theodore Runyon, where he writes about early Methodists gathering in chapels to celebrate common Communion and prayer (*The New Creation*, 118).
[605] Ibid., 151.
[606] Chilcote, 'A Paradigm of Renewal,' 33; cf. John Wesley, 'Catholic Spirit,' *Works,* Volume 2, 79-83.
[607] Albert Outler writes that at the core of Wesley's theology was the axial theme of soteriology: 'Wesley's theology was guided by a pneumatological soteriology --- the Spirit's renewal in humanity of the image of God toward its great end of loving God and neighbor, which is the heart of true religion'; Albert C. Outler, 'Introduction,' in *Works,* Volume 2, 185n.70.
[608] Clapper, *As If the Heart Mattered,* 77-79.

economics of God's abundance. The inner workings of Wesley's house encompass an entire way of life.[609]

All of these sources provide material for reflecting on how local pastors are formed. Indeed, a spirit of receptivity accompanies the process for discerning the way forward, especially with the cathedral (ecumenical tradition) and university (academic inquiry) in mind. That is, the task of forming local pastors must not lose sight of these larger aspects of learning within the church's own history, and in how the church's confessions may lead to professions of faith, worked out in vocational contexts of ministry. Such a movement, I contend, can be viewed as part of Wesley's own dictum of 'watching out over one another in love.'[610] It is part of keeping the Wesleyan emphasis on holiness of heart and life foregrounded as a way to move toward integration in ministerial formation. Indeed, I envision this process not as a means to prop up a denominationally centered organization or academic enclave, though those are certainly part of this project. Instead, I see it as part of a broader approach to abide in the Spirit within the church as a social means of grace, which entails dwelling among and in the tensions of the cathedral, house, and university, drawing on knowledge past and present, for forming local pastors.[611]

8.3 Wesley's Praxis Aimed at Gaining Pastoral Wisdom

In Chapter 1, I argued that practical theology and theological education have often neglected the Holy Spirit. I suggested that, through its institutions and programs of theological education, the UMC in particular has not always, or intentionally, addressed the significance of pneumatology in ministerial formation. Indeed, as I have noted, it has not always grappled with the implications of this omission, especially concerning the education of local pastors in the Course of Study. Yet, as Richard Heitzenrater has written, the central role of the Holy Spirit in Methodism cannot be overlooked, as such a role is:

> trinitarian, synergistic, dynamic, and perhaps above all a thoroughgoing theology of grace—God's presence-power-influence is the active and empowering element at every stage. While his view is certainly Christocentric in typically Protestant fashion, Wesley's position is also very trinitarian, as salvation

[609] M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 23-26; cf., John Wesley's sermon, 'On Riches,' *Works,* Volume 3, 518-528.
[610] Cf. Michael G. Cartwright with Andrew D. Kinsey, *Watching Out Over One Another in Love,* 8-9.
[611] I refer to Charles Wesley's famous hymn 'Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' to iterate the impulse of a Methodist Meeting House for formation. The hymn has the following words that describe a holistic approach to education: 'Unite the pair so long disjoined, Knowledge and vital piety: Learning and holiness combined, and truth and love, let all men see. In those whom up to thee we give, Thine, wholly thine, to die and live'; cf. Charles Wesley, 'Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' at www.sifalyrics.com/charles-wesley.

> is from God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. If anything, Wesley's theology has a stronger pneumatological emphasis than many other mainline Protestant denominations.[612]

My thesis builds on Heitzenrater's observation and contends that in the Wesleyan-Methodist circles of theological education, the Holy Spirit must be stressed more in attempts to educate and form local pastors, taking on concrete form in community, initially through practicing means of grace, teaching and learning more with the affections in mind, and embodying a life devoted to God and others, vocationally and missionally indwelling the Spirit in particular cultural contexts. This approach aims to accentuate the life-giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the task, from a formational standpoint, is to attend more intentionally to the Spirit's everyday experiences and connections.

Such a posture, of course, does not mean that invoking the Holy Spirit guarantees people will encounter the Spirit, since the Spirit reveals itself. Instead, it means that teaching and learning can be oriented toward creating the conditions that favor making the Spirit known in the learning for ministry. This posture is in keeping with the Wesleyan turn to praxis in theology, in that it is a 'turn' that depends on God's prevenient grace as the Spirit's activity operating contextually and personally, even before we are fully aware.[613] Gearing curriculum and pedagogy accordingly entails, then, not prescribing them in advance as a blueprint but rather attending to the context's challenges for the Spirit's activity, all for the purpose of gaining ministerial wisdom or know-how.

In other words, the primacy of *praxis* orients Wesley's practical theology: central to Wesley's approach to shaping the Christian life is our faithful response to God's prior initiative in Christ, by the Spirit, in obedience, and in reflection and action as one grows in holiness.[614] By *praxis* here, I mean that critical relationship and orientation between theory and practice: i.e., *praxis* includes that comprehensive matrix of beliefs and activities that comprise the Christian faith; practices, on the other hand, are the more specific material activities, liturgies, and beliefs

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[612] Richard P. Heitzenrater, 'God with Us: Grace and the Spiritual Senses in John Wesley's Theology,' in *Grace Upon Grace*, edited by Robert Johnston, Gregory Jones, and Jonathan Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 97; cf. Bondi, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit from a Methodist Perspective,' 351-355.
[613] Pamela D. Couture, 'Revelation in Pastoral Theology: A Wesleyan Perspective,' in *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 9.1 (1999), 22.
[614] Maddox, 'John Wesley–Practical Theologian?', 134.

of the Christian faith.[615] *Praxis*, particularly in this research, begins with experience and has a pneumatic dimension, whereas practices are those concrete activities we do together over time, oriented toward God's mission. Both *praxis* and practice are holistic in that they seek to embody the Christian faith.

The question John Wesley was focused on was how we approach the Christian faith comprehensively by participating in these practices, being indwelt by the Spirit, and becoming more like Christ. The issue was epistemological, as well as pneumato-logical: the Spirit acts preveniently, apart from our human consciousness, before we are consciously aware, yet our consciousness is nevertheless a 'must' if the relationship with God and neighbor is to include awareness of God's Spirit.[616] Such a process of awakening is why Wesley felt the senses, or tempers and affections, were essential to formation: the Spirit quickens or awakens our dulled senses and affections so they can function within God's way of salvation, turning us toward Christ. The aim of this movement is the restoration of God's image in us, by the Spirit, who is the source of the whole process, aimed at its true end: Jesus Christ.[617]

Yet, in practice, this also entails what John Wesley and early Methodists called the ordinary and prudential means of grace, or the channels by which the Holy Spirit is received. Such channels, as Wesley wrote, are the means for how the Spirit works 'in, with, under, and through' our words and actions.[618] They are the practices that move us toward intentionally indwelling God's Spirit, as well as being indwelt by the Spirit, in the everyday (e.g., conversations, sudden insights, meals) and the more formal (e.g., worship, prayer, communal conferencing). They can occur anywhere as they are 'this-worldly,' or as Stephen Neill has argued, they are how the Spirit 'becomes flesh and dwells among us': God condescends to meet us here and now in this world in the Holy Spirit just as God does in the Son.[619]

In other words, there is a sacramental aspect to what the Holy Spirit does because of who the Holy Spirit is, using 'this-worldly' means to communicate transcendent truth in Christ.

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[615] Steven M. Studebaker, 'The Pathos of Theology as a Pneumatological Derivative or a *Poiemata* of the Spirit? A Review Essay of Reinhard Huetter's Pneumatological and Ecclesiological Vision of Theology,' in *Pneuma* 32 (2010), 272-273.
[616] Runyon, *New Creation,* 158.
[617] John Wesley, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation,' *Works,* Volume 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 153-169.
[618] John Wesley, 'The Means of Grace,' *Works,* Volume 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 381-383; cf. John Wesley, 'Of the Church,' *Works,* Volume 3 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), 53-54.
[619] Stephen Neill, *Christian Holiness* (New York: Harper, 1960), 89-90.

Wesley's practical theology, as a turn to praxis, relies on the Holy Spirit, materially and comprehensively, to register God's grace in our consciousness. But not simply consciousness narrowly, but holistically, including feelings, emotions, and affections. Here, the Spirit concretely intensifies these aspects of our lives, bringing forth a reflection of what was experienced to stir our souls into action — e.g., through worship and song, and through moving from word to deed. As Theodore Runyon has suggested, this movement satisfies the criteria of a sacrament as an 'outward and visible sign to inward and spiritual grace' in that it communicates the message of grace to the person through the sign or experience, which calls forth a faithful response that brings into being a new way of being.[620] Both affections and feelings, along with reason, participate, then, in the renewing of God's image, collectively and personally.

As I discovered in my research, the use of images also prompted reflections on how local pastors encountered the Spirit as part of their formation, underscoring the ways they concretely partake in it. The process included both formal and ordinary experiences, expanding the scope of formation.[621] There was a deep sacramental quality to what local pastors described. The irony is that they can only serve the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion in their local contexts, an indication of how the sacramental encompasses 'more' of the Spirit. The Course of Study served as a prudential means of grace on their journey, providing a form of connection within an otherwise frayed denomination. The connectional aspects of the UMC were not managed bureaucratically, but experienced as a broader impulse.

Therefore, the turn to *praxis,* as the orienting perspective in Wesley's practical theology, is not about imposing a timeless blueprint of holiness onto particular contexts, or even about prescribing a predetermined curriculum or pedagogy. Instead, it is about orienting theology toward acquiring practical knowledge or wisdom as a critical part of a life of holiness, to carry out the church's mission and embody love. It is about learning how to deploy in practice the resources of the church, such as creeds, hymns, sermons, etc., in ways that visibly demonstrate God's love for all and creation (Jn. 1:1-5; Jn. 3:16).[622] In this way, it doesn't just look to embody the church's purpose by faithfully preaching the Word, sharing the Sacraments, and ordering its

[620] Runyon, *New Creation,* 159; cf. John Wesley, 'The Means of Grace,' 381.
[621] Andrew C. Thompson, *The Means of Grace: Traditioned Practice in Today's World* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2015), 99-101.
[622] Maddox, 'John Wesley–Practical Theologian?', 131-132.

life for mission, but to be indwelt by the Spirit which animates these practices more fully in the first place.

In Wesleyan circles, then, such a shift receives further theological support from John's First Letter, where the following framework is also communicated: 'We love because God first loved us' (1 Jn. 4:19). This is the 'sum of all true religion and a genuine model of Christianity,' lived out contextually and pneumatically amidst ministry's messiness (1 Jn.4:12-13, 19). It is this model of 'real' Christianity that brings together the different aspects of the Christian faith, embodying the church's mission holistically and practicing the gospel lovingly.[623]

8.4 Pneumaformity amidst Organizational Challenges

Such an understanding of the Spirit's activity, as articulated above, provides and enriches the inner workings of the Methodist Meeting House model of ministerial formation I am advocating. It does so, again, by emphasizing Wesley's turn to praxis as 'practical' or 'experiential divinity' that can cultivate both critical and imaginative sensibilities in shaping pastoral wisdom or know-how.[624] It builds on the church's doctrines, such as the Trinity, incarnation, and resurrection, and engages in experimental learning of ministerial practices, including pastoral care, administration, and preaching. The entire matrix of these activities, animated by the Spirit, is educative and formative, as local pastors learn ministry by doing ministry for the sake of the church's mission to make disciples. This is one of the advantages of the Course of Study in the formation of pastors: it forms them as they learn ministry, all after the pattern of Christ.[625]

Yet, as I also stated above, Methodism's understanding of the church as the social means of grace is an essential aspect of my model's ecclesiology–as an ongoing 'experiment' in pneumaformity –- or the Spirit taking concrete shape, even amidst the bureaucratic structures and tensions of the UMC. This form of church (as Spirit-shaping) is *prototypical* in Methodism, in that it highlights the critical *ascetical* dimensions of the formation and education process across

[623] Ibid., 135; cf. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes,* 915.
[624] Frank Baker, 'John Wesley and Practical Divinity,' in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22.1 (1987), 7-10; cf. Miller-McLemore, *Christianity in Practice,* 161-162.
[625] Henry Knight notes that Wesley employed the language of patterning to speak of a life of holiness, or a life that 'walked as Jesus walked.' Knight writes how the means of grace themselves serve as a pattern or model, which can take on various forms depending on context; cf. Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 3-5; and D. Stephen Long, 'The Advantages of the Course of Study School,' 5-10,

space and time.[626] That is, it is oriented not only toward knowing and participating in God's grace through accountable community and learning the practices of ministry, such as preaching and administration, but also, as a *praxis*, toward changing structures and systems. These practices find their true end in sanctification, or a life of holy love.[627]

Therefore, the task in ministerial formation within a Wesleyan framework for local pastors in the Methodist Meeting House becomes not simply about conveying information, but moving toward transformation, or, as Wesley quipped, toward making Christians, not Calvinists or Methodists, and assessing whether the process for formation is positively or negatively affecting people in their maturing in grace (Eph. 4:14), bearing fruit (Gal. 5:22-23; Jn. 15), and demonstrating the Spirit's gifts in practice (1 Cor. 12:4-11).[628] All of these are 'evidence' of abiding in God and God in them (1 Jn. 4:19).[629] They are the pieces that form the conviction of an imaginative integration of *orthodoxy, orthopathy*, and *orthopraxis* in gaining pastoral wisdom.[630]

This *prototypical* aspect of Methodism for ministerial formation, however, needs further unpacking. That is, by 'prototypical,' I want to stipulate that, in Methodism, we have, as Wesley advocated, a concrete 'method' of formation in practice as disclosed in scripture and taught by Jesus.[631] Methodism conveys a 'pattern or a way' for understanding one's relationship with God and others in community. This is unlike an 'archetype' that can convey a sense of unchangingness or timelessness and is often ahistorical. Methodism, as a prototype of 'real' Christianity, can remain contingently open to its own ongoing transformation. There is an 'iterative' disposition to it that invites continual action and reflection on its own praxis while engaging with Christ and the world.[632]

Such a prototypical approach has implications for shaping local pastors for ministry — organizationally and missionally — organizationally because, as Cathrine LaCugna and Kathleen Cahalan have written, there is within this 'prototype' of the church the Trinitarian work of God

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[626] Abraham, *Methodism: A Very Short Introduction*, 48-49, 118.
[627] K. C. Abraham, *Transforming Vision: Theological Methodological Paradigm Shifts* (Thiruvalla: CSS, 1987), 37.
[628] Runyon, *New Creation,* 27; cf. John Wesley, 'The Witness of Our Own Spirit,' *Works*, Volume 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 309-310.
[629] For Wesley, the 'sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity' is found in the words 'We love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19); cf. *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament,* 915.
[630] Runyon, *New Creation,* 147-148; cf. Clapper, *As If the Heart Mattered,* 19-20.
[631] John Wesley, 'Letter to John Smith' (June 25, 1746).
[632] LuCugna, *God for Us,* 402; Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry,* 154.

as a critical *perichoretic* principle against which to measure present institutional arrangements: i.e., how do (or don't) the rituals, liturgies, and administrative practices of the UMC foster a domain of inclusive collaboration, structured according to the model of God's mutual indwelling Spirit among all persons, especially local pastors?[633]

Secondly, Methodism as a prototype, as James K.A. Smith and Amos Yong have argued, starts with the whole impulse that Wesleyan-Methodist Christianity is missional.[634] There is no reason for Methodism to exist other than the mission to spread scriptural holiness. Methodism's very essence is about demonstrating the nature of God in practice, as God's life with the church is about the Spirit's movement of 'gathering and sending' those set aside for this mission.[635] This 'setting aside' and 'sending forth' of local pastors, in particular, has missional implications, especially regarding the church's ordering of local pastors as local elders.

Raising these two implications about foregrounding the Holy Spirit within a critical Trinitarian principle, however, raises further questions about the overall process of formation for local pastors in the UMC: what are local pastors actually being formed in, by whom, and for what purpose? That is, if the formation of local pastors is tied principally to an administrative licensing procedure that broadly reinforces a functionalistic understanding of ministry, then what kind of ecclesiology undergirds the education and formation taking place? I contend that the Spirit's indwelling presence in the church speaks to the need to encompass the 'more' of the total process of formation for local pastors and move toward a mutual recognition of sacramental authority and ministry. Indeed, I want to affirm that, despite the functional aspects of UMC ecclesiology, the Spirit transcends the functional in practice, as the Spirit is mediated in all things. Yet, as a sign of the church's unity, I also want to more intentionally abide in the church's apostolic and catholic witness, as expressed ecumenically in the UMC's agreements.[636]

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[633] I am using 'prototype' and 'archetype' in the following way: i.e., there are similarities between archetypes and prototypes, as both provide ways or patterns for understanding things. However, I see prototypes as having a 'reflexive nature'; they are open to critique and change. Archetypes, on the other hand, communicate a sense of rigidity as with completed works or binding timeless principles. Methodism, as a prototype, welcomes ongoing reflection and action on the church's praxis to envision alternatives to its current state. I have been helped by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), 10-15; cf. Abraham, *Methodism: A Short Introduction,* 61.

[634] Smith, *Thinking in Tongues*, xv-xvi; Yong and Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*, 123-124.

[635] Gorman, *Abide and Go*, 8-9.

[636] *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982).

Therefore, I want to outline the implications of the 'pneumaformity' of my proposal for a Meeting House of Formation: first, by addressing organizational challenges, and second, by creating a missional order of local elders. Both are interconnected, but distinct.

That is, first, regarding the implications of my proposal within the broader UM church's organization, I note the challenges posed by what Russell Richey has called the 'machine-like' ways of American Methodism's denominational structures.[637] As I progressed in this research, I recognized that there was 'more' to the experiences of the Holy Spirit among local pastors than academic requirements or ministry challenges. By 'more,' I mean 'more' than simply local pastors' personal experiences of the Holy Spirit: the 'more' includes a larger horizon, notably the question of the 'organizational machinery' of the UMC: i.e., the bureaucratic structures and systems within which the Course of Study exists.

To be sure, local pastors enroll in the Course of Study because it is required by the *Discipline.* In addition, they are expected to perform academically in it (but without a degree). This is one of the ways they maintain their license, often without the Spirit's blessing during the conference assembly. But what does this say about viewing this process through the lens of the Holy Spirit, and about the Spirit taking concrete shape in church ordering?

Here, as Stephen Pickard and Robert Jenson have argued, the church's teachings on pneumatology and Christology have organizational consequences. For example, as Pickard has written, by over-focusing on matters about the Son, the Western church has often consciously and subconsciously subsumed the Spirit within the Son, which has often assumed a 'top-down' structure that reinforces the Son's confession, not to mention stressing the 'male look' of sonship in having authority. The overlooking of pneumatic sensibilities, primarily from the 'bottom' or 'margins' of the church, has tended to result in forms of ecclesiastical control that keep the bottom in place and the margins at bay.[638]

Similarly, as Robert Jenson has noted, this view of the church's operating within a 'managed environment' may also have its roots in the introduction of the *Filioque* into the Creed. The move may have served to eclipse the wildness of the Spirit and flatten out, if not occlude,

[637] Russell E. Richey, *Methodist Connectionalism: Historical Perspectives* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2009), 172-182.
[638] Stephen Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Surrey: Ashgate,2009), 39.

the charismatic dimensions of the Spirit in the ordinary.[639] As both Pickard and Jenson have stated, the Western churches, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, have often neglected the 'disruptive' nature of the Spirit's work, missing how the everyday, including those on the borders of church and society, discloses the Spirit and the Spirit's reciprocal nature.[640]

This contested claim needs more work, especially in light of Amos Yong's enthusiasm for charismatic networks and criticisms of mainline denominations. Yong's critique of the deadness of mainline Protestant denominations, such as the UMC, has merit, as they operate within the backdrop of managerial and administrative imaginaries. However, the growth of charismatic online networks also raises questions regarding conflating the Spirit's favor with them.[641] That is, there are questions of how forms of submission and discrimination are part of online learning and ministry networks as well. The issues, as I shared in Chapter 7, concern how to attend to the Spirit in ways that encourage and move toward embodiment in learning the practices of ministry, and to be critical of what such embodiment entails. To be sure, the model I propose aims to be mindful of how the Spirit's potency and nearness can succumb to instrumental forms of reasoning within 'machine-like' organizations where efficiency can become dominant in 'making things work.' Yet I also want to find ways to counter what I also view as hyper-spiritualism and isolationism in online learning networks, where questions of relationality and embodiment are contested. In either case, the challenge is to question pedagogical formats that automatically suppose the Spirit's approval, online or in person. Indeed, the challenge in theological education is to 'test the spirits' in all aspects of formation, discerning the Spirit collaboratively (1 Jn. 4:1), and to understand the concrete shape the Spirit takes in a learning community (Jn. 16:13-14).

A second part of my constructive proposal for a Methodist Meeting House of Formation is the creation of a ministerial order of local elders, set aside by the annual conference through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit. This ministerial order would exist alongside the Orders of Elders and Deacons, with a liturgy that affirms and celebrates local elders as they are sent into ministry with their graces and *charisms*. It would exist for the sake of

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[639] Robert W. Jenson, *Unbaptized God: The Basic Flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 125-131; cf. Robert W. Jenson, 'The Holy Spirit,' in *Christian Dogmatics,* Volume 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 156.
[640] Jenson, *Unbaptized God,* 125-126; Pickard, *Theological Foundations,* 39-41.
[641] Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit,* 16-21.

Christ's body and be rooted in baptism. It would also build theologically on the UMC's historical consensus in its ecumenical and liturgical agreements, as well as on its own historical precedents for ordaining local elders to perform sacramental responsibilities. In other words, this order would remind the entire conference assembly of its dependence on the Holy Spirit in carrying out Christ's mission: to live with all in mutual trust and concern, and to seek, with all, the sanctification of the church's entire fellowship, being indwelt by the Spirit.

A Methodist Meeting House of Formation, therefore, would serve as the venue in which to practice this 'sanctification of the fellowship, within the conference, living by the Wesleyan way of salvation and covenant of practicing the General Rules and holding each other accountable to practicing the means of grace, with each other and in the wider church. [642]In addition, it would form and educate local elders for the assignments that the annual conference would discern, deploying them in the Spirit with their unique gifts and grace.[643] A Methodist Meeting House, then, would not only be a formative and educational place for learning pastoral know-how, but also the community within which the various parts of God's household invest more intentionally and justly in the ministry of local elders.

Yet even here, I want to claim that this kind of ministerial order needs to be situated more deeply and in context within the theological imagination of John Wesley's own struggle to shepherd an 'evangelical order' within the church catholic.[644] As Randy Maddox, drawing from Albert Outler's famous argument in 'Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?', has contended, Wesley's attempt to utilize Anglican liturgical practices with Pietist small groups was grounded in a larger effort to form the Methodists in the way of salvation.[645] There was an intensity, if not 'tensive,' that characterized Methodist spirituality from the beginning, one that did not fall within Protestant or Roman Catholic ideal types. It was a renewal, missional movement of intentionally disciplined societies, founded within a larger ecclesiastical body. Yet, as Outler argued, Methodism would best live out its own ecclesial charism as an 'evangelical order,' deeply established within ecumenical catholicity, especially in its witness and worship,

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[642] Cartwright and Kinsey, *Watching Over One Another in Love,* 3-8; cf. Steven M. Manskar, *Accountable Discipleship: Living in God's Household* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2000), 53-58.
[643] Mark W. Stamm, 'What Is an Order? Reflections on the Vocation of Elders and Deacons,' in *Quarterly Review* 24.4 (2004), 342-344.
[644] Randy L. Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 131; cf. Albert Outler, 'Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?' in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 221.
[645] Maddox, 'Social Grace,' 131; Outler, 'Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?', 226.

discipline and nurture.[646] That is, Methodism would need to reclaim its monastic and apostolic sensibilities, with accountable yet adaptable organizational structures. Otherwise, it would become, according to Albert Outler, a 'de-traditioned' church, or a church estranged from its Anglican heritage and other modes of catholic Christianity—i.e., not a church at all, the form of a bureaucratic institution without the theological scaffolding to uphold it, or the pneumatic furniture within it to fill it—all form but no power.[647]

This kind of 'evangelical' or 'missional order' has two implications for the Methodist Meeting House, or practice-oriented model of formation for local pastors: first, the recovery of the UMC as an 'evangelical order' in the church catholic builds on the theological riches of the ecumenical movement, reminding the UMC that it inhabits, if not indwells, the church apostolic and catholic, holy and one: the Holy Spirit is the Lord who sustains the church, and the church participates in God's mission by abiding in Christ's Spirit in practice, especially within the annual conference, which is primary unit in United Methodism that embodies apostolicity and catholicity. It is in the annual conference gathered in worship that Christ calls the church to invoke and indwell the Spirit for its very mission, reminding the church of its dependence on the Spirit in sending pastors into ministry.

And second, an 'evangelical order within the church catholic' provides a theological foundation for establishing the Methodist Meeting House as a household of ongoing discipline and learning. A ministerial order of local elders would operate within the annual conference but practice ministry contextually, connectionally, and missionally, in the Spirit's presence, as part of a collaborative effort. Here, the connectional aspect would be crucial, both as an organizational tool and as relational support: local elders indwelt by the Spirit in baptism and vocationally committed are commissioned to grow in covenant relationship with one another and in the knowledge and love of God. Indeed, the whole edifice of the Meeting House would be built on the witness of the prophets and apostles for gaining wisdom and fulfilling their ordination vows, having been examined according to Wesley's Historic Questions and in agreement with Methodist doctrine and polity. Here, I envision such a process of education and

[646] Outler, 'Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?', 223; cf. John Wesley, 'On Dissipation,' Volume 3 *Works,* 115-126.
[647] Ibid., 224.

formation occurring within a matrix of practices that constitute shaping pastors in a Meeting House of Formation.

8.5 Towards a Practice-Oriented Model of Formation

So, what does this practice-oriented model of formation in a Methodist Meeting House that is indwelt by the Spirit look like, and how would it shape local elders? How would it be related to the wider ecumenical church (i.e., cathedral) and the university (i.e., academy)? What kinds of pedagogies and liturgies would be practiced? How would the broader UMC, along with local elders, practice sanctification as part of the stewarding of financial resources?

Here, I sketch the inner parts of the house I described above, including the porch, door, and house of religion, noting the critical materials of formation, or what I view as the pneumatic scaffolding of worship, friendship, pedagogy, and stewardship. The sketch I offer is tentative but suggestive of how the image of a Methodist Meeting House emerged from the pictures local pastors chose and commented on during the sharing group phase of research and was brought into dialogue with scripture (John's Gospel and First John), tradition (Wesley), and current scholarship (Cahalan, Yong, and Smith), as well as my own experience, contemplating the data. I see the Meeting House not simply as an image or metaphor but as the actual venue where education and formation occur.[648]

In other words, as I have shared in this thesis, I have viewed local pastors as indwelt by, or abiding in, the Holy Spirit, which entails learning ministry as a spiritual practice in collaboration with others. It takes place over time. Yet I have also stated that the UMC needs to begin to designate local pastors as 'local elders' within a ministerial order, thereby eliminating the need to obtain a license and attend the License to Preach School. In making this move, I want to approach early Methodism more comprehensively as a prototype of formation in preparing those for ministry and as part of this new ministerial order: envisioning the entire process of formation and education as learning pastoral wisdom or know-how, and growing in holiness while practicing ministry. It is why the curriculum and pedagogies utilized in this 'House' would be theologically characterized as 'participatory sanctification' from beginning to end, or learning to walk as Jesus walked.[649]

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[648] In Chapter 1, I described my approach or methodology as one of 'going back and forth' over the four poles of research, utilizing Mark Cartledge's model of practical theological research: 1) Wesleyan spirituality, 2) practical theology and theory, 3) context or life world of the research, and 4) the practical theologian.

[649] Loyer, *God's Love through the Spirit,* 265.

Indeed, in the Meeting House, local elders will initially meet with one another as they journey toward ordination, going through the process they do now, as I shared in Chapter 3, and understanding matters pertaining to covenantal accountability and maturity. Here, they will acknowledge how the Spirit has led them into ministry from diverse educational, cultural, and occupational backgrounds and begin to focus on theological reflection as a vital part of their discernment of ministry.

To illustrate how this might work, I highlight the following process, based on Wesley's 'house of religion' as an inner framework or furniture, supported by the scaffolding supplied by the themes I have shared and enriched by John's Gospel and First Letter:

- *The Porch: Welcoming into Ministry*

The Porch is that part of the ministerial journey where all in the UMC (and beyond) are welcome to discern how they may live out their baptismal vows, including laity and those who sense God's call to serve as local elders. Because the Porch faces outward as the place where people gather to initially understand the UMC's mission to make disciples, it serves as both a place of discernment and a community of practice, where theological reflection is practiced from the start. It is also the place where people begin to learn what it means to be in a covenant relationship as members of a ministerial order, and how the order will support their ministry learning. Not everyone may take the journey toward ordination; indeed, some may choose not to and instead learn the basics of Methodist history, doctrine, and practice, as well as issues pertinent to the mission of their conference's local settings. In this way, it seeks to recognize and use the gifts and graces of all for ministry — laity and clergy alike.

In this initial phase of formation, which will entail understanding the certification process as part of covenantal accountability, persons deciding to move into the order of local elders will be introduced to the history, doctrine, and polity of the UMC, become grounded in Wesleyan spiritual practices, such as the instituted and prudential means of grace, and participate in worship and small groups. Here, they will begin to reflect theologically on their call and ministerial context, as well as on the UMC's mission to make disciples within the broader ecumenical church. The primary aim of this phase is to understand how a Wesleyan understanding of ministry is comprehensive in its emphasis on praxis, yet also focused on learning ministry as a spiritual practice within this approach. This phase then breaks down the

process of formation, which is about intentionally learning to indwell, practice, and live in sacred trust with others (1 Jn. 4:13).[650]

During this phase, local pastors begin with understanding the role of friendship among peers and colleagues, along with the practices of worship and small groups (1 Jn. 1:7; Jn. 13). In addition, local pastors will begin to take into account how they are to steward God's abundance as part of their sanctification, which includes their talents, time, and financial investments, as well as their own ministry setting's investments. Indeed, it will be during this 'Porch' phase that people will discern further Christ's call, considering both formal and informal aspects of their education and formation, including challenges that may come with the more 'academic' aspects, or dealing with learning challenges, and the ways the community is to learn together.

- *The Door: Embodying Ministry as a Spiritual Practice*

The Door in the Methodist Meeting House highlights the phase in which those seeking to serve as elders will learn in greater depth the following practices through a series of six modules designed for those who will serve part-time or full-time. Everyone will participate.

Module 1 - Ministry of Caring
Module 2 - Ministry of Preaching
Module 3 - Ministry of Worship and Prayer
Module 4 - Ministry of Teaching
Module 5 - Ministry of Justice and Mercy
Module 6 - Ministry of Administration and Leadership[651]

Each of these modules will include scripture. In the preaching module, for instance, exegesis would be foundational for interpreting a text, along with communication skills to embody exegesis in preaching. That is, within each of these initial modules, ministry would be

[650] I have not said anything about the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral in relation to my proposal. The reasons go beyond this thesis, but one pertinent to it is its generic appeal: the four categories of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience are too broad to reflect most of John Wesley's concerns, challenges, and issues related to ministry. The category of experience, for example, is too vague to wrestle with the distinct kinds of experiences people have of the Holy Spirit or other charismatic phenomena. The category of tradition is similar: Wesley's appeals to tradition are complex and disclose conflicting understandings. In short, the Quadrilateral, as commonly understood, is ill-equipped to offer a great deal of guidance. Instead, in relation to my thesis, within a Methodist House of Formation, I see the task of understanding God as the Spirit opening a person's senses to perceive Christ, and then learning to trust and abide in him. So many other factors come into play in responding to God's prevenient activity and its relation to experience and the ministry of the church; cf. Douglas M. Koskela, 'John Wesley,' in *The Oxford Handbook of The Epistemology of Theology*, edited by William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 459-470.

[651] I am using Kathleen Cahalan's categories of ministry as an essential basis for my model; her breakdown is both suggestive and generative of where the church could begin the formative and educational process; cf. Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, chapter 3.

modeled as an integrative practice that involves a cohort of students and instructors. As several local pastors in this research indicated, they appreciated the opportunities to actually engage in exegesis and preaching together. They indicated how it helped them in their ministries. Yet a few also indicated that they took a preaching class but had no opportunity to preach, only to hand in a written sermon; even then, one student shared that she received no feedback.[652]

In other words, the thrust of the Door Phase would be to learn ministry practices as a novice and to reflect theologically on practice. A wide range of pedagogies would be used, experientially and kinesthetically, along with case studies, verbatim accounts, and reflective supervision.[653] In addition, the curriculum itself, rather than being split into foundational and functional courses, would be more practice-oriented, not at the expense of what Kathleen Cahalan calls the vertical or academic dimensions, but also not fully determined by them. Instead, the curriculum, in keeping with its root meaning, would be about learning to run the way or course together, in light of present challenges.[654] Indeed, in the Meeting House, the curriculum becomes part of the Spirit's *perichoretic* movement and is assessed by how it is forming pastors for the church's mission. It is constantly being examined, like pastors themselves.[655]

Therefore, as stated above, during this phase, all participants take these modules together, whether full-time or part-time. Part of the reasoning is that, as this research found, good learning occurs in a community devoted to ministry. This was particularly true in the Native American Course of Study (NACOS), where the 'learning circle' fostered a culture of sharing, if not vulnerable learning.[656] It was also indicative of the pastors who were part of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE): they expressed a deep appreciation for reflecting on their ministry with others. The CPE experience marked a highlight of many 'Aha' or 'lightbulb' moments in their journey. It was also a model of learning itself, in that, even though it was not accessible to many pastors, it allowed local pastors to engage in theological reflection.

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[652] 'Kathrine' (SG11/P30) was one of the local pastors who expressed deep frustration with her preaching class and its instructor for not having opportunities to preach and receive feedback. Only written sermons were 'graded.'
[653] Charles Foster and others' work on 'signature pedagogies' would come into play, whereby instructors and students engage in the practices of ministry together. These pedagogies are 'signature' in that they require engagement as a critical aspect of knowing, or in this case, learning by doing and then reflecting with others in gaining pastoral know-how; cf. Charles R. Foster, et. al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination,* chapter 1.
[654] Merriam-Webster online dictionary: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curriculum.
[655] Cahalan, 'Integration in Theological Education,' 389-390.
[656] Higton, *Vulnerable Learning*, 10-12.

- *The House: Gaining in Pastoral Wisdom or Know-How*

The House phase shifts more toward specific aspects or 'rooms' for the formation of local elders in ministry. Here, the rooms of formation can focus more broadly on subjects such as theology, ethics, church history, and/or the particular challenges of ministry, including biblical studies, leadership, ministry in multicultural contexts, and further pastoral care. Moreover, each room features furniture that can deepen understanding of theological reflection, mission, and evangelism ministries, as well as the challenges of multi-vocational and bi-vocational ministry. These additional courses are designed with contextual needs and/or the desires of local elders in mind — more elective in nature (as the current iteration of the Course of Study has no room for electives).

In other words, this phase would involve possible ministerial tracks, or extensive stints in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), prison contexts, or mental health clinics, to name three. Local elders could be commissioned at this point and set aside for other ministries as well, for example, a church-planting or a missional project in a poverty-stricken rural or urban area. There could be other examples, but always with a missional impulse: how may the UMC intentionally send out local elders into different ministry contexts with the Spirit's and assembly's blessings?

One key finding of this research, for example, was the diversity of ministry contexts in which local pastors serve. Two pastors from Latino churches shared how they were 'planting' or helping to grow Latino congregations while serving Caucasian congregations.[657] Other local pastors were serving in multiple staff contexts.[658] It is not out of the question, then, that within these tracks or 'rooms' with different furniture, local elders could focus more intently on one or more of these ministerial foci. Indeed, the purpose of learning in this House is not only to learn ministry practices through the modules, but also to discern the Spirit's mission and, in doing so, to provide people with opportunities to continue reflecting on and embodying ministry where they are. This is why, as I mentioned above, reflective supervision needs to be part of this model.

- *Ordination: Sent in the Spirit as a Local Elder*

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[657] 'Ezekiel' (SG5/P14) and 'Franco' (SG6/P15) were Hispanic pastors serving Hispanic and Caucasian congregations, respectively. They both shared that they would have appreciated more guidance on how to plant churches among Central and South American immigrants. Thankfully, they found some support in the Hispanic Course of Study in Perkins School of Theology.

[658] 'Lacy' (SG12/P36) and 'Joe' (SG10/P26) were two local pastors on multiple staffs in large suburban churches in the Midwest. Both second-career, they had previously worked in the corporate world and found their contexts for ministry fulfilling.

But once people move through the Door phase and learn to 'live' in the House, depending on their gifts, desires, and calling, they can be set aside and sent in the power of the Spirit to share in Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service in their respective contexts. Indeed, the practice of 'being sent' is a critical part of the education and formation process. Here, the covenant among local elders and the wider conference is publicly confirmed and ordered toward growing in wisdom and toward the sanctification of the broader fellowship of the church. The ordination of local elders, then, serves as a reminder not only that ministry in the UMC involves covenantal responsibility for ordering the church, but also that it entails publicly stewarding the church's resources for those who will serve its ministries.

8.6 Summary

I close this chapter with two points concerning my proposal. First, as I discovered in this research, foregrounding the Holy Spirit in theological education does not simply entail focusing on a person's experience of the Spirit, though that's where my initial research questions focused; it also entails attention to organizational contexts and polity dimensions. As I stated in Chapter 3, I see an administrative imaginary providing a backdrop to a great deal of the denominational 'machinery' to the Course of Study, raising questions about whether this is a consequence of the Western church's overly focused emphasis on the Son at the expense of the disruptive work of the Spirit, or, as Russell Richey has argued, is simply part of modernity's way denominations negotiate boundaries and avoiding sectarianism.[659] My question has been concerned with the implications of this imaginary for theological education.

Here, I have also contended that Amos Yong's argument about the Holy Spirit's subversive presence on Pentecost has some merit in changing ecclesial bureaucracies, but toward what end?[660] Yong doesn't appear to focus on the Spirit's activity in the everyday or ordinary. Yet, as I discovered, what occurred in everyday encounters among local pastors was key to their theological education and formation from the beginning. Additionally, James K. A. Smith's whole liturgical formation project takes these concerns seriously, expanding the pneumatological lens to ask what theological end is and how the Spirit's regenerating work is being embodied toward that end: whose formation is taking precedence? The academy? The cathedral? The

[659] Richey, *Methodist Connectionalism,* 162-163.

[660] Yong would certainly say that theological education is oriented to the coming of God's kingdom in Christ for freedom and liberation. Yet he does not always pay attention to the actual experiences of people in the ordinary in making his claims; cf. *Renewing the Church by the Spirit*, 3-5.

Methodist Meeting House or Chapel? What is being habituated? And what happens in actual practice?

I contend that the purpose of my Methodist Meeting House of Formation is to reclaim the life of holiness of heart and life as integral to gaining pastoral know-how. It is critical in the reshaping of theological education and formation for local pastors.

The second point I want to share concerns understanding theological education through the Spirit's indwelling and viewing ministry as a spiritual practice. Here, as noted above, I see the importance of creating conditions that may foster encounters with the Holy Spirit as a critical part of theological education. It remains pertinent to shaping pastors for ministry and needs to be part of the overall process of education and formation. To be sure, it cannot be manipulated, as there is always 'more' to what the Spirit does or is: the Spirit moves where the Spirit wills (Jn. 3:8). It is why the church is always in need of reflecting on how practices themselves can be used to harm or hurt.[661]

Yet, as I have argued, such reflection also needs to be part of a wider discussion of how the Holy Spirit assists us with cultivating pastoral know-how and helping us to perceive and see more deeply into the challenges of theological education, as Carol Lakey Hess suggested decades ago: attending to the Holy Spirit means attending to the 'other' in both the classroom and ministry setting; it means understanding that learning for ministry involves reflecting on it in the company of others and must entail the Spirit as essential to knowing Christ and Christ's ministry more fully, especially within a comprehensive network of practices: the whole endeavor of theological education and formation must be embodied and relational, geared toward a life of holy love.[662]

But a potential weakness I see in this model concerns the assumption about Wesley's house of religion: that once we enter the house, we have arrived or have what we think we need, unaware that crossing the threshold into ministry is a constant process of growing in knowledge and wisdom. That is, it would be un-Wesleyan and contrary to what I am advocating if we think that once we enter the House, we go through the door only once. The experiences of the Spirit shared by local pastors indicate the importance of always attending to what is happening, even informally, and always growing and aware of the forces shaping theological education; or, as

[661] Winner, *The Danger of Christian Practices,* chapter 1.
[662] Lakey Hess, 'Educating in the Spirit' (Ph.D. Thesis at Princeton Theological Seminary, 1990).

James K. A. Smith contends, to notice that something or someone is always forming us; there is always a liturgy at work, teaching us who we are and what we are to desire.[663]

My argument, then, is that as a prototype of formation, Methodism possesses a critical orientation of and a comprehensive approach to ministerial *praxis.* It has theological resources to measure how the UMC can shape people for ministry, in relation to administrative and organizational structures, while emphasizing an array of other resources to deploy, such as the means of grace, liturgical practices, the journey or way of salvation, emphasis on fruit and gifts, covenant, and virtues for ministry. All of these are crucial aspects of a practice-oriented Meeting House of Formation, as they all participate in and are indwelt by the Spirit. They are all part of the wider movement of the Spirit, which is not set over and against the ecumenical traditions of the church or the educational rigor of the university, but instead are geared toward gaining pastoral wisdom as a key part of sanctification. I am suggesting that these resources be reclaimed for ministerial formation.

Therefore, as I close, I also want to state that a Methodist House of Formation, as based on God's baptismal promise, is open to all people: it is the space in which clergy and laity discern the challenges of the gospel for ministry by claiming their gifts, fruit, and callings within the horizon of the Spirit's domain of cooperation and inclusiveness.[664] As I stated in Chapter 7, there is a critical pneumatological principle at work that serves to school those called by the Spirit in this House of Formation to ground their calling in the church's apostolic and catholic witness. It is a principle that assesses how the UMC aligns with Christ's own ministry and critiques the current theology of ministry in the UMC, which has a dual track that separates local pastors and elders. The Methodist Meeting House of Formation that I am advocating reorients this duality and stipulates a Spirit-ordained pathway for all those who will be set apart to serve the sacraments as a sign of God's kingdom.[665] Indeed, it views ordination for this purpose as an act of the Spirit for the ordering of the church's sacramental ministry. Such a pathway invites all to discern the Spirit, yet emphasizes that within the UMC, those ordained bear responsibility for structuring the church's ministry according to the *perichoretic* impulse of the Spirit, an impulse that accentuates Christ's ministry and assesses the church's rituals, practices, and organizational

[663] Smith, *You Are What You Love,* chapter 2.
[664] On page 159, I utilize Cathrine LaCugna's critical pneumatological or *perichoretic* principle to assess the practices, structures, and attitudes of the church's ministry.
[665] *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 30.

arrangements, and asks if they are fostering collaboration, not competition, among those serving in God's household.

I refer to this critical principle, then, to argue that the 'pneumatological intervention' that has guided my methodology assumes addressing what I see as a functionalist ecclesiology in the UMC. This ecclesiology keeps local pastors out of the conference assembly, indeed, out of the Spirit's invocation, but expects them to maintain the same ministerial standards of elders. Intervening pneumatologically, I contend, interrupts this functionalism and recognizes the gifts of all those set aside for ministry, but especially those who continue the apostolic roots of Christ's ministry. Here, ordination in the UMC, as I am proposing, cannot simply be about maintaining ecclesiastical or even academic status, but about ensuring that the fruit, gifts, and wisdom of all the baptized are recognized, affirmed, and deployed according to Christ's mission in the Spirit (Jn. 20:21).

This pneumatological intervention, therefore, reminds the church, as I suggested in Chapter 7, that the themes of Christology, pneumatology, and ecclesiology cannot be separated in the Methodist House of Formation but are inextricably interwoven into its scaffolding, such as worship and friendship. John's Gospel, in particular, offers a rich resource for integrating these themes and addressing the bankruptcy of hierarchical religious institutions that exclude ordinary people in the church.[666] As I have outlined in this chapter, this Johannine enrichment aligns well with the Wesleyan understanding of faith as oriented toward God's love, the sum of all religion, which emphasizes a *praxis* approach to learning ministry by being indwelt by Christ's Spirit.

[666] Wes Howard-Brook, *John's Gospel & The Renewal of the Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 12.

Chapter 9

Contributions and Conclusions

9.0 Introduction

I conclude this thesis by focusing on several aspects of the research and sharing the question that guided it: How would foregrounding the Holy Spirit shift the way the Course of Study is shaped to prepare local pastors for ministry? What, if anything, would be re-scripted by noting what Mark Cartledge called a 'pneumatological intervention,' with the Holy Spirit more as forethought than afterthought when educating and forming local pastors? What would the Course of Study look like? Indeed, examining the contexts in which local pastors navigate to serve in the United Methodist Church (UMC), how might the entire process of formation and education, leading to ordination, take on a different pattern and shape?

These questions provided a basis for my research. They prompted me to ask local pastors in the sharing groups how they may have experienced the Holy Spirit during their education and formation in the Course of Study: how would they describe their experiences of the Spirit in light of the pictures I provided or that they brought? What insights would emerge, and what implications would surface for reshaping the Course of Study by taking seriously what local pastors communicated? What in the Wesleyan tradition could be reclaimed?

These questions guided me to current and past literature on theological education and ministerial formation. Here, I noted two gaps in research: the first was the lack of attention to local pastors in the UMC (e.g., part-time, full-time, multi-vocational, bi-vocational), and the second was the lack of integration of pneumatology into theological education. I see this research as contributing to this ongoing conversation and to eliciting further questions, especially regarding the role of local pastors in what is quickly becoming a new 'normal': how will churches and denominations, specifically the UMC, go about educating and forming this demographic for ministry? What is needed to move in new directions?

I break down this concluding chapter into the following areas:

9.1 Contributions to Research

A primary aim of this research was to test my hunch about what I was perceiving in the Course of Study: that there was an overly academic focus on how local pastors were being educated and formed, and that an administrative procedure known as licensing reduced ministry to a functionalistic form. I learned more about each of these as I tested this hunch and examined the complexity of local pastors' life-worlds: the formation and education of local pastors in the Course of Study do not fit into a simple binary between 'Berlin' and 'Athens' models that have been a part of previous discussions in theological education. I also learned that ministerial practices play a critical role in learning pastoral know-how or practical wisdom for ministry: i.e., learning ministerial practices over time in community with other novices who are also learning ministry can create opportunities to transcend the wide range of educational differences among local pastors. My aim to test this hunch led me to envision a more embodied process of indwelling and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, from the call into the ministry at the local church level to stepping onto the porch of Wesley's house of religion. What I found was that, even though local pastors are confined by their license to serve the sacraments in their local church setting, they demonstrate sacramental sensibilities well beyond that setting through their being indwelt by the Spirit and through how they learn together.

This research, then, has led me to understand the following as contributions to the current conversations in theological education:

First, I view my project as contributing to practical theology and empirical research by seeing my methodological approach as complementing my pedagogical concerns in the Course of Study: indwelling and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit along the axes of research, as Cartledge detailed, and utilizing the practices of *Lectio Divina* and *Visio Divina* in attending to the data and contemplating on it, mirrors the pedagogies of attending to and being indwelt by the Spirit in practice and gaining a wider horizon of complexity.[667] I view such attending and contemplating as dealing with the 'givens' of the research and bringing them into conversation with the other parts of the research process, namely, the literature in practical theology and theological education.

[667] Mary Keator, *Lectio Divina as Contemplative Pedagogy* 31; Sarah Dunlop, *Doing Theology with Photographs*, 103-105.

Second, by foregrounding the Spirit, I want to advance the claim that practical theology is 'ordinary pneumatology': i.e., the everyday experiences of local pastors being indwelt by the Spirit offer critical insights into their education and formation; they go beyond prescribed curricula, credit-earning, and license maintenance. Instead, they invite us to see how formation and education are integral to a comprehensive process of preparing local pastors. I would like to see this as contributing to ongoing conversations in practical theology and theological education.

Third, I understand my project as part of addressing a growing concern in the churches: the ministries of bi-vocational, multi-vocational, and local pastors, as well as possible models for their education and formation for ministry. Over the last forty years, most of the focus in theological education has remained on seminaries and professional forms of ministry, at the expense of learning from a large demographic of local pastors. More work is needed here.

Fourth, my research provides another voice to discussions in theological education by raising concerns about the lack of focus on the Holy Spirit and what this may entail for reshaping theological education. For example, while Kathleen Cahalan indicates how the Holy Spirit is critical to the integrative task of clergy preparation, bringing together the thinking, being, and doing of ministry, and Amos Yong addresses the implications of Pentecost for the missional impulse of the church's pedagogies, noting their emancipatory power, and James K. A. Smith speaks of the roles liturgies play in shaping our desires to become who we are as God's children—none of these scholars engages people in actual practice. What I found in this research is that 'more' is occurring in the tasks of preparation, informally and implicitly, and that the need to attend to these aspects of theological education is evident. This 'more' includes finding ways to move beyond an instrumental rationality and address how people learn the actual practices of ministry.[668] It is why I argued for conceiving of practical theology as 'ordinary pneumatology' in reenvisioning current models of theological education: speaking of being indwelt by God's Spirit, as experienced in the lived, means attending to all of life and its situations. I do not state this to devalue Cahalan, Yong, or Smith's arguments. Instead, I wanted to bring their views into conversation with my empirical theological research to test their claims and continue the current

[668] Eileen Campbell-Reed, 'Ministry as a Spiritual Practice: How Pastors Learn to See and Respond to the 'More' of a Situation,' *Journal of Religious Leadership* 12.2 (2013), 123-144.

conversations in theological education. I wanted to find out what could happen if we took the local pastors' experiences seriously and how the Course of Study might change.

Fifth, I see my research as potentially offering a way of conceiving of theological education as a practice of being open to the Spirit that must involve more questions than the 'what' and 'why' *of* theological education, but also incorporate the communal dimensions of 'with whom,' 'where,' 'when,' and 'how' of knowing and learning *in* theological education: the Spirit calls the church to embody practices of collaboration among all stakeholders at all levels of the formative and educational process, as well as the public recognition and the affirmation of their gifts for ministry in the conference assembly. Such affirmation brings these issues to the surface when foregrounding the Spirit. It also resonates with the Wesleyan tradition, where *praxis* is primary and a critical pneumatological principle of relationality is at work. As this research suggests, relational and embodied experience in a learning context matters, especially in scaffolding friendship as an opportunity to encounter the Spirit in ministry preparation.

9.2 Limitations of Research

I noted in Chapter 6 a couple of shortcomings concerning my research regarding my methods in approaching the empirical data. I rehearse them briefly here. However, each of these limitations is also an opportunity for future research.

For example, I shared in Chapter 6 that I had a limited number of photographs to choose from and that many local pastors did not bring their own pictures to describe their experiences of the Spirit. This approach could be viewed as limiting the range of responses and inhibiting broader conversation, e.g., due to a lack of picture diversity and culturally conditioned pictures.

Another limitation that could be further researched, or seen as a limitation, is that my research sample was dominated by a large white female segment, unlike the national local pastor demographic, which indicates that white males are the largest group. The age of the local pastors in my sample may also have indicated certain responses, including resistance to online learning.[669] More qualitative research is needed to gauge the extent to which my own research has revealed local pastors' attitudes toward online learning.

[669] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., 'Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church: 2023 Report' (Lewis Center Report on Elders, Deacons, and Local Pastors. Access at www.churchleadership.com.

A third limitation concerns engaging other scholars who have addressed the Holy Spirit in practical theology. I chose Cahalan, Yong, and Smith because each, in their own way, has addressed issues related to higher education, ministry formation, and theological education, integrating pneumatology while moving beyond overly academic models. However, other voices are part of a wider discussion, especially in practical theology: e.g., Cheryl Bridges Johns, Andrew Root, and Ray Anderson, whose praxis-oriented approaches address my concerns, albeit indirectly. They all write about the importance of encountering the Spirit as a critical piece of formation. I could see their work as part of a future project, alongside that of James Loder and Thomas Hastings, both of whom also foreground the Trinity and approach practical theology from an ecumenical vantage point. Helen Collins and David Heywood have expressed similar concerns about the changing landscape of theological education in the UK. This could become a mini research project in itself. I could see how leaving them out could be a counterargument to my proposal: i.e., they are wrestling with some of the same issues in omitting the Spirit from practical theology and theological education. However, I am not sure that they would have drastically altered my argument for a practice-oriented model. For example, I could see Root and Johns in particular offering further support for what I am suggesting.[670] Helen Collins in the UK is also raising similar questions.[671]

A fourth limitation to my argument for a practice-oriented model is that it would not be capable of critiquing its own distortions or weaknesses, or of being 'academically' insufficient. As Lauren Winner has argued, all formation in Christian practice is, in some way, also deformation.[672] This would also include 'Berlin' and 'Athens' models as well, as being open to deformation and reduction. Yet, I would also argue that the primacy of *praxis* within the Wesleyan tradition entails that it must also always be critical of its own orienting perspective: it is always adjusting on the way toward maturity and integration.

Finally, the limitations of creating another ministerial 'silo' and the level of bureaucracy are evident: a new ministerial order of local elders and another form of education leading to

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[670] Andrew Root, *Christopraxis: A Practical Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); and Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Academic, 2001).
[671] Collins, 'The Communal Reception of the Spirit's Gifts and Grace: Reimagining a Decolonized Church of England Theological Education,' in *Practical Theology* 17.5 (2024), 416-429.
[672] Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice,* 144.

ordination might become another utilitarian mode of ministry. This counterargument, I could see, would warrant more discernment: perhaps another ministry study! However, I would also contend that creating an order of local elders is part and parcel of Methodism's own history and ecumenical commitments. It stands within those traditions, and, on the theological education front, part of Methodism's own 'spirit of experimentation' that needs to be reclaimed and incorporated into the UMC: it is a vital component of reshaping the Course of Study as a Methodist Meeting House of Formation, which includes testing the Spirit (1 Jn. 4:1), and envisioning this Meeting House as the place for ongoing supervision and reflection in ministry.

9.3 Recommendations and Conclusions

Terry Veling writes that practical theologians need to move from 'So what?' questions to 'What if' questions. By that, he means envisioning risk to drive change and transform current practice: risk-taking is part and parcel of the hard work of practical theology.[673]

The recommendations I am proposing entail risk in reshaping the practices of an education program that I perceived as more habituated to academic performance than to learning pastoral know-how by indwelling and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. However, I found out how much more complicated the picture is between academics and formation models.

In addition, my conclusions and recommendations might be opposed by local pastors themselves. After all, they did not express concerns with the licensing procedure, though several did complain about navigating a maze of bureaucracy, and one was told to get in the back of the line in her procession line into the annual conference because she wasn't an elder.[674] Therefore, why change? Many local pastors in my sample enjoyed the Course of Study and found a place in the UMC to live out their vocations as local pastors, not to mention discovering friends for the journey. The issue of ordination also did not come up, as they were already doing ministry. So why bother with my proposals? So what?

As a member of the new denominational Task Force established by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GHBEM) to revise the Course of Study, I have come to realize how difficult denominational-level change will be. What Pete Ward calls the 'affective gravitational pull' of the church is real: the emotional forces that keep the status quo in place are

[673] Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: 'On Earth as It Is in Heaven'* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 236.
[674] 'Amy' (SG1/P2) from the Southeastern Jurisdiction shared how, when she was in front of those with red stoles beginning to process into the conference, she was to 'get in back of the line' because she was a local pastor.

ever-present and influence how we interpret our traditions, mostly unconsciously.[675] Yet some of what I am recommending is being considered, which, as I have discovered, finds resonance among others—e.g., creating different tracks and modules for learning, such as those tailored to contextual challenges in multicultural settings or urban areas, or suggesting that Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) become a track in and of itself as a model for learning ministry, which was suggested by several local pastors in my sample. Changing the curriculum and doing away with 'vertical' notions of a curriculum (or staggered number classes), proposing electives, having basic ministry practice modules for both part-time and full-time local pastors, opting out of some courses due to prior education, allowing annual conferences room to experiment with theological education in collaboration with seminaries to engage in ministries such as planting churches, and exploring long-term reflective supervision as part of the Wesleyan covenant with local pastors, making worship more intentional, understanding different cultural contexts as unique locations of the Spirit's activity — all address what I am proposing in a Methodist Meeting House of Formation.[676]

What remains contested is the role of online learning and questions concerning the economics of investing in local pastors. Both are interrelated. Online learning reduces costs across the board for schools and students. However, at what price to learn the material practices of ministry and culture? How may access to online learning undercut embodied modalities of learning? Indeed, how will the UMC measure the growth and wisdom of local pastors whose education is delivered online rather than in person? By what criteria? What does a local pastor look like once they have gained pastoral wisdom and cultural aptitude?

In addition, regarding economics, my model of gathering, blessing, sharing, and investing is part of a larger conversation in the church. The key is to ensure that local pastors are part of it, which they have not been. How may the UMC draw on additional resources it currently depends on for investment and sharing? Jesus' model of gathering is important, but it assumes someone is aware of what the people need (Jn. 6:1-5). In addition, how might Wesley's own model of 'earning, saving, and giving all you can' apply? As Ted Smith has written, the unraveling of mainline denominations presents not only problems to renounce in terms of scarcity but also

[675] Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology,* 19.
[676] As a member of this new GBHEM Task Force, I was invited to present parts of my research at a meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 5, 2025.

affordances for moving forward. How may these theological affordances, such as solidarity, be brought to bear?[677]

These changes are part of the Course of Study, but they also align with eliminating the administrative procedures known as licensing and the License to Preach School, and moving toward the local elder order, which would address issues of authority in the UMC. This move would include, on the educational and formative fronts, ensuring that local pastors, such as elders and deacons, are examined according to Wesley's Historic Questions of ministry, and that the General Rules and regulations for this new order of ministry, as stated in the Discipline, are observed.[678] This move might sound contrary to my proposal, but eliminating the License to Preach School and opening up the 'porch' of the Methodist Meeting House to all persons who want to discern, entertain, and 'figure out' their vocations as United Methodists, within a spirit of collaboration and ongoing learning, echoes similar practices to the early class Meetings. To be sure, moving toward the local elder route could take different forms, depending on missional needs and challenges, but the impulse would be to understand how pneumatology informs sacramental ministry and how formation is always ongoing and open from the beginning to both seekers and those moving into ministry.

These are the points I made in Chapters 3 and 8: practicing pneumatological intervention entails imagining new possibilities for critically assessing the ministry of all those who are baptized: that in the Methodist Meeting House of Formation, while all are called to discern the demands of the gospel, not all are called to order the church's sacramental life. Indeed, as James K.A. Smith has written, the Spirit's work must always rhyme with Christ's: the Spirit is always acting to conform us to Christ, not simply to our own wishes.[679] The Spirit's desires in us are always desires to be tested (1 Jn. 4.1). Such foregrounding of the Spirit, then, as indicative of a pneumatological intervention, sets into motion not only a reshaping of pedagogy, which I shared in Chapter 7 for the formation of local pastors, but also the very *praxis* of Christ's ministry that drives mission in the Wesleyan tradition. The two are inseparable. It is why ordination is always measured within the domain of the Spirit's inclusive and collaborative domain.

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[677] Smith, *The End of Theological Education,* 164-171.
[678] *Discipline* ¶ 306.
[679] 'Not by Might, but by the Spirit: Discerning What Power is For,' in *The Mockingbird* (Spring 2025), 14-19.

This is why my concern about a practice-oriented model of formation addresses not only what occurs in the classroom for the formation and education of local pastors but also what occurs at the conference assembly. It addresses the entire process by which local pastors are shaped, from their call in the local church to their enrollment in the Course of Study. That is, it addresses the 'where' and the 'with whom' dimensions of learning, dimensions which are pneumatically significant. As I discovered in the Sharing Groups, for example, several local pastors stated how they felt about instructors who did not always teach as they said they would on ministry practice, nor did they align with what some local pastors perceived as an agenda other than the subject of the class (as stated in the syllabus). Some instructors did not care at all about teaching local pastors.

Such concerns raise the 'what if' question: 'What if' there were places where instructors and students in the Course of Study could share best practices and address common concerns: e.g., what are some of the ways in which to educate local pastors from diverse educational backgrounds? Indeed, such places or 'hubs' could be part of the Methodist Meeting House of Formation to serve as a form of accountability.[680] It could also be part of reclaiming aspects of early Methodism's apprenticeship- and community-based emphases to recast what 'going on to perfection' entails. Here, mentorship takes on new importance as well.

I mention this communal aspect of learning because during the research, I relied heavily on feminist perspectives on epistemology to understand how people learn: the formation and education of local pastors involve the embodied, relational, and contextual nature of knowledge. To be sure, I didn't go into my research with this in mind, but I soon discovered how the approaches of feminists scholars complemented Michael Polanyi's epistemological concept of indwelling, which also depends on emphatic and kinesthetic forms of knowing for learning: i.e., we come to indwell the complexities of reality in the particulars of what we are learning in a specific cultural context, and, in doing so, in this 'indwelling,' we discover that there is always more of reality to know.[681] I contend that such learning to 'see' or 'perceive' reality takes us into important aspects of a Wesleyan theological framework that also tries to account for the

[680] David Lowes Watson, 'Spiritual Formation in Ministerial Training: The Wesleyan Paradigm of Mutual Accountability,' *The Christian Century* (February 6, 1985), 122-124.
[681] Michael Polanyi, *Knowing and Being,* 148, and *The Tacit Dimension,* 18-19; cf. Andrew Wright, C*hristianity and Critical Realism: Ambiguity, Truth, and Theological Literacy* (London: Routledge, 2012), 10-13.

affective, emotional, and embodied ways we come to know God and be indwelt by God. How can this be further researched as part of any pneumatological intervention?

Lastly, in dealing with the tension between the church as an institution and as the social means of grace, I observed how Albert Outler called on Methodists to avoid what he coined a 'de-traditioned' church, or a church that operates as a machine, empty of theological content.[682] This tension remains, for the UMC is an institution. Yet how may the UMC reclaim resources from its own theological tradition and ecumenical work to address this concern? Here, I recommend building on the indwelling Spirit metaphor in God's household by bringing it into conversation with the ongoing dialogue between Roman Catholics and Methodists, which speaks to how 'communion ecclesiology' may assist the church in formation, or of seeing how 'communion with the Triune God is the very life of the Church…with the mission of God's Son and Spirit.'[683] Such 'communion ecclesiology' could provide theological depth by bringing together the administrative and more communal poles of the UMC's mission to make disciples, addressing how the UMC's visible organizational structures are necessary for communion with the Spirit. I view such an approach as aligning with the scaffolding of the Johannine emphasis on indwelling and being indwelt by the Spirit, as well as with the apostolic and the catholic dimensions of the church's fellowship with the Triune God.

9.4 Final Remarks

I conducted this research to learn about the formation of local pastors in the Course of Study. In doing so, I was reminded of why I entered the ministry in the first place: serving with local pastors. I began preaching in small United Methodist chapels when I was 18 and valued the local pastors who ministered there, often unrecognized for their efforts and gifts and often away from the ecclesial spotlight. I was grateful for the opportunities to come alongside them and learn as I was starting out in ministry. Even then, I realized how these folks were making a difference.

But what I didn't realize at the time was what becoming a local pastor or an elder involved: I was in college and very much being educated in a 'Berlin' model of theological education — literally a product of that paradigm (attending the University of Göttingen for a

[682] Outler, 'Do Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?' in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 211-226.
[683] This quote is found on page 74 of the *Seoul Report: The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church:* Report of the Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council (2006).

year). I thought preparing for ministry involved this kind of education: professional-academic courses to gain my ordination credentials and conference membership.

However, over time, I also began to recognize the limitations of this model: teaching local pastors in the Course of Study and assisting incoming candidates for ordination from seminary, as well as mentoring and directing spiritually those already in ministry, prompted me to wonder about other models and ways of education and formation: how may the UMC, looking at the current landscape, prepare people from all walks of life for ministry in a variety of settings, including local pastor roles that didn't require a professional graduate education? What if the 'Berlin' model is not the only way forward? What would a new model look like, especially one reoriented by the Spirit that still maintains critical thought? How could the UMC reconceive the entire formation and education process if it wants to move beyond such academic models and toward what Justo González has called the 'Bishop Ambrose model,' in which a bishop learns to be a bishop while serving as a bishop? That is, how could such a model complement the current 'Aquinas models' that were established in the universities and cathedrals of Europe as exemplars of theological education?[684] Or, as I have tried to share in this thesis, what if John Wesley and the early Methodists provide another answer by noting how education and formation can occur in their chapels and meeting houses–-reclaiming that pastoral wisdom is best gained while doing ministry and reflecting on it with faithful companions, and not necessarily by attending a prescribed degree program before ministry occurs-–all as an expression of growing in holiness. As I have come to see, both are needed, depending on context and person.

What I also learned in this research is that the equation of academics and formation is much more complex and worked out in practice. The good news is that, based on my research sample and anecdotal experience, local pastors learn from and shape one another despite ecclesial structures and academic challenges, testifying to how the Holy Spirit teaches in all things (Jn. 14:26). The John and Charles' of the UMC, as I shared in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, learn ministry by doing it and learn a great deal outside formal classroom and online settings. The Kittys and Susannas of the church also learn ministry, though their paths are typically different from John and Charles'.

It is why I wanted to pursue this research in the first place: I wanted to ask local pastors like John and Charles about their experiences of the Holy Spirit as part of their formation: what

[684] González*, The History of Theological Education,* 3.

would I discover? Here, I found that there is a great deal of informal 'lived' learning that happens that is part of the total educational and formative process: local pastors, like John and Charles, learn to con-spire (or breath-together) in their education and formation journeys, especially by befriending each other and worshipping together, practices I recommend must be considered significant conditions for encountering the Spirit, along with investing more financially in their ministries and elevating pastoral know-how as part of growing in holiness. Throughout this research, I was impressed by how local pastors were indwelt by the Spirit as they carried out their ministries. It was an admiration that I came to view as one of also indwelling God's love and grace, as in a Methodist Meeting House of Formation.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A

Sharing Group Participants and 'Codes'

List of 'Names' in Groups with Dates

The number of sharing groups and participants is recorded below. The meetings will be held online via Zoom from August 8, 2021, to November 22, 2021. The letters and numbers used to identify participants work as follows: Sharing Group = SG; Participant = P, with appropriate numbers. 40 people participated online; 46 completed the questionnaire. The six people listed at the end could not participate in the Sharing Groups for various reasons: Did Not Attend (DNA). The # before the SG/P or DNA/P indicates the order in which I received each questionnaire.

Sharing Group (SG#/P#)	**Date of Meeting**
Sharing Group 1	August 8
#3 SG1/P1 – 'Amber'	
#2 SG1/P2 – 'Amy'	
Sharing Group 2	August 10
#6 SG2/P3 – 'Betty'	
Sharing Group 3	August 30
#16 SG3/P4 – 'Cameron'	
#9 SG3/P5 – 'Candy'	
#7 SG3/P6 – 'Caroline'	
#8 SG3/P7 – 'Craig'	
Sharing Group 4	September 16 (Morning)
#4 SG4/P8 – 'Daniele'	
#19 SG4/P9 – 'Dakota'	
#26 SG4/P10 – 'Debbie'	
Sharing Group 5	September 16 (Evening)
#20 SG5/P11 – 'Ed'	
#25 SG5/P12 – 'Evan'	
#24 SG5/P13 – 'Emily'	
#22 SG5/14 – 'Ezekiel'	

Sharing Group 6		September 20
#23	SG6/P15 – ‘Franco’	
#27	SG6/P16 – ‘Faye’	
#21	SG6/P17 – ‘Faith’	
Sharing Group 7		September 29
#10	SG7/P18 – ‘Grace’	
#18	SG7/P19 – ‘Glenna’	
#15	SG7/P20 – ‘Gabriel’	
#28	SG7/P21 – ‘Georgia’	
Sharing Group 8		October 17
#30	SG8/P22 – ‘Hank’	
#29	SG8/P23 – ‘Harry’	
Sharing Group 9		November 10
#33	SG9/P24 – ‘Isaac’	
#1	SG9/P25 – ‘Ivy’	
Sharing Group 10		November 13
#34	SG10/P26 – ‘Joe’	
#32	SG10/P27 – ‘Jane’	
*	SG10/P28 – ‘Jerry’	
Sharing Group 11		November 16
#36	SG11/P29 – ‘Kala’	
#35	SG11/P30 – ‘Kathrine’	
#40	SG11/P31 – ‘Kennedy’	
#38	SG11/P32– ‘Klee’	
Sharing Group 12		November 17
#41	SG12/P33 – ‘Linda’	
**	SG12/P34 – ‘Lou’	
#42	SG12/P35 – ‘Laura’	

#37 SG12/P36 – ‘Lacy’

#39 SG12/P37 – ‘Larry’

Sharing Group 13 November 22

#44 SG13/P38 – ‘Mike’

#31 SG13/P39 – ‘Maurice’

#43 SG13/P40 – ‘Max’

Total: 40

Did Not Attend Sharing Groups (DNA/P) But Took the Questionnaire

#5 – DNA/P41 – ‘Nina’

#11 – DNA/P42 – ‘Naomi’

#12 – DNA/P43 – ‘Nancy’

#13 – DNA/P44 – ‘Nora’

#14 – DNA/P45 – ‘Nyla’

#17 – DNA/P46 – ‘Neriah’

Total: 6

Overall Total: 46

* ‘Jerry’ participated in the Sharing Group (SG10/28) but did not complete a questionnaire.

** ‘Lou’ participated in a Sharing Group (SG12/34) but did not complete a questionnaire.

Appendix B

Letter to *Directors* of Courses of Study

Sent to the Directors around the Country

Gaining Access

I sent this letter to Directors across the United States to share what I was doing and to find out how I might obtain permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with local pastors. I sent this email with the letter they could use (Appendix C) and a letter to local pastors (Appendix D). Once I gained approval, I sent the Participant Information Form (Appendix E), Consent Form (Appendix F), and Management Data Form (Appendix G) to inform each director of the research process.

Dear Course of Study Director (Name):

I am writing to seek your help. I am an elder in the Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church. I have been teaching in the Course of Study for nearly two decades and serve as the senior pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Franklin, Indiana.

I am seeking your support for research on the Course of Study. I am conducting this research as part of my Doctor in Theology and Ministry program at Durham University in England. I am writing to see how I might send invitations to local pastors who participate in the course of study that you directed.

Would you help me locate and contact the persons participating in the Course of Study to join a sharing group? This will involve local pastors taking a short questionnaire and selecting photographs to describe their learning experiences in the Course of Study and how they may have (or might not have) experienced the Holy Spirit as part of their ministerial formation. Once a person agrees to participate, I will send the Participant Information and Consent Forms to read, which explain my research. I will then send the questionnaire and visuals and work with those who agree to set up a time to meet. The focus or sharing group will last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Therefore, I am reaching out to request permission to invite participants. I have an ‘invitation’ to send out to help in this process, which I will send to you. I want to interview up to four or five people in an online focus group. I am also looking for a group as diverse as possible in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, church serving, etc.

This study has received approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Appendix C

Letter of Invitation to the Local Pastors

from the

Directors of the Course of Study

Once access was granted in my first letter (Appendix B), the Directors of the Course of Study sent this short letter to Licensed Local Pastors in their respective Courses of Study via email. My letter of invitation accompanied this initial invitation (Appendix D). I provided the Directors of the Course of Study with other materials as well, explaining different pieces of the research (e.g., Participant Information (Appendix E), Consent (Appendix F), and Management Data (Appendix G). I also made my Resume/CV available in case directors and local pastors wanted more information. This letter, sent by the Directors via email, helped me get the word out.

From the Directors of the Course Study:

Dear Local Pastors:

You are invited to read the email below and decide whether you would like to submit your name for a focus group led by Reverend Andy Kinsey of the Indiana Conference.

If you would like to do so, please email me at _____, and I will forward your name and email address to Reverend Kinsey. This is a worthwhile study.

Warm regards,

Name of the Course of Study Director

Appendix D

My Letter of Invitation to *Local Pastors*

Accompanying Letter

The email below accompanied the directors' invitation to participate and share.

Dear Local Pastor:

I am writing to seek your help. I am an elder in the Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church and have taught in the Course of Study for sixteen years. I am also the senior pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Franklin, Indiana.

I am seeking your support for research on the Course of Study. I am currently conducting this research as part of my Doctor in Theology and Ministry program at Durham University in England, and I am writing to invite you to participate.

Specifically, I want to locate persons who are participating in the Course of Study or who have participated in it to take part in a sharing group with me, which will involve a short questionnaire and a "narration" process of selecting a photograph to describe your experiences of learning in the Course of Study, along with questions to reflect on how you have (or have not) experienced or encountered the Holy Spirit as part of your learning and formational process as a local pastor.

Participants will also have a Participant Information Form to read, which explains my research, and a Consent Form to fill out, which is part of the questionnaire. This study has received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University (I will also send it).

I am reaching out to learn how, when, and where I may interview up to 5 people in a focus group or sharing group. Our online sharing will last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

I look forward to hearing from you. I need a way to schedule time to complete this research phase. Once I get a group of respondents, we will do so. If you know of other people you would recommend, that would also be helpful.

Pastor Andy Kinsey
andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com

Appendix E

Participant Information Form

Licensed Local Pastor

Tentative Project Title: Toward a Pentecost Pedagogy: Understanding the Learning Experiences of Local Pastors in the Course of Study of The United Methodist Church

Researcher: Andrew D. Kinsey
Department: Theology and Religion
Contact details: 317-494-9704, andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com
Current Supervisors: Rev. Dr. Will Foulger and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Kent
Supervisor contact: william.foulger@durham.ac.uk and Elizabeth.kent@durham.ac.uk

I sent this information about participation to the Directors of the Courses of Study around the country so they would know what I would be doing. It was also included in my first communication (Appendix B). I wanted the Directors to see the scope of the research. I sent the Consent Form (F) and the Management Form (G) to the local pastors.

Dear Local Pastors:

Here is the Participant Information Form for you to review as part of the research project exploring your learning experiences in the Course of Study. I am conducting this project as part of my work in the Doctor of Theology and Ministry (DThM) program at Durham University in England. This study has also received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University.

Personal Reminder (Again): I am an elder in the Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church. I have been teaching in the Course of Study for twenty years. I also serve as the senior pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Franklin, Indiana. My Resume/CV is available upon request. Please email me at the above address.

Before you decide whether to agree to take part, you need to understand the purpose of the research and what is involved as a participant. Please read the following information carefully. Please get in touch with me if anything is unclear or if you want more information.

The rights and responsibilities of anyone taking part in Durham University research are set out in our 'Participants Charter':

https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/considerations/people/charter

What is the purpose of the study?
This study aims to explore how participants in the Course of Study experience it as a form of theological education and ministerial formation. It seeks to understand how you learn in the Course of Study and how your interactions shape you. The research will involve

- An online questionnaire (to be sent)

- An interview in a sharing group, which will take place online (via video conferencing)
- Selecting a visual to share describing your experiences in the Course of Study

All participants will be asked to complete the online survey (phase one) and whether they would be willing to be interviewed. A selection of participants who have indicated their willingness to be interviewed and participate will then be invited to an interview with the researcher (phase two). The online questionnaire and the sharing group interview will provide this information sheet and a consent form.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to participate in the Course of Study. You are a licensed local pastor, or you are in the process of becoming a licensed local pastor, or you have completed the Course of Study. You have been identified as the person who is preparing to serve, or currently serving, or has served in The United Methodist Church and has been involved in the Course of Study.

Do I have to take part?
Participation is voluntary, and you do not have to agree to participate. If you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time before submitting the researcher's thesis (expected to occur in 2025) without giving a reason. Your rights to withdraw any data that is identifiable to you are explained in the accompanying Privacy Notice.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you agree to participate in this research, you will receive a link to complete an online survey. The online survey will take 20 minutes to fill out. You may choose not to answer any of the questions in the survey. You may complete the survey anonymously or give your name and contact details if you want to be interviewed in phase two of the research study.

Suppose you have indicated your willingness to be interviewed and selected as a participant for phase two of the research. In that case, you will be invited to an interview with the researcher at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will be held either in person at a public space convenient for you or online via video conference (Zoom). The interview will last about 1 hour and 15 minutes. You can choose not to answer any question during the sharing group.

During the sharing group, I will invite you to use a reflection form to select a picture and reflect on your involvement in the Course of Study. You will be provided with twenty-six pictures and invited to reflect on your learning experience in the Course of Study. You may choose not to participate in this aspect of the interview.

The interview will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. If you choose to participate, a picture of the picture you decide to share will also be taken.

Are there any potential risks involved?
There is no risk to you in this process. You will be asked about your educational and ministry experience and views on the Course of Study. You do not need to prepare anything in advance.

A possible benefit of this research is that your responses inform research that seeks to shape the future of theological learning and ministerial formation in the Course of Study.

Will my data be kept confidential?
All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. Any identifiable data collected will be accessible only to the researcher and Durham University staff directly involved in the supervision and oversight of the research project. You will be asked to permit the use of verbatim quotations from your survey responses and (where applicable) your interview responses. Quotations will be anonymized in the publication or presentation of any research findings.

You may choose to complete the online survey anonymously. Persons cannot connect data to the IP address from which the survey is completed.

Interview recordings will be stored on a secure digital recording device, and transcriptions will be kept in password-protected files on a secure computer. The accompanying Privacy Notice provides full details.

What will happen to the results of the project?
This research will be published as part of a thesis submitted to Durham University's Doctor of Theology and Ministry program. It will also be presented online and at conferences on practical theology. Individual participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?
Please contact the researcher or their supervisor if you have further questions or concerns about this study. If you remain unhappy or wish to complain formally, please submit one via the University's Complaints Process.

Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.

Pastor Andy Kinsey

Appendix F

Consent Form

Completed by Participants

Tentative Research Title: Toward a Pentecost Pedagogy: Understanding the Experiences of Local Pastors in the Course of Study in The United Methodist Church

Researcher: Andrew D. Kinsey
Department: Theology and Religion
Contact details: 317-494-9704 (USA) or andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com
Current Supervisors: Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Kent, Rev. Dr. Will Foulger
Supervisor contact details: william.foulger@durham.ac.uk and elizabeth.kent@durham.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in this research**.** This form confirms that you understand the project's purpose and what is involved, and that you are happy to participate in the online survey. If you have any questions about this project and the questionnaire from the information sheet, please share them with the researcher before participating. All your answers will be stored safely and anonymized in the DThM thesis and any other published material or presentations from this research, as detailed in the Information Sheet.

Please tick each box to indicate your agreement:

These questions appear at the end of the survey/questionnaire I sent via Survey Monkey.

I confirm that I have read and understand the Information Sheet dated [dd/mm/yy] and the privacy notice for the above project.	
I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.	
I understand who will have access to the personal data provided, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to it at the end of the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before the project's completion without giving a reason.	
I understand that my data will be anonymized before publication.	
I agree to the publication of anonymized verbatim quotes from my responses.	

I understand that if I withdraw during this process, all of my data will be immediately excluded from the research and deleted.	
I agree to take part in the above project.	

Would you also be willing to be contacted by the researcher about opportunities to participate in other parts of this project (e.g., follow-up interviews)? Information and a separate Consent Form will be provided for each part of this project. Answering 'yes' here indicates only your willingness to be contacted by the researcher and not your consent to participate in further research.

____ Yes, I am willing to be contacted by the researcher after I complete this survey about opportunities to participate in other parts of this project. My email address is andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com.

____ No, I am not willing to be contacted by the researcher after completing this survey.

Participant's Name _____ Date_____

Appendix G

Management Data Form

Sent with Consent and Participation Forms

Tentative Project Title: Toward a Pentecost Pedagogy: Understanding the Learning Experiences of Local Pastors in the Course of Study of The United Methodist Church

Researcher: Andrew D. Kinsey
Department: Theology and Religion
Contact details: 317-494-9704 (USA) or andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com
Current Supervisors: Rev. Dr. William Foulger and Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Kent
Supervisor contact details: william.foulger@durham.ac.uk and elizabeth.kent@durham.ac.uk

Will my data be kept confidential?
All data and information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. Any identifiable data collected will be accessible only to the researcher and Durham University staff directly involved in the supervision and oversight of the research project. You will be asked to permit the use of verbatim quotations from your survey responses and (where applicable) your interview responses. Quotations will be anonymized in the publication or presentation of any research findings.

You may choose to complete the online survey anonymously. Persons cannot connect data to the IP address from which the survey is completed.

Interview recordings will be stored on a secure digital recording device, and transcriptions will be kept in password-protected files on a secure computer. The accompanying Privacy Notice provides full details.

What will happen to the results of the project?
This research will be published as part of a thesis submitted to Durham University's Doctor of Theology and Ministry program. It will also be presented online and at conferences on practical theology. Individual participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation.

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns about this study?
Please contact the researcher or supervisor for further questions or concerns about this study. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please submit a complaint via the University's Complaints Process. *Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in this study.*

Appendix H

Debriefing Sheet for Local Pastors

Sent to Participants

Once completed, this information was sent to those participating in the sharing groups**.**

Tentative Research Title: Toward a Pentecost Pedagogy: Understanding the Experiences of Local Pastors in the Course of Study in The United Methodist Church

Researcher(s): Andrew D. Kinsey
Department: Theology and Religion
Contact details: 317-494-9704 (USA) or andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com
Current Supervisors: Rev. Dr. William Foulger and Rev. Dr. Liz Bryant
Supervisor contact details: william.foulger@durham.ac.uk and elizabeth.kent@durham.ac.uk.

Dear Participant:

Thank you for taking part in this study.

As you know, this research sought to understand how local pastors in The United Methodist Church experience the Course of Study as a form of theological education and ministerial formation, especially as they have encountered (or not encountered) the Holy Spirit through their participation.

If participating in this study raises (or has raised) any specific concerns about confidential information, please let me, the researcher, know at the email address or phone number above.

If you would like further information about the study's findings when all the data have been collected and analyzed, please indicate that here by providing your email address:

_____

Name Email Address

Appendix I

Email Sent with *Links*

Explanation of What to Do

I emailed the following once local pastors agreed to the research information phase. I then set up times for online sharing groups with those who chose to participate. The links went to the questionnaire (Appendix I) and the pictures (Appendix J).

Dear Local Pastor Name:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. I am grateful for your response.

Please take a moment to do two things.

1. Click here to complete the questionnaire, which collects basic demographic information. It will take approximately 15 minutes.

2. Click **here** to choose two pictures that you think describe the following:

    a. Picture One – a picture to describe your learning experience in the Course of Study.

    b. Picture Two – a picture to describe your experience of the Holy Spirit.

    If they are the same, that's okay. We will share during our meeting online.

If you have questions, please let me know. You can email or call me at the following address.

andrewdalekinsey@gmail.com

317-494-9704

With appreciation,

Pastor Andy Kinsey

Appendix J

Online Survey Questionnaire

Understanding the Learning Experiences of Local Pastors

This online survey questionnaire was distributed via SurveyMonkey. I kept track of the responses in online and hard-copy folders, and in transcripts, in a safe place on my computer and in a secure box at home. Once local pastors had completed the questionnaire, I worked with them to schedule an online meeting to share their responses and images (Appendix J).

Part 1

The first part of this survey asks questions about you and your background. If you prefer not to provide the requested information, you may select 'I prefer not to say' to any of the following questions.

1. Age: Click one of the following…
    - 20-25
    - 26-30
    - 31-35
    - 36-40
    - 41-45
    - 46-50
    - 51-55
    - 56-60
    - 61-65
    - Over 66
    - I prefer not to say
2. Gender:
    - Male
    - Female
    - I prefer not to say
3. Ethnic Background
    - a. White
    - b. Black or African-American

c. Asian-Pacific Island

d. Native American/Alaskan Native

e. Hispanic

f. Multiple Ethnicity

g. Other:

h. I prefer not to say

4. Previous Education: check level attained.

a. High School

b. GED Level

c. College (Bachelor's Level)

d. Vocational Technical Training

e. Post-Graduate (Master's and above)

f. I prefer not to share

Part 2

The next part of the survey asks for some information about your membership and service in The United Methodist Church and (where relevant) in other denominations

5. Before serving or becoming a member of The United Methodist Church, did you consider yourself a member of another denomination or religious group?
   Yes, another Christian denomination (for example, Baptist): please specify
   _____

   Yes, another religious group (for example, Jewish): please specify
   _____

   I prefer not to answer.

6. How many years have you been serving in ministry in The United Methodist Church?
   Write number here: _____

7. How many churches have you served in The United Methodist Church?
   Write number here: _____

8. What kinds of ministry roles or ministry positions did you participate in before moving into the status of a local pastor? Please choose.
   a. Lay Leader in Local
   b. Sunday school teacher

c. Other position: Please write answer(s) here: _____

9. Are you currently a part-time or a full-time local pastor?
    a. Part-time
    b. Full-time

10. In what Jurisdiction do you serve? Open the list and select.
    a. New England
    b. Southeastern
    c. North Central
    d. South Central
    e. Western
    f. Other _____

Part 3

The following section asks about your enrollment in the Course of Study, the forms of learning you engaged in, and the support you have received in your studies.

11. In what year did you begin in the License to Preach School?
    Write the year here:

12. In what year did you begin the Course of Study?
    Write the year here:

13. In what year do you expect to complete, or have completed, the Course of Study?
    Write here:

14. How many courses do you still need to complete if you are still enrolled in the Course of Study? If you have completed it, please check 'completed.'
    Write Number Here:

    Check here if completed.

15. In what place does your Course of Study meet?
    Specify place here: _____

16. Would you describe yourself as having any of the following specific learning needs? If so, check the following:
    a. No Specific Needs
    b. Dyslexia
    c. Attention Deficit Disorder
    d. Dyspraxia
    e. Trauma
    f. Hyperactivity Disorder

g. Prefer Not to Answer

17. If you answered the above in Question 17, have you received formal support for your specific learning need in the Course of Study?
Please share briefly: _____

No
I prefer not to say

18. What styles or forms of learning have you experienced in the Course of Study that you have found helpful to your formation? Click those that apply.
    a. Lecture
    b. Seminary
    c. Case Study Approach
    d. Preaching Laboratory
    e. Zoom
    f. Online Format
    g. Other: Share here:

19. What courses have not been helpful to you in the Course of Study?
Share briefly here.

20. Learning happens in formal and informal ways. What informal ways have you found beneficial for learning?
    a. Conversations over meals
    b. Conversations during breaks
    c. Developing Friends
    d. Classroom Sharing
    e. Other: Share here:

21. Unlike seminaries, which provide financial assistance, it is not always clear if local pastors receive financial support: Do you receive any financial assistance from the following?
    a. Local church help
    b. District support
    c. Conference support
    d. Other support. Please share here:
    e. No support at all.

Part 4

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Worship, and Vocational Journey

22. Where have you encountered or experienced the Holy Spirit as part of your formation in the Course of Study? Please share.

23. Are there any places in the Course of Study where you felt the Holy Spirit was prevented from being part of the teaching and learning? Please share.

24. What patterns or forms of worship and prayer have you found helpful in the course of study in which you participated?
    a. Contemporary Forms of Worship
    b. Alternative Forms of Worship
    c. Spontaneous Worship Led by Course of Study Students
    d. Traditional Worship Practices of the UMC; singing with the UMC Hymnal
    e. Other: Please share:

25. Has the Course of Study supported you in your vocational journey as a local pastor?

    a. Agree Strongly

    b. Agree

    c. Neither agree nor disagree

    d. Disagree

    e. Disagree Strongly

26. Is there anything else you want to share about your involvement in the Course of Study?
    I would be interested in taking part in the interview phase of this research:

    Yes

    No

    If yes, provide email contact: _____

Part 5

Please answer the following regarding consent and confidentiality.

27. I have read and understood the above project's Information Sheet and Privacy Notice.

    Yes/No

28. I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.

    Yes/No

29. I understand who will have access to the personal data provided, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

    Yes/No

30. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before the project's completion without giving a reason.

    Yes/No

31. I understand that my data will be anonymized before publication.

    Yes/No

32. I agree to the publication of anonymized verbatim quotes from my responses.

    Yes/No

33. I understand that if I withdraw from this process, all my data will be excluded from the research and deleted immediately.

    Yes/No

34. I agree to take part in the above project.
    Yes/No

35. Would you be contacted by the researcher about opportunities to participate in other parts of this project (e.g., follow-up interviews)? Information and a separate consent form will be provided for each part of the project. Answering 'Yes' here indicates only your willingness to be contacted by the researcher and not your consent to participate in further research.

    Yes, I am willing to be contacted by the researcher after I complete this survey about opportunities to participate in other parts of this project. Please share your preferred information/email: _____.

Appendix K

Use of Photographs

Chosen by the Local Pastors to Share

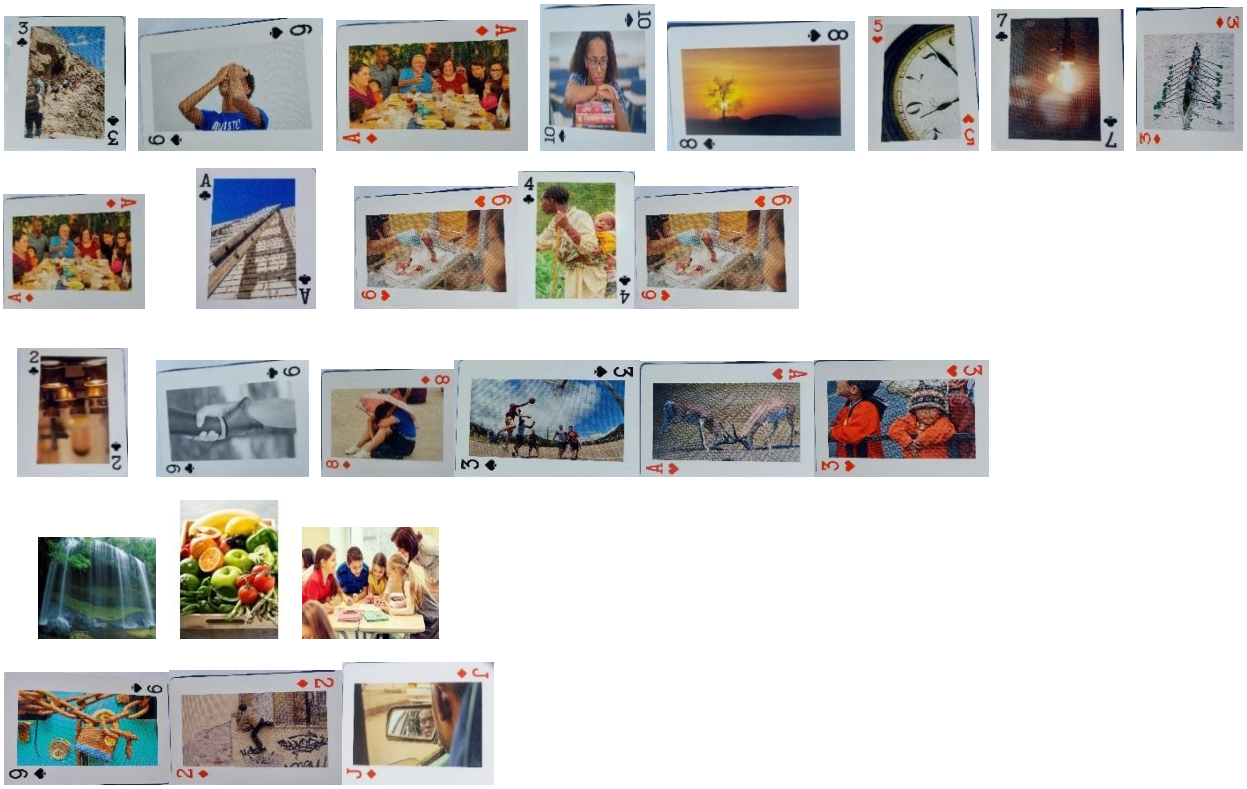
I used the following 26 cards from Snapshot, a religious/educational group that uses them in its learning. I used them to elicit responses to my questions.

1. What picture might describe your learning experience in the Course of Study?

2. Where or how might you have experienced the Spirit as part of your formation in the Course of Study?

When I used them in the sharing group, I began, following prayer and time of introduction, by showing the cards on the computer screen and saying something to the effect: 'I invited you to select a picture describing your experience of learning the Course of Study. Who would like to begin by sharing and pointing out their chosen picture? Once completed, I asked about the Spirit's experiences. (Cf., www.tips:snapshots.cards for more information.)

Pictures:



Appendix L

Sharing Group Format

Process of the Sharing Groups

The following outlines how I conducted the semi-structured interviews in the sharing groups: allowing for conversation, listening to how local pastors shared their learning experiences, responding to the visuals I sent before the meeting, and linking to the questionnaire.

1. Setting Up the Zoom Link and Time of Meeting

2. Welcoming Local Pastors

    Thanking the people who agreed to come and ensuring they had completed the survey and understood the consent aspect of the study.

    Doing introductions about where a person was serving and where they were in the process of the Course of Study.

    I am sharing a brief word about the research I am doing.

3. Opening Prayer for God's Spirit

    Sharing words about the Visual Narration pieces I had them pick before the Focus Group. Each person would explain why they chose the image and comment on it. The question was, 'Which picture or image best describes your learning experience in the Course of Study?'

    Spending time sharing and listening. I would put the visual narration piece on the screen, allow the person to comment on the picture they chose, then display that picture.

    There was also a blank picture to allow people to share an image they might have chosen if the photos on the screen did not describe their experience.

    Once the group members had finished sharing, we proceeded to the following discussion question: 'Which picture best describes your experience of the Holy Spirit in the Course of Study?'

    Members took time to share their experiences.

4. Experiences and examples followed this question.

    Depending on responses, other questions followed as they arose or took different directions in the interviews.

        a. What was the role of worship in the Course of Study, if there was one?

b. How did it provide a space for the Spirit? Or not provide? Where did worship take place? Was this important for you? Share more.

c. How was Wesleyan theology taught or practiced in classes? Elaborate.

d. Frustrations with the Course of Study? Could you change or tweak as aspect of the Course of Study? What specifically? Why?

e. What was helpful in learning ministry?

f. Gifts of the Course of Study?

g. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience in the Course of Study?

h.. Online forms of learning? Reactions? Positive? Negative? Share more.

Closing Remarks

Questions about the research. Goal of the study.

Debriefing Form comments and instructions.

Closing Prayer and Thanks

Appendix M

Data Further Broken Down

Questionnaire

The purpose of this Appendix is to further break down the data from the Questionnaire and Sharing Groups. The first section of the Appendix focuses on the Questionnaire responses and the second on the Sharing Groups.

Questionnaire Breakdown Further

Age Distribution

Ages	31-50	51-60	61 and above	Prefer not to say
Number	8 people	14 people	18 people	4 people

Fortunately, the United Methodist Church tracks statistics for licensed local pastors in the U.S. As noted in Chapter 6, the age breakdown of the 6,107 licensed local pastors follows:

Median Age of LLPs – 58
Average Age – 55

Gender and Age

	Under 35	35-54	55-72
Men	71%	67%	60%
Women	29%	33%	40%

The average age of a United Methodist, laity, and clergy combined in the US in 2023 was 61.[685] My research sample pairs well with this age median and average. The average age of *all forty-six* participants in my research was 59. They were four years older than the average, though only one year older than the median.

Gender and Status Percentages of LLPs in the UMC

Under 35: 71% men, 29% female.
Ages 35-54: 67% male, 33% female.
Ages 55-72: 60% male, 40% female.[686]

[685] See also Ryan Burge at www.ryanburge.com. Burge's research brings attention to the aging of mainline Protestant groups in the United States, including the UMC, and notes this trend in 'The Aftermath of the Schism in the United Methodist Church' (April 25, 2024).

[686] These statistics do not align fully with the data I shared above from the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The Lewis Center also uses Pew and Gallup, which may explain the variation in the data; cf., 'Clergy Trends in the United Methodist Church 2023 Report,' 16.

My sample was almost the reverse of these trends:

17 females serving full-time
11 females serving part-time
8 males serving full-time
8 males serving part-time

Regarding gender, my research sample also did not match the UMC gender average: 64% were female, and 36% were male, almost the opposite of the current trend among licensed local pastors in the UMC.[687]

Ethnicity and Gender of Questionnaire Respondents

White – 32 people (17 part-time and 14 full-time)
African American – 2 (two part-time males)
Asian American – 1 (full-time, woman)
American Indian or Alaska Native – 1 (full-time, one male)
Hispanic or Latino – 2 (full-time, males)
Multiethnic – 5 (full-time, all female)

Regarding race and ethnicity, my sample closely mirrors national trends within the United Methodist Church. Of the 44 respondents to the Questionnaire, 32 identified as Caucasian, 2 as African American, 1 as Asian, 2 as Hispanic, and 5 as Multiethnic. Nationally, the United Methodist Church's racial/ethnic breakdown of local pastors overall is 74% white, 4.6% African American, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic/Latino, and fewer than 1% multi-racial, Native American, or other.[688] In the UMC, 83% of all clergy (elders and deacons) identify as white, with 73% male and 27% female.[689]

I also noticed that more women identified as multiracial (e.g., approximately 60% were women, and 10% identified as African American, Hispanic, Native American, or multiracial). Here, the sample differs from the UMC's dominant demographic: 62% of pastors are male and 40% are female, and 83% of all clergy (elders, deacons, and local pastors) are white, with less than 5% from other ethnic backgrounds.[690] A noticeable absence in my data, however, is the

[687] 'Increasing Interest in Bi-vocational Ministry,' Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Religious Workforce Project* (Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesleyan Theological Seminary, 2022), 14.
[688] Find the figures at the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women at www.gcsrw.com and the following: "Analysis of Race/Ethnicity of United Methodist Clergy,' Amanda Mountain (*United Methodist Communications,* 2024).
[689] Ibid., 3.
[690] 'Analysis of Race/Ethnicity of United Methodist Clergy,' Amanda Mountain (United Methodist Communications, 2024).

explicit identification of African American and Hispanic women, Asian men, and Pacific Islander men and women. Yet, as noted, a flipside is that five women in my sample identified as multiethnic, which raises the possibility of different conclusions.

Educational Backgrounds

Prefer not to say – 4
Post-Graduate Work – 14
Bachelor's Degree – 17
Vocational Training – 6
High School – 3

Four women preferred not to answer about their educational level. However, the fourteen people who stated they had attained postgraduate education were as follows: ten were white women, two were Hispanic men, one was an Asian woman, and one was a multiethnic woman. Only one of these fourteen people, a female, was below 50. Five women with postgraduate degrees serve in full-time pastorates, while two men do so as well. The other seven serve part-time parishes, one of which was multi-ethnic.

In addition, 17 people in my sample reported having a bachelor's degree: 10 were female, and 7 were male. They ranged in age from 36 to over 66. Three people in this category did not disclose their age. Of these seventeen people, however, eight are females serving in full-time ministry (one of whom is multiethnic), and two are serving in part-time ministry (both white). Four males serve full-time in churches, and three serve part-time, one of whom is Native American.

The following information indicates training at a high school and a technical school. Out of the 44 respondents, six reported attending a technical school, comprising three men (two African-American and one white) and four women (all white). Three served full-time (white women), and three were part-time (two African-American men and one white woman).

Of the three people who earned a high school diploma and were part of the Course of Study, two were white females, and one was a multiracial male. One of the females was part-time and between 31 and 35 years old, the youngest in my questionnaire sample. The two full-time local pastors, a multiethnic male and a white female, served in their respective parishes in their jurisdictions, Western and North Central, respectively.

Years of Service Before Ministry

7 respondents served less than 5 years
18 respondents served between 5 and 9 years
12 respondents served between 10 and 14 years
7 respondents served more than 15 years

Previous Ecclesial Membership

8 Baptists
5 Roman Catholic
3 Lutheran
2 Presbyterian
2 Nazarene
2 Pentecostal
1 Church of Christ
1 Congregational
1 Disciples of Christ

Regional/Jurisdictional Breakdown

New England/Northeastern – 5
Northcentral/Midwest – 22
Southeastern (Southern) – 6
Southwestern/Central – 6
Western – 5

Formal Learning Formats/Pedagogies

Participants could choose one or more.

Preaching Labs—12 people found them helpful
Seminar Format—14 people expressed positive feedback
Case Studies in Classes—15 people found these practical
Other Formats (class discussions, worship exercise, CPE)—23
Zoom—25 reported frustrating experiences with online formats
Lecture—28 noted that lectures were a dominant format for learning

Informal Ways of Learning

Participants could choose one or more or write in a response.

Conversations Meals – 25
Conversations at Breaks – 25
Developing Friends – 30
Classroom Sharing – 37
Other Formats (Online) – 21

Locating the Spirit as Part of Formation.

Worship – 35 people
Open Dialogical Class Discussions – 32
Ongoing friendships – 28
Other – 24

The category 'other' refers to having time outside classes for meditation, prayer, reading, and studying with others.

Sharing Group Breakdown Further

The following information provides a brief breakdown of participants in the Sharing Groups.

Gender and Ministry Status Breakdown of Sharing Group Participants

Female serving full-time – 13
Female serving part-time – 9
Male serving full-time – 9
Male serving part-time – 9

Total Female: 22
Total Male: 18

Ethnic Breakdown of Sharing Group Participants

White – 30
Black or African American – 3
Asian or Asian American – 1
American Indian or Alaska Native – 1
Hispanic or Latino – 2
Multi-ethnic – 2
Other – 1

Regional/Jurisdictional Breakdown of Participants

New England/Northeastern – 5
Northcentral/Midwest – 18
Southeastern (Southern) – 6
Southwestern/Central – 6
Western – 5

Educational Breakdowns of Sharing Group Participants

Prefer not to say – 4
Post-Graduate Degrees – 13
Bachelor's – 15
Vocational Training – 6
High School – 2

Age Breakdown of Sharing Group Participants

Prefer not to say – 4
Ages 31-50 – 7
Ages 51-60 – 1 3
Ages 61 and above – 15

Appendix N

Curriculum Structures

License to Preach School and Course of Study

The breakdown of the License to Preach School, Course of Study, and Advanced Course of Study is below.

License to Preach School (80 Hours)

- United Methodist Tradition
- Public Worship and Liturgy
- Preaching, Leadership/Administration
- Spiritual Formation
- Educational Ministries,
- Pastoral Care Mission and Evangelism
- Conference-Specific Education.[691]

Basic Course of Study Class Curriculum

Foundational Courses (Twenty Classes)

- Bible – CoS 121: Bible Introduction
  CoS 221: Torah & Israel's History
  CoS 321: The Gospels
  CoS 421: The Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom
  CoS 521: Epistles & Revelation

- Theology – CoS 122: Theological Heritage: Intro
  CoS 222: Early Church
  CoS 322: Medieval-Reformation
  CoS 422: Wesleyan/Methodist Movement
  CoS 522: Contemporary Church.

Functional Courses

- Congregational Life – CoS 123: Formation & Discipleship
  CoS 223: Worship & Sacraments
  CoS 323: Congregational Care
  CoS 423: Mission
  CoS 523: Evangelism.

[691] There are currently forty-three License to Preach Schools: www.gbhem/liscensetopreach.com.

- Identity of Pastor – CoS 124: Transformative Leadership
  CoS 224: Administration and Polity
  CoS 324: Preaching
  CoS 424: Ethics
  CoS 524: Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry.[692]

Advanced Course of Study Classes (Ten Classes)

Needed for Ordination

ACoS: UM History

ACoS: UM Polity

ACoS: UM Doctrine

Foundational

ACoS: Old Testament

ACoS: New Testament

ACoS: Theology

ACoS: Church History

Functional

ACoS: Mission,

ACoS: Evangelism

ACoS: Worship & Sacraments.[693]

[692] All the websites of a Course of Study in annual conferences will list these twenty-classes, along with the basic information about how to enroll, what the class requirements are, and what steps a person needs to take if he or she wants to become a licensed local pastor (i.e., as outlined in *The Guidebook: Answering the Call* and as noted in terms of meeting with local church leaders, etc.).
[693] Go to www.gbhemadvancedcourseofstudy.com.

Appendix O

Grade Sheet for a Local Pastor

Course of Study

'Student Assessment'

Upon completing a course, a local pastor will receive a 'Student Assessment' from the instructor. Here is an example of that assessment from the Extension Site of the Indiana Course of Study of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois.

Student Name:

Conference: **PID:** **Status: Full-Time or Part-Time**

Semester: **Course Number:**

Course Title:

Grade (A through F):

Note to Student: You are responsible for saving this grade sheet for your records. This protects you if GBHEM is unable to find a grade for this course. It will also be your proof that you have completed the course!

Instructor Comments:

Recommendations:

Instructor: _____

Print Name **Signature**

Date: _____

Cc. Student, Director of Course of Study, GBHEM

Appendix P

Course of Study Graduation

Service

Announcements Prior to Procession

***Processional Hymn**

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" vv. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 UMH #57

****Welcome and Call to Worship***

Leader: Peace be with you.
People: And also with you.
Leader: Come and see the love God has given us.
People: Come and see what it means to be children of God.
Leader: Come with this hope, that Christ's presence is real.
People: With joy, we come to see the Lord.

Leader Shall Offer Opening Prayer

~ Adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009, © 2008 Abingdon Press.

Prayer for Illumination

~ written by Amy Loving, and posted on The Worship Closet.

Scripture Exodus 3:1-15

Sermon "Called to Lead, Formed to Follow"

***Response Hymn** **"Here I Am, Lord"** **UMH #593**

Prayers of The People

Petitions will be offered by the leader. Following each petition, there will be a brief period of silence. Then the leader will prompt the following response:

Leader: Set our minds on heavenly things; **People: Fill us with your joy.**

~ adapted from Paul Sauer, and posted on the Lutheran Forum website

Recognition of Graduates (Director)

Ministry is the work of God, done by the people of God and given to each Christian as a vocation. Through baptism, all Christians are made part of the priesthood of believers, the Church made visible in the world. God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, empowers us to live as witnesses to God's grace and love. We are to bear witness in and through the life of the Church and to be faithful in our daily lives. Therefore, in celebration of our common ministry, I say to you all: Remember your baptism and be thankful!

We remember our baptism and affirm our common ministry.

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul writes that "[Christ] himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

We honor and recognize those who have been called and set apart by God in various ways for the work of equipping the saints.

In the United Methodist Church, Local Pastors are licensed for pastoral ministry and, along with Elders, share the responsibilities and duties of a pastor in the fourfold areas of Word, Order, Sacrament, and Service within the local congregations or contexts to which they are appointed. Today, we recognize those who have felt the call to serve God and the Church through ministry as Local Pastors and who have completed their Course of Study.

We celebrate those who have answered the call to serve the Church as Local Pastors.

The names of the graduates are called, and individual Gifts are distributed

Names of LLPs.

Prayer for the Graduates

The leader shall say: Graduates, you have worked... as we lift you up in prayer.

Let us pray together:

God of truth and knowledge,
By your wisdom, we are taught the way and the truth.

Bless these servants as they now finish this Course of Study.

We thank you for those who taught and worked beside them,
and all who supported them along the way.

Walk with these graduates
as they continue their service as Local Pastors.

Take away their anxiety and self-doubt,
strengthen their many talents and skills,
instill in them confidence in the future you plan,
and equip them for the work of ministry
to which you have called them;
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

~ offered at Baccalaureate Mass at Xavier University by Fr. Michael Graham SJ, 2015.

***Recessional Hymn "Christ for the World We Sing" UMH #568**

~ Parts of this service were adapted from a service created by Shalimar Holderly in 2024

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