

McCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

RE-COMPOSING A LIFE:
TRANSITIONING INTO THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

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ABSTRACT:

God calls people in all seasons into a life of fullness and wholeness. This includes Baby Boomers, those who now find themselves in the second half of life, many of whom are searching for meaning and purpose, as well as greater fulfillment spiritually. This thesis project therefore aims to help Boomers discover their Christian vocation and equip them to live full and purposeful lives. Through the development of an educational intervention tested at Siloam United Church, this project aims to reach out to Boomers in our community. Its purpose is five-fold: first, it seeks to help Boomers discover their Christian story. Secondly, it attends to the needs of Boomers by helping them to transition from the first half of life to the second half of life, including marking this transition ritually. Thirdly, it helps Boomers to discern their calling, biblically and theologically, and assists them in reclaiming the vision of St. Paul in I Corinthians 4:1. Fourthly, this project attempts to engage Boomers in meaningful ministry, including Christian vocation and service. Finally, it is the goal of this project to help Boomers understand the significant legacy they have to share, while exploring ways that they can become mentors and keepers of meaning who pass down their faith and wisdom to the next generation.

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Introduction

Standing like Moses at the top of Mount Nebo, and looking out into the Promised Land of the twenty-first century, sociologist of religion Wade Clark Roof described the post World War II “Baby Boomers”¹ as “the vanguard of cultural transformations”.² What Roof said about the impact of Boomers in the United States is also true of Canada. Canadian sociologist Reginald Bibby noted in 2006, because of their numbers, “this much-heralded cohort born” between approximately 1946 and 1966 has played a huge role in shaping Canadian culture and values, including religion.³ While Canadian Boomers have never received “the fanfare” that has accompanied American Boomers, there is no question that Canadian Boomers have had, and continue to have, a major impact on Canadian culture.⁴

Nor is it their sheer size alone that has fashioned them into the influential force they have become in Canada. As Bibby notes, Boomers continue to play a major role in almost every facet of Canadian life. Moreover, as the research conducted by Yankelovich and Associates clearly demonstrates, not only did Boomers in the sixties and seventies defy traditional expectations during their younger years, so also they continue to defy conventional expectations about aging and retirement. As they note, “Boomers have never known an age at which they didn’t matter.”⁵

¹ The term “Baby Boomers” was first coined and popularized by Florence Skelly, one of the co-founders of Yankelovich, Skelly, & White, Inc., a marketing and research firm in the United States. J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Generation Ageless. How Baby Boomers Are Changing the Way We Live Today...And They’re Just Getting Started*. (New York, Harper Collins, 2007), p. 18.

² Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace. Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 3.

³ Reginald W. Bibby, *The Boomer Factor. What Canada’s Most Famous Generation Is Leaving Behind*. (Lethbridge, Bastian Books, 2006), p. ix.

⁴ Bibby says, [This] is much like what happens with the CFL versus the NFL, or *Canadian Idol* versus *American Idol*. Our Boomers didn’t have a highly publicized counter culture movement, regular clashes with the police, a Woodstock, religious brainwashing, or a Vietnam War. Still,...our quieter, lower-key Boomers are leaving a definite imprint on our culture. *Ibid*.

⁵ J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Generation Ageless*, p. 37.

It is highly unlikely therefore that they will “go gently into that good night”⁶ of old age. In fact, what is clear from Yankelovich’s studies, is that Boomers not only want to matter, they also want to make a real difference in their world.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that a dramatic and persistent decline in church participation by Boomers since the mid-1960’s suggests that those in the Boomer generation have not been able to find the meaning they are searching for within the traditional mainline church. As Bibby points out, there is no escaping the fact that the huge drop-off in church attendance between the mid-1960’s and the start of the millennium “coincided with the Boomers (a) becoming adults and (b) comprising almost 1 in 2 adults between roughly 1981 and 2001.”⁷ As Bibby further notes, “Contrary to rumours originating in the United States about Boomers returning to church, some returned, but most did not.”⁸ Clearly the church has not been able to connect its love of God with a large segment of the Boomer generation.

It is my belief that the Church has a responsibility to reach out to Boomers, as well as an important role to play in assisting Boomers to make a difference in the world around them. Indeed, how the Church can begin to help Boomers make some steps in this direction, and provide them with spiritual resources to assist them as they transition from “first half of life” to “second half of life” issues, is the focus of this thesis project.

To this end I have put together a six-week course of study entitled “Re-Composing A Life: Transitioning Into the Second Half of Life”. This program, first offered at Siloam United Church in the spring of 2014, seeks to help Boomers to discern where and how God is calling

⁶ Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night” *The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas* (New York, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1957).

⁷ Reginald W. Bibby, “*Restless Gods and Restless Youth: An Update on the Religious Situation in Canada.*” Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Sociological Association. Ottawa, May, 2009.

⁸ *Ibid.*

them to serve in the second half of life. It builds on the architectural metaphor described by cultural anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson in her book, *Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom*.⁹ Bateson compares the second half of life – Adulthood II – to an atrium that is added to the center of the house we call our life and which affects how we use all the other rooms and stages of our life. She points out that many entering Adulthood II have been given an extra 25 to 30 years of active wisdom denied to most in previous generations in history. It is the contention of this thesis that these extra years are a gift that are to be used wisely in service to God’s world. By connecting Boomers with the Church’s story this project therefore explores ways that Boomers can become servants and mentors and begin to pass down their faith and wisdom to the next generation.

Background

The setting for this project is Siloam United Church in London, Ontario, where I have served as Lead Minister since the Fall of 2007. While a very active congregation, the most recent statistical findings demonstrate that Siloam United Church has not been successful in connecting its love of the Christian story with the vast majority of Boomers who live in the area. This is unfortunate, given not only that Boomers represent an unusually large proportion of the population and have many gifts and talents to share, but also because the research is clear that a great many of them are hungering for spiritual nurture, as well as a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.¹⁰

Established in 1857, Siloam United Church has grown from a small rural church on the

⁹ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Further Life. The Age of Active Wisdom*. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

¹⁰ Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers. The Spiritual Journeys of Baby Boomers*. (San Francisco, Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 4, 8..

outskirts of London, a city of now approximately 367,000, to a program sized pastoral charge of roughly 300 households. Rooted in the Reformed tradition of the United Church of Canada, Siloam was originally a Methodist congregation. It became part of the United Church of Canada at the time of Church Union in 1925, a union of the Methodist and Congregational denominations and a majority of the Presbyterians.¹¹ Over the decades it has seen both periods of growth and decline.

At present Siloam's ministry is largely shaped by its relatively affluent context. Our third building, constructed in 1988, is a beautiful contemporary building with big bright sunny windows beckoning its members out into service in God's world. It is located in a corner of the city that has seen tremendous growth in the development of major housing projects.

To a large degree Siloam United Church still sees itself as the friendly little country church on the corner. Friendly it is, and very inclusive in its policies, especially with regard to the Gay-Lesbian-Transgendered and Twin Spirited (GLBT) community. However, its composition is largely homogenous, consisting of mostly older white adults. Whereas the little country church on the corner was bursting with young families thirty years ago, now all the children from that earlier period have grown up and most have moved away, leaving behind them their older parents and grandparents.

We also have a great deal to do when it comes to reaching out to middle-aged adults of the generation known as the Baby Boomers, the generation with whom this thesis project is concerned. This is the demographic that increasingly finds itself sandwiched between caring for aging parents and teenagers or young adults. According to the most recent Environics Report that was completed for Siloam (September 27, 2013), 18% of households in our service area are

¹¹ See Appendices for more information on the church's history and core values.

maintained by Leading Edge Boomers (LED), or those between the ages of 55 to 64.¹² Over 20% of households are maintained by Trailing Boomers (TREBS, aged 50-54) and old end Busters (aged 45-49). The report reveals that between 95.7% and 99.5% of these Boomer households remain untapped by Siloam.¹³

While many churches and faith communities rightly stress the need to focus on children and young people, I have deliberately decided to center my study on the Baby Boomer generation for several reasons. Not only is there ample evidence to show that this is a group that largely remains untapped at Siloam, but also the very nature and size of this generation demands that we pay attention to them. For example, sociologists have for some time now referred to the Baby Boomers as the “lead generation”.¹⁴ To a large degree they are the ones who set the agenda for the rest of the country. Yet, as Alban Institute founder and writer Lyle Schaller pointed out some years ago, 13% of those born in the peak years of the Baby Boom claim no church affiliation. According to a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, the percentage of those claiming no church affiliation is higher in Canada, reaching as high as 24 per cent in 2011. Quoting writer Mike Bella, Gary L. McIntosh says: “the baby boom is simply too big and too influential to be ignored. Churches that want to grow must not ignore the Boomer generation but adjust their ministries to attract and keep them.”¹⁵

More importantly, studies such as those by Roof and McIntosh show that the Boomers are hungry for meaning and spiritual nurture. While there is much to be learned from other

¹² *The Environics analysis Service Report prepared for Siloam United Church, London, ON, September 27, 2013, pp. 3-17.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gary L. McIntosh, *One Church. Four Generation. Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church.* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2007), p. 89.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

traditions, it is sad that so many Boomers fail to find support for their faith journey in the Church and instead often turn only to the New Age movement to meet their spiritual needs. Roof writes, “We are all leading lives of quiet desperation. There is definitely a reclaiming of spirituality among many Boomers involved in what is at least in part a mid-life quest for meaning.”¹⁶

Moreover, because many Boomers live far away from family, they are redefining what family means. For many, family is determined not necessarily by biological ties but consists rather of those people who love and care for them.¹⁷ As in the earliest days of Christianity, the Church has a unique opportunity to become a supportive, caring family to a generation that, largely because of career moves, has often had to leave biological families behind.

Bibby agrees that the Church today has a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of Canadian Baby Boomers. He observes that much of the popular thinking would have us believe that Boomers have it all – educational and material success, youthfulness and exciting sex lives! Yet, while Boomers have generally made significant advances over their parents in terms of educational achievement and their standard of living, Bibby’s study suggests that Boomers, especially men, are not as emotionally or financially satisfied as we would expect. Many Boomers are not feeling very fulfilled, at least when compared to previous generations, particularly as they reflect upon family life, marriage, career, and life as a whole. Surveys show that 3 in 10 Boomers in Canada feel that there is a void in their lives, that there is something missing, and that they “should be getting more out of life.”¹⁸ Bibby says that the expectation is that such feelings would decrease with age; but this has not been the case with Canadian Boomers. “In 1985, when Boomers ranged in age from 20 to 39, 32% said they were troubled

¹⁶ Wade Clark Roof, *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

about needing to get more from life. Two decades later, the figure is 31%.”¹⁹ Clearly life is not as rosy for Canadian Boomers as they thought it would be. Something still remains missing in the lives of many of these independent and self-sufficient achievers.

One of the questions that Bibby and his associates have been tracking since the mid-1980's has to do with the issue of “the purpose of life”. According to their studies in the eighties, 1 in 4 Canadians said that the question of life’s meaning troubled them a lot. Here again, Bibby says that they would have expected that over time the “purpose of life” question would not be as troublesome to people as it was when they were younger. Such is the not the case.²⁰ If anything, as Bibby notes, Canadian Boomers’ quest for meaning has not gone down, but is very much in the fore.

Far from being a story shrouded only in darkness and gloom, the story of Canadian Boomers presents the Church with an exciting and unique opportunity. Not feeling as fulfilled in their lives as the generation before them and the one following behind, Bibby’s surveys reveal, in addition, that some 7 in 10 Boomers are not only receptive to greater involvement in the Church, but also that they are hungering for spiritual nurture, as well as for some “clarity” among all the different voices that call to them in Canada’s very pluralistic society.²¹ As his counterparts Hoge, Benton and Luidens in the United States argue, “the mainline churches have a potent

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁰ Yet, since at least the mid-1980's, when we first asked the question, a core of about 20% of Boomers have continued to be bothered about life’s purpose. Concern levels have gone down a bit for men, but overall have remained remarkably similar for both women and men. Following the anticipated pattern, the purpose question has become less of a concern for the Pre-Boomers as they have been getting older – much like the pattern that was expressed with the “getting more out of life” issue. Bibby, *Ibid.*

²¹ Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, pp. 204-205.

product that many Baby Boomers seek. They are religious or spiritual answers to life's questions."²²

Finally, Boomers bring with them many gifts and talents, as well as years of valuable experience, not to mention wisdom derived from many walks of life. In the years to come, a great number of them will enjoy the leisure time afforded by retirement, as well as mostly good health, and these factors will enable them potentially to devote themselves to the mission of the Church and the wider community. In addition to financial resources, they may also bring a desire to really live their faith, openness to experimentation, a tolerance to differences, commitment to relationships, a deep longing for justice, a passion for environmentalism, and a yearning to serve both the local community and the wider mission of the Church.

Given the wisdom, experience, and passion for service that they could bring, we would be foolish to ignore the needs of Baby Boomers. As Elmer Towns said some twenty years ago, "We must understand them now to reach them before it is too late. The coming Boomer church can influence our culture but the congregations that ignore them will only be hibernating churches."²³ Today the generation that caused over-crowded classrooms, Sunday Schools, and job markets is now, as they enter the second half of their lives, searching for spiritual nourishment and meaning.

Research

In this paper I argue that not only do we as a church have a ministry to those in the Baby Boom generation, but also that Boomers themselves have an important ministry to the generation that follows. Indeed, the survival of the faith is largely up to Boomers now. It is vital therefore

²² Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald Al Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries. The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*. (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

²³ McIntosh, p. 115.

that they begin to understand themselves as stewards whose task it is to preserve and pass on the torch of Christian faith and values to the next generation.

Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall argues that "when it comes to the theology of stewardship, no scriptural text is more important and....more neglected -- than the Pauline verse...I Corinthians 4:1: 'This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.'"²⁴

While Paul here is defending his ministry and that of Apollos against the challenge of the Corinthian congregation, his message is clear. He and Apollos are not the only stewards of God's mysteries. All are called to live lives in service to Jesus Christ. In chapter 3:3, Paul writes that those who belong to Christ and ultimately to God (3:23), are charged with responsibilities for "God's mysteries". Later, in his famous passage on gifts in chapter seven, Paul writes that all believers are given the gift of faith. In other words, all are called to be stewards of God's mysteries, by which writes Richard Horsley, he "probably means the overall message of God's fulfillment in history"²⁵ or as Richard Hay puts it more simply "the Gospel message itself."²⁶ All believers therefore are accountable when it comes to preserving and passing on the faith. All are called to be stewards of God's words, or as Douglas John Hall writes, all are called to be "theologians".²⁷

Again, the call to be "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" is part of Paul's bigger exhortation concerning spiritual gifts. As he argues, the different *charismata* or

²⁴ Hall, *Ibid.*, *Finding Our Way Into the Future*.

²⁵ Richard A. Horsley, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, Abingdon Bible Commentaries. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998), Kindle, Chap 4:1-21, Chap 12, 1057-2973.

²⁶ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians. Interpretation*. James Luther Mays, Editor. (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), p. 40 (Kindle Loc 1012).

²⁷ Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free. A Theologian's Journey*. (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005), pp. 1-7, 106-121.

gifts are for the benefit of the whole community. They are intended for the building up of the body of Christ. Just as the foot cannot say that because it is not a hand it does not belong to the body, and just as the head cannot say that it has no need of the feet, so also every part of the body should have equal concern for each other. In response to the Corinthians' constant infighting and boasting over who has the better gift, Paul says there is to be no hierarchy of gifts and no conceit. All are important. In this way, as J. Paul Sampley writes, Paul "undercuts individual efforts at enhancing status."²⁸ What is paramount for Paul is the common good.

While Paul's exhortation is in response to the particular situation he finds in the Corinthian church of his day, his concerns for the well-being of the whole community of God's people speak to our present circumstances. All have gifts to share and, when one part of the body does not share its gifts, the life of the whole body is greatly demeaned and diminished. Likewise, building on years of experience in a variety of areas, today's Baby Boomers have important gifts to share and pass on to the next generation of believers.

As pointed out earlier, Boomers are searching for a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Most don't simply want to do "busy work". They want an opportunity to share their gifts and talents with others. In short, they are looking for a way to serve. In an article entitled "Some Second Careers Are a Leap of Faith" the Wall Street Journal writes:

"Call it a midlife epiphany. After decades of pursuing money, titles and ever more stuff, baby boomers are coming to a big realization: Success and security just aren't enough anymore. They want something more fulfilling out of life, something that feeds their spiritual side and connects them to a bigger purpose. For many, the answer is embracing faith - and devoting their lives to serving others."²⁹

²⁸ J. Paul Sampley, *I Corinthians*, The New Interpreter's Bible. A Commentary in Twelve Volumes. Volume X. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002), p. 944.

Anne Tergespm, "Some Second Careers Are A Leap of Faith", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2013.

Translated into the traditional language of the church, what this says is that Boomers are searching for a vocation. Having lived all their lives in a consumerist culture, many are keen to get off the treadmill and make their lives count. This is “vocational” language. It’s also something that the church knows all about. As Hoge, Johnson and Luidens have argued, and as Bibby concurs, this is therefore something with which the church can help them.

In Christian tradition, the idea of a “calling” or “vocation” goes back to the time when Jesus first invited the fishermen to leave their nets and follow him. Later, in the Middle Ages, the word “calling”, or in its Latinate form “vocation”, was used in reference to the sacred ministry, especially the religious orders. This was all to change with the Protestant Reformation.

According to the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther,

“...all Christians are truly of the Spiritual Estate, and there is no difference among them, save of office alone. As St. Paul says (I Cor. xii), we are all one body, though each member does its own work, to serve the others. This is because we have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism, gospel and faith, these alone make Spiritual and Christian people”.³⁰

Luther locates his understanding of Christian calling in the sacrament of baptism: “Thus we are all consecrated as priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: “You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (I Peter 2:9).³¹ It is the community, Luther notes, that determines whether one will serve in what we refer to today as the “ordered ministries”; but all, he says, are priests. “For, since we are all priests alike, no man may put himself forward, or take upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that which we have all alike power to do.”³²

³⁰ *Luther on the Priesthood in Protestantism*, edited by J. Leslie Dunstan (George Braziller: New York 1961) p. 47-50; *Martin Luther, First Principles of the Reformation*. (John Murray: London 1883) p. 116-117.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Reflecting on Luther's teachings, Gene Edward Veith writes: "The purpose of one's vocation, whatever it might be, is serving others. It has to do with fulfilling Christ's injunction to love one's neighbor."³³ Veith explains:

Martin Luther was the first to use 'vocation' to refer also to secular offices and occupations. Today, the term has become common-place, another synonym for a profession or job, as in 'vocational training.' But behind the term is the notion that every legitimate kind of work or social function is a distinct 'calling' from God, requiring unique God-given gifts, skills, and talents. Moreover, the Reformation doctrine of vocation teaches that God himself is active in everyday human labour, family responsibilities, and social interactions.³⁴

Whereas Luther, according to Professor John R. Crawford, "used the doctrine almost as a battle-axe to hew away at the pretensions of the Roman hierarchy and sacramental system"³⁵, John Calvin did not write specifically about "the priesthood of all believers." The latter phrase, for example, is never used in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. However, argues Crawford, there can be no doubt that Calvin "accepted without qualification the priesthood of all true believers."³⁶ As theologian Anna Case-Winters notes, this is evidenced from Calvin's other writings, where he did acknowledge that in Christ all are priests: "Christ...once for all offered a sacrifice of eternal expiation and reconciliation; now, having also entered the sanctuary of heaven, he intercedes for us. In him we are all priests (Rev. 1:6; cf. 1 Peter 2:9), but to offer praises and thanksgiving, in short, to offer ourselves and ours to God. It was his office alone to appease God and atone for sins by his offering."³⁷ As Case-Winters concludes, the concept of a "priesthood of all believers" is therefore present in Calvin's theology, even if he does not deal

³³ Gene Edward Veith, "The Doctrine of Vocation. How God Hides Himself in Human Work" in *By the Sweat of Our Brow*, Modern Reformation. May/June 1999 Vol. 8 No. 3 pp. 4-7.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ John R. Crawford, "Calvin and the Priesthood of All Believers", *Scottish Journal of Theology* Volume 21 (1968), p. 145.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. and index. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p. 1476.

with the idea explicitly.³⁸

That all individuals are called into ministry is also the premise of The Westminster Catechism, which taught that "the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."³⁹ This, the writers said, is our first vocation. Hall claims that we need to re-frame this important confession and state it in a manner that is more appropriate to the more "calamitous nature of daily life" today, which he argues is a time that is far less "ordered and spiritually sure" than that of the writers of the Westminster Catechism.⁴⁰ He writes:

"And how shall we state this...in a manner that has sufficient urgency to capture the crisis of our times? There are of course many ways of stating it, but none, in my experience is so contextually perceptive as the wording proposed by one of the truly prophetic minds at work today....I refer to Wendell Berry, and specifically to his book, *What Are People For?* That's it. That's how we should state the primary anthropological question of Christians today. What are people for?"⁴¹

At this point it is useful to turn to a brief discussion of the social sciences, as they have much to offer as we seek to understand human development, from both a social and psychological perspective. Such insights have an impact on how we think about the ways in which men and women might live out their vocation as they enter the "second half of life." For example, Richard Rohr says that the question Hall poses above is largely a 'second half of life'

³⁸ Anna Case-Winters, *Lecture given at the Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, Austria*, 2003. Calvin asserts that everyone has a vocation, not just those who are ordained. Indeed, whenever men and women use their gifts and talents for the good of the whole community, their life's work is as much a "divine calling" as that of those who have been ordained.³⁸ For Calvin, like Luther, this divine calling is something we receive at baptism. "With that sacrament," writes Case-Winters, "we are all marked as God's own, we die and rise with Christ, and we are incorporated into the covenant community, and we are called into ministry."

³⁹ The Westminster Shorter Catechism is a catechism written in 1646 and 1647 by the Westminster Assembly, a synod of English and Scottish theologians and lay people intended to bring the Church of England into greater conformity with the Church of Scotland. The assembly also produced the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger Catechism. NB: This belief is echoed in the United Church of Canada's most recent credal statement, the 2006 *Song of Faith*, where the United Church reaffirmed its faith in the "priesthood of all believers". According to the Song of Faith, "God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry".

⁴⁰ Douglas John Hall, "Stewards of the Mysteries of God", lecture given at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg Seminary, October 27th, 2005.

⁴¹ Douglas John Hall, "Finding Our Way Into the Future", (Princeton, New Jersey, The Princeton Lectures on "Youth, Church, and Culture, 2006.), pp. 21-22.

question. As such it is a theme that is particularly important to the Baby Boomer demographic. Using the classical journey of the hero in ancient mythology as a model, he argues that the second half of life can never be about mere survival. "The hero or heroine" (or the person who has truly engaged the second half of life), "is by definition a 'generative' person, to use Erik Erikson's fine term, concerned about the next generation and not just himself or herself."⁴²

Those in the second half of life, he writes, need to ask themselves: "What [am I] going to do with [my] now resurrected life?"⁴³

Scripture abounds with answers to this question. We need only to recall the example of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 12, as they set off at an advanced age into an unknown land, in response to God's call on their lives. Likewise we remember how Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38 continued to serve the Lord faithfully. Anna was an elderly widow who ministered in the temple daily with fasting and prayer, a witness to all who made pilgrimages to this sacred institution. Then there are the words that we find in the second chapter of Titus, which state that the older men and women are to teach, by example, younger men and women how to live. (Titus 2:4-8)

Contrary to the hedonistic message of much of today's consumerist advertizing, our older years are not to be spent solely in the pursuit of pleasure. In I Timothy 3:16, Paul says that the widow who lives for pleasure is dead while she yet lives. While this is not to say that there should be no time to enjoy golf, travel, social functions or other pleasurable pursuits, these should not be the sole or primary focus of life at any age. When we consider the years after 50, we would do well to remember an important observation made by Iona writer, teacher and

⁴² Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward. A Spiritual Journey for the Two Halves of Life*. (San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 2011), pp. 20-21. Erikson's developmental model will be looked at later in this paper.

⁴³ Ibid.

musician John Bell. Bell says: “The great thing about God is that God chooses older people to do a new thing. The old are the mid-wives to the young.”⁴⁴

This project seeks to help Baby Boomers, who may or may not be connected to our church, to see how God is calling them “to do a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19) and explore ways that they can live out their vocation in the second half of life. In particular, it invites Boomers into a life of stewardship, so that as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”, they may preserve and pass on the torch of Christian faith and values to the generations that follow.

This task of sharing what we have learned and passing it on to the next generation is identified by developmental psychologist Erik Erikson as the “generative” stage.⁴⁵ Erikson is remembered as the first to chart the sequence of life stages across the life span, beginning with birth and ending with death. In his foundational work Erikson identified eight stages of psycho social development in a person’s life.⁴⁶

As stated above, it is the seventh stage which is important for this project: Generativity versus Stagnation. In imagining this stage, Erikson originally had in mind men and women between the ages of 40 and 65, when most people are very active and productive. By generativity Erikson refers to the innate desire within human beings to nurture and care for others, especially the next generation. The virtue emerging from generativity, says Erikson, is “a

⁴⁴ John Bell, lecture for D. Min. class, “*Joining Up the Body*”, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, June 13, 2014.

⁴⁵ Erikson, *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ These are: 1. Basic Trust vs. Mistrust (Birth to 18 months); 2. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt (2 to 3 years); 3 Initiative vs. Guilt (3 to 5 years); 4. Industry vs. Inferiority (6 to 11 years); 5. Identity vs. Confusion (12-18 years); 5. Intimacy vs. Isolation (19-40 years); 7. Generativity vs. Stagnation (40-65 years); Ego Integrity vs. Despair (65 to Death). Each stage is centered on a conflict that must be resolved. For example, in Erikson’s first stage (“basic trust versus basic mistrust”), the infant must develop deep and lasting trust with parents and care-givers. On the other hand, the infant needs to maintain a basic mistrust so as not to be left entirely unprotected and vulnerable. Each of the eight stages of Erikson’s life cycles must be successfully negotiated before moving on to the next developmental stage.

widening commitment to take care of the persons, the products and the ideas one has learned to care for.”⁴⁷ Generativity includes things like raising and nourishing our children and grandchildren, but it also goes beyond these narrower definitions to include other forms of productivity and creativity, notably teaching, writing, artistic expression, activism, advocacy and service to the community. Erikson would argue therefore that it represents “primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation.”⁴⁸ Elsewhere he writes that “generativity always invites the possibility of an energetic shift to productivity and creativity in the service of the generations.”⁴⁹

The opposite of generativity in Erikson’s thought is stagnation. When individuals fail to care for others, they begin to stagnate. Unlike the generative person, the individual who is self-centered and unable or unwilling to help society move forward develops a feeling of moral torpidity. Indeed, as he writes, those “who begin to indulge themselves as if they were their one and only child, move into stagnation and personal impoverishment.”⁵⁰ Unable or unwilling to find meaningful ways to contribute to the common good, these individuals may feel disconnected or uninvolved with their community and with society as a whole. On the other hand, those who are successful during this phase will feel that they are contributing to the world by being active in their home and community. They will also feel satisfaction in the knowledge that they are creating a legacy for others. This is what Generativity is all about. As John Kotre has written, “The task of Generativity is to invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive

⁴⁷ Erik H. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*. Extended Version with New Chapters on the Ninth Stage of Development by Joan M. Erikson. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Kindle edition), p. 67.

⁴⁸ Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*. (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1985) Kindle edition, pp. 266-267.

⁴⁹ Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed*, p. 54.

⁵⁰ Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 103.

the self.”⁵¹

Not surprisingly the existential question of this life stage, then, is “Can I make my life count?” This is the question that is front and center where most Baby Boomers are concerned. They want to feel that their lives matter, that they have something valuable they can share with those who follow, and that they can make a positive difference in the world around them.

It is therefore important to help Boomers wrestle with what Benedictine nun, author and speaker Joan Chittister says is the most crucial question: "What am I when I am no longer young enough to strive for money to pay the rent?"⁵² As she writes, "We must not only ask ourselves, what we are when we pass from doing to being? For the sake our happiness and mental health, we must also answer the question: What am I when I am not what I used to do?...And what does that have to do with growing into God?"⁵³ The question of how we grow into God is largely a question of vocation or mission. How is God calling us to serve in the second half of life?

One response from psychologist Daniel Levinson, who builds on Erikson, centers on the role of Boomers as mentors. As Levinson points out, Boomers are uniquely placed to become “mentors” for the next generation of believers.⁵⁴ They can serve as models, supporters, sponsors, advisers and teachers to younger generations in the church and wider community. His preliminary studies may be helpful to the church. "Moreover, they are the ones who act as “encouragers” of the next generation by “believing in their dreams”.⁵⁵ Levinson says that they are particularly well positioned to seek out those in whom special talent, virtues and ideas may

⁵¹ John N. Kotre, *Outliving the Self. Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives.* (Baltimore, Maryland, John Hopkins Press, 1984), p. 10.

⁵² Joan Chittister, *The Gift of Years. Growing Old Gracefully.* (Katonah, New York, Blue Bridge, 2008), p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴ Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life.* (Toronto, Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 99.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

be struggling to emerge.⁵⁶ In the church, this task is normally given to the whole community. Boomers have a special role to play in this community.

Interestingly, Igor Grossman, an assistant professor at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, argues "that the mere effect of being in a mentor or adviser's role, over time, seems to be promoting forms of reasoning that have been associated with wisdom."⁵⁷ In particular, Grossman's findings suggest that older people have a greater ability "to look at life's problems from a third-person perspective",⁵⁸ a perspective that is sorely needed in our churches and in our world today. Grossman's research echoes that of cultural anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson, who argues that those who find themselves in the second half of life are very much needed in order "to restore a dimension of long-term thinking" to society and to bring to our decision making a perspective that comes from years of experience combined with a time of thoughtful reflection.⁵⁹ These extra years are a gift that must be used wisely and for the purpose of blessing our world and those who follow. As Boomers grow and age they clearly have much to offer.

Also building on Erikson's research is psychiatrist George Vaillant. In Vaillant's model, there is an additional stage between Erikson's seventh and eighth stages (Generativity and Ego-Integrity).⁶⁰ He refers to the men and women who find themselves in this in-between stage as the "Keepers of Meaning".⁶¹ The Keepers of Meaning are not simply concerned with the care of

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Paul Knowles, "Older and Wiser", The United Church Observer, July/August 2014, pp.16-17.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well. Surprising Guideposts to a Happier Life from the landmark Harvard Study of Adult Development.* (New York, Hachette Book Group, 2002) E-book edition, 10.

⁶¹ Ibid.

individuals, but they are also concerned with preserving the culture's traditions.⁶² Vaillant says that a major drawback to Erikson's virtue of generativity – "Care" – is that it requires paying attention to "one" person rather than another. In contrast, the virtue inherent in the task of the Keeper of Meaning is "Justice", which involves a more non-partisan and less personal approach to others.... "society needs dispassionate judges as much as it needs passionate trial lawyers. If the task of young adults is to create biological heirs, the task of old age is to create social heirs."⁶³ I would argue that this is the primary task currently of Baby Boomers or adults who are entering into the second half of life.

In addition to Erikson's developmental model, I believe that Vaillant's theory has much to offer those who care about the church, its teachings, traditions, faith and values. As those who have been entrusted with the stewardship of "the mysteries of God", the "Keepers of Meaning" have a vital role to play with regard to preserving and passing on our Christian heritage. As in the tradition of our First Nations brothers and sisters, they are the Elders who embody the community's memory and thus are able to help show the younger generations the way.⁶⁴ Not only do men and women entering the second half of life have a responsibility to those who follow them, but in many ways they are the generation that is most able to engage the crucial

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Traditionally in the reformed churches we have spoken of the role of the "elder"; but this term is being used less and less in the United Church, as many congregations have eliminated the offices of elder and steward moved to a Council structure. A notable exception would be the role of the elder among Canada's First Nations people, for whom the elder is still held in high esteem. This exception notwithstanding, my experience is that few people in the United Church today really understand the role of the elder as it is described in the New Testament. This role includes that of spiritual shepherd or pastor, one who tends, feeds, guides, protects and cares for the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3) and who also carries important teaching responsibilities. In Titus 1:9-13, we even hear an echo of Paul's exhortation on the stewardship of the mysteries of God: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

questions of our time.⁶⁵

The Church has both a responsibility and an opportunity to engage these ministries and train men and women for service. The good news is that there is a whole demographic of people in our communities who would welcome, nay, jump at such an opportunity. We call them Baby Boomers. Using Rohr's language, then, the goal of this project is to help Boomers transition from the first half of life to the second half of life while supporting them in their quest to fulfill their God-given calling.

It builds first of all on the architectural metaphor described by Mary Catherine Bateson in her book, *Composing a Further Life: The Age of Active Wisdom*.⁶⁶ Bateson compares the second half of life – Adulthood II – to an atrium that is added to the center of the house we call our life and which affects how we use all the other rooms and stages of our life. She points out that many entering Adulthood II have been given an extra 25 to 30 years of active wisdom denied to most in previous generations in history. As she writes, “This is what longevity is like...we have ‘added’ years to life (thirty in the twentieth century, twenty since World War II)... We have changed the shape and meaning of a lifetime in ways we do not yet fully understand.”⁶⁷

It is my contention, moreover, that William Bridges' change theory provides the best model to help people cope with the changing shape of their lives and make the transition into “the atrium” of life. Back in 1991, Bridges developed and published his Transition Model in his

⁶⁵ “We tend to assume that the old, because they have fewer years ahead of them, are less concerned with the future than younger adults, but in fact the group best quipped to advocate for the future are thoughtful older adults – those in Adulthood II – who have time and perspective for reflection combined with the willingness to consider new skills; who can speak up about issues that will affect future generations, particularly issues of the environment, and engage in bringing that future to pass.”⁶⁵ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Further Life. The Age of Active Wisdom*. (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

⁶⁷, p. 11.

book "Managing Transitions."⁶⁸ According to his theory, there is a subtle but significant difference between "change" and "transition". Change is what happens *to* people. For example, a person experiences the loss of a job or the death of a loved one. Transition, on the other hand, is internal. It's what happens *inside* people's minds and hearts when they are confronted by such changes.

Essentially there are three distinct stages in Bridges' model: (1) Ending, Losing, and Letting Go; (2) The Neutral Zone; (3) The New Beginning. Bridge's model has important things to say to people in the second half of life, who are very frequently presented with a variety of changes that challenge their self-understanding in major ways. For example, retirement often means letting go of "a regular income, a group of colleagues and friends, a regular place to go every morning, a way to use your talents, a way to structure your time, a bunch of plans for the future, a way to get appreciated."⁶⁹ In short, it can lead to a loss of identity. As a result, people often feel lonely and confused. They do not know who they are anymore without a regular job, their life partner, or the kids. Bridges calls this next stage "the Neutral Zone". Like the disciples who surely felt lost and frightened following the ascension of Jesus and before the coming of the Spirit, people in this phase often find themselves feeling fearful and disoriented, "like a vessel bobbing on the water without compass or star sightings."⁷⁰ It is only as people begin to let go of old ways of using their talents that they begin to find new energy and embrace a new identity. In short, they find themselves at the place of New Beginnings. At this point they begin to discern how God may be calling them into new life and new purpose in service of God's world.

⁶⁸ William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*(Cambridge, Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2009).

⁶⁹ William Bridges, "Transitions as a Way Through", *Organizations in Transition*, Vol. 14, #3.

⁷⁰ Bridges, *Ibid.*

By introducing Bridges' change theory to participants, my hope is that they will be able to understand or anticipate the feelings of loss or confusion that come with most endings so that they are not overwhelmed by them.⁷¹ If they can be encouraged to develop some coping strategies while they make their way through these often challenging transitions, the experience may be less frightening. Greater understanding may bring less resistance to the changes that are inevitable during this period of life, as they learn to accept the changing seasons of life. Moreover, if participants can recall how they may have navigated difficult changes in the past, or draw courage from others (including Jesus' own disciples) who have faced similar experiences, it is hoped that their transition into the second half of life will be less shattering and perhaps more meaningful too.

Theoretical Framework

There is no doubt that many people struggle to discern who they are amid the changing landscapes of their lives, especially as they enter the second half of life. Their questions about meaning, purpose, and identity are essentially religious questions and, as such, are things with which the Church is uniquely equipped to deal. Indeed, the Church has a potent product that many Baby Boomers seek, namely, religious or spiritual answers to life's questions. The aim of this research project is therefore two-fold: first, to assist Baby Boomers to transition from the first half to the second half of life, and secondly, to connect them to the Church's story and the faith resources that will help them with this important transition.

By helping Boomers connect to the Christian story and identify their calling or vocation

⁷¹ I think here of couples I have known who begin to experience problems in their marriages when one or both partners enter into retirement. If they can be helped to see that a time of transition is normal and that the way they relate to each other may require some renegotiation in this new phase of life, perhaps this understanding can help them to build an even stronger relationship. It is possible that it may even save some marriages that might otherwise find themselves in the divorce courts!

in the second half of life, this paper also seeks to affirm the Reformation teachings of the "priesthood of all believers", the belief, as Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall writes, that all are called to be theologians. Here I take as my biblical premise the verse from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians: "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries." (I Corinthians 4:1) This verse, together with Paul's later passage on the variety of spiritual gifts, is foundational to our understanding of Christian vocation. It forms the basis of Luther's conviction that every Christian has a ministry and therefore each plays an important role in the body of Christ, a belief also present in Calvin's theology. Moreover, the various charismata or gifts, according to Paul, are intended for the benefit of the whole community. They are meant for the building up of the Body of Christ. Given that Baby Boomers bring with them years of accumulated wisdom and experience in the workforce and in the school of life, it is urgent that we help them discern how they can use their gifts in service to God and for the benefit of the whole people of God.

According to Hall, these have never been needed more than they are now. With the enormity of the global problems we face, including terrorism, disease, hunger, poverty, and even the possibility of environmental extinction, Hall says that it is vitally important to help people discover how God is calling them away from the obsessions of a largely narcissistic and consumer-oriented culture and inviting them to make a positive contribution to their community. While he does not focus specifically on the role of Baby Boomers, Hall's words seem especially appropriate for those in the second of half of life who are searching for ways to make a difference in their world. This project, therefore, aims to help Boomers realize that even small acts of justice and compassion can have a significant impact on their society. Additionally, it is

imperative that Boomers recognize the important role God is calling them to play as mentors to the generations that follow.

In this regard, and drawing on the foundational work of developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, I show how this vocational work is an important part of the "generative" stage of the Eriksonian life cycle theory. Even more important to this study is the research of psychiatrist George Vaillant, who argues that there is an additional stage between Erikson's seventh and eighth stages. Vaillant refers to those who find themselves in this stage as the "Keepers of Meaning". The latter are not simply concerned with the care of individuals (Erikson), but they are also dedicated to preserving the culture's traditions. Whether we speak of St. Paul's "stewards of the mysteries of God" or Vaillant's "Keepers of Meaning", both descriptors apply to Boomers in an important way. As I show, Boomers have a special calling and a vital role to play with regard to preserving and passing on our Christian heritage.

To help them in this endeavour, I have created an educational intervention for my community at Siloam. The program strives to help Boomers see essential connections between their personal stories and the story of our Christian faith. It invites participants into discussions around the deeper questions of vocation, meaning, and faith, and how the Church's teachings and traditions can assist them in making the transition to the second half of life.

This program is based on the theoretical arguments of William Bridges. As noted earlier, Bridges highlights three stages of transition that people go through when they experience change. These are: Ending, Losing, and Letting Go; The Neutral Zone; The New Beginning. The main strength of Bridges' model is that it focuses on transition, not change. Changes happen whether we want them or not. Transitions, on the other hand, represent our internal responses to such

changes.

Using Bridge's change model, then, I try to help people understand and cope with the "Endings" that often occur in the second half of life, to discover ways to live in the "Neutral Zone" or "wilderness" period that always follows such "Endings" in life, so that they can then effectively transition into a time of "New Beginnings". In addition to Bridges' theory of change, the participants are introduced to a variety of resources drawn from the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the Reformation teaching on "the priesthood of all believers", the psychology of Erikson and Vaillant, the social anthropology of Bateson, and contemporary writings by spiritual writers like Chittister and Rohr. Together with selections from contemporary films that speak to the situation of Boomers today, these resources encourage participants to consider how they can become spiritual mentors to the next generation.

Objectives, Strategies, and Implementation

I come now to the plan I developed and implemented at Siloam or what practical theologian Richard Robert Osmer calls the fourth or final task of ministry, namely, "the pragmatic task."⁷² Here it is helpful to recall the goals of this program: first, to help Baby Boomers discover their Christian story; secondly, to attend to the needs of Boomers by helping them to transition from the first half of life to the second half of life, including marking their transitions ritually; thirdly, to help Boomers to discern their calling, biblically and theologically, and assist them in reclaiming the vision of St. Paul in I Corinthians 4:1; and finally, to engage Boomers in meaningful ministry, including Christian vocation, service, and nurturing of the next generation.

⁷² Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 4.

In order to achieve these goals, I developed a six-week course of study that invited people into discussion and thoughtful reflection about the gift of another 25 to 30 years at the center of life. In particular, I asked them to consider how God is calling them to use these extra years intentionally and wisely and in service to others. Invitations were sent to those in the congregation who are known to be in the Baby Boomer demographic and announcements were posted in church bulletins and newsletters, as well as at the nearby YMYW-CA, the local library, and other places in the community. People at Siloam were also encouraged to share the information with friends, neighbours and colleagues, especially those who are not affiliated with a church. I had expected that it might be hard to get people to participate in such a program, so my daughter suggested that I offer to provide supper at the beginning of each session. In the end, I received far greater interest in the course than I had anticipated, with the result that I had to place some people on a waiting list.

We began our program the first Wednesday evening after Easter, with twenty-four participants, including me. The group represented a good cross section of men and women of varying ages. There were people from all across the Boomer spectrum, from age 50 to 69, and from a variety of walks of life. Some had been retired for a long time; others were newly retired or contemplating retirement in the near future, while others still had several more years to work or had started on second careers. Some did not intend to retire at all, while at least one person was an empty-nester or stay-at home spouse. Apart from one First Nations person, a woman from the Ojibwa tribe, the group did not include any people of colour or any visible minorities. While a few people had to miss the odd session due to illness or work, attendance was consistently high and participants always arrived on time and often early.

As people entered the classroom each week, they were invited to contribute to a Graffiti wall on which they were asked to respond to a question about their dreams, hopes, values and achievements. These later formed the basis of a group Ethical Will or Legacy Letter that I put together based on the group's responses and which I shared with them in our last class.⁷³ Participants then helped themselves to supper and sat in small table groups where they were invited to discuss a question related to the evening's theme. While the supper was not really necessary, the shared time over the meal helped people to build a sense of community and get to know one another. Each week the table groups were changed so that members could acquaint themselves with new people. The eight couples in the group were invited to sit with people other than their partners. Conversations were often lively and animated and lots of laughter could be heard in the room. Many acknowledged that the shared table fellowship was one of their favourite parts of the program.

Following an informal meal, the weekly time together was structured around several different learning activities. The goal was to provide a variety of pedagogical methods, recognizing that people all learn differently and what works for one person might not work for another. Building on the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, who once described faith as a many-sided cube, Richard Osmer warns against the dangers of the one-dimensional learning style. As he has noted, focussing exclusively on the transmission of knowledge through lectures "addresses only one side of the faith cube", diminishing "participants' chances of growing in other areas."⁷⁴ Osmer says that "a good rule of thumb is never to do any single thing for very long."⁷⁵ He even

⁷³ See Session Five of "Re-Composing A Life" curriculum in Appendices.

⁷⁴ Richard Robert Osmer, *A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes*. (Louisville, Westminster-John Knox Press, 1992, pp. 16, 67.

⁷⁵ Osmer, *Ibid.*, p. 57.

recommends changing the teaching format every ten minutes! The varied teaching methods therefore included power point presentations, practical in-class exercises, graffiti walls, small and large group discussions, short biblical devotions and guided meditations, videos and stories. According to John Kotre, a generative society shapes meaning through the stories it tells.⁷⁶ Storytelling was therefore an integral part of this program: the biblical stories and stories of our faith, stories from selected writers, stories we watch in popular contemporary film, and the stories we tell each other.

To allow for ongoing evaluation, at the end of each session, participants were asked to fill in an Exit Ticket for the purpose of identifying one thing they learned and one question they still had. These were completed anonymously and placed in a box as people left the classroom. Where appropriate, I would respond to the questions through group email or at the beginning of the next class. People were also invited to participate in an optional weekly blog or forum.⁷⁷ Some also found time for the optional take-home assignments and eagerly shared their work in the following session.

While several scriptures were used in the development and implementation of this course, the passage from I Corinthians 4:1 continued to be foundational: “One should think about us this way -- as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” As mentioned earlier, the unifying theme for the course was the architectural metaphor described by cultural sociologist Mary Catherine Bateson. The change model that was employed was that by William Bridges. The thoughts of both scholars are reflected in the session headings below.

⁷⁶ John Kotre, “Generativity and Culture. What Meaning Can Do.” *In The Generative Society. Caring for Future Generations*. Ed de St. Aubin, Dan P. McAdams, Tae-Chang Kim, editors. (Washington, DC, American Psychological Association, 2004), p. 40.

⁷⁷ Unfortunately, this did not work for reasons which address in Appendix VII.

Week One: Building an Atrium

This foundational session introduced participants to a variety of thinkers and practical exercises that set the stage for our subsequent sessions together. Building on the architectural model of social anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson and the ideas of Cambridge scholar Peter Laslett, we explored how the life cycle has changed over the past one hundred years. A new stage of life has been inserted at the center or “atrium” of our lives. According to psychologist Erik Erikson, this is the period of “generativity” when adults between ages 40 and 65 strive to contribute to society, through caring for others, and creating things that make the world a better place. Psychologist Daniel Levinson builds on Erikson’s ideas, pointing out that the important role of people in this period is to serve as “mentors” to the next generation. Psychiatrist George Vaillant adds another task to Erikson’s eight stages, between the ages of 60 and 75, which he refers to as the “Keepers of Meaning”. For Vaillant, the task of those in this stage of life involves passing on the traditions of the past to the next generation and connecting the past to the future. Relating these ideas to St. Paul’s call to be “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”, we discussed how we might use the gift of an extra 25 to 30 years at the center of our lives. Theologian Harvey Cox’s work, *Not Leaving it to the Snake*, became the focal point for our final exercises and discussion as we discussed the major temptation of this period of life. Do we simply drift into the kind of lifestyle retirement gurus want to sell us, or do we try to make thoughtful and intentional decisions about how we want to spend the gift of these extra years in service to God’s world.

Week Two: “Dismantling the House”

The opening scenes of the film “About Schmidt” were the jumping off point for our

second session together. Here participants were introduced to the change model of William Bridges. Through a series of exercises and discussions, we talked about who we are when we are not what we used to do. For example, who are we when we are no longer defined by our career or our roles as spouse or parent? The key elements of Bridges' thought were presented, including the difference between "change" and "transition". Since the second half of life generally includes retirement and empty nesting, it was important that we focus our discussions in this session on the first phase of Bridges' theory, namely, "Ending, Losing, and Letting Go."

Week Three: "How to Survive Home Renovations!"

The exercises and discussions in our third session focused on the second stage of Bridges' theory: the Neutral Zone. Using Bateson's architectural model again, we compared life in the neutral zone to living in the midst of home renovations. During this in-between time when life is often characterized by chaos and confusion, we need to discover ways to find meaning in a smaller world from what we have known in the past. We also need to be prepared for the ways in which retirement or empty-nesting affects our marriages and other relationships. Gerontologist Gene Cohen's ideas on developing a "Social Portfolio" to complement our "Investment Portfolio" formed the basis of another helpful exercise for this stage of life.

Week Four: "Building A Cathedral"

The video resources, readings, discussions, and guided meditation in this session all centered on how we understand our vocation or calling in life. During our time together we explored the biblical understanding of vocation, especially I Corinthians 4:1, and how this was interpreted by the Protestant reformers and later writers. We also explored the difference between a vocation or calling and a job or occupation. Next we looked closely at case studies

where men and women in the second half of life had found ways to unite their gifts and passions with a life of joy and service to others. We discussed what it might mean to develop a new definition of calling in the second half of our lives.

Week Five: “What to Leave Behind, What to Keep or Carry Forward”

As we began to move out of Bridges’ Neutral Zone to a place of New Beginning, we realized that there were things about our past that we needed keep and things that we needed to let go of or discard. Each person completed a simple test based on David McClelland’s Theory of Needs, to determine whether the primary source of their sense of meaning derived from achievement, power, or affiliation and how this might help them to find a meaningful place to serve in the second half of their lives. We also discussed Martin Seligman’s theory on happiness and explored how “engagement” is key in any major undertaking we pursue at this stage of life. The closing part of our time together involved creating an Ethical Will or Legacy Letter.

Week Six: “Inviting the Neighbours Over!”

Having completed our home renovations, it was time to move into our new home and make a New Beginning. A good home does not end at the edge of a well-manicured lawn but extends out into the community to welcome and include others, especially those in need. So also Jesus calls us to reach out to and love our neighbours: to fulfill the generative task of this stage of life (Erikson), to be good mentors (Levinson), to serve as the Keepers of Meaning and preserve our heritage (Vaillant) and to become Servants of Christ and true Stewards of the Mysteries and love of God (St. Paul). Drawing on the former, as well as what we learned in our previous sessions together, we were ready to write a Personal Mission Statement for the second half of our lives. Each member was invited to consider where and how God was calling them to

serve in this new chapter of their lives.

Following this participants were given evaluation forms to complete. The session then closed with a word of thanks to all participants and a brief communion service. A meditation on the seasons of our lives followed the reading of selected verses from Ecclesiastes 3. Then each member participated in a special ritual in which they were invited to place two symbols on our communion table and share, as they felt comfortable, one thing that they are letting go in the second half of life and one thing that they want to preserve or carry forward into this new chapter. What followed were some very moving and often emotional testimonies. While one individual helpfully commented that the first half of this ritual might have been more effective part way through the program, we all felt very blessed by our time together and the stories everyone shared. Our little six-week adventure may have come to an end; but the real adventure was just beginning. As I listened to the cheerful banter out in the hall as people gathered their things and left, I could hear them excitedly making plans to meet up with each other again and talk about ways that they might begin to serve together. They were already making new friends to support them on their journey. More importantly, they were taking some initial steps to live out their calling as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Evaluation and Learning

The evaluation took three forms: weekly Exit Tickets after each session, where participants were invited to share one thing they had learned and one question they still had; written evaluation forms which were filled in during our final session; and two informal group follow-up sessions a month after the course ended. More information about these evaluations can be found in Appendix VII. Here I will concentrate on the content of the feedback I received.

Because the course was very content heavy, the primary complaint that I had about it was that there was too much to digest in six weeks. Several people felt it should be extended to eight or even ten weeks. One recommended that, while she found the closing worship service to be especially meaningful, this ritual should probably have a session all its own. Their critique echoed Osmer's observation that most people can only take in three or four points in a short period of time. As he says, "trying to cram in too much information actually reduces the amount of learning that takes place."⁷⁸ In future, I will remember Osmer's advice: "Less is more."⁷⁹

The other factor to be taken into consideration has to do with the wild and wonderfully mysterious way the Holy Spirit works. No matter how carefully one plans, no matter how much attention has been given to structure and design, the Spirit always breaks loose. For example, while it was lovely to listen to people share their stories, reducing the class size next time by even half a dozen people would probably encourage even greater sharing, especially from the more timid members of the group. That said, the discussions were often lively, sometimes heading off in surprising directions that brought even more meaning to our time together. It was also beautiful to witness the creation of new friendships. In the final analysis, as Osmer notes, such "community in the church is a creation of the Holy Spirit"...and the task of those who lead is simply "to serve as best we can within our human limitations..."⁸⁰

While noting the need to make allowances next time for a longer program and smaller class size, I believe that most of my original goals were met to one degree or another. Basically my proposal said that the program would be successful if the following objectives were met: (1) Baby Boomers find meaningful opportunities to engage the faith story; (2) Participants are able

⁷⁸ Osmer, *Teaching for Faith. A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes*, p. 48.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Osmer, *Ibid.*, pp. 104 – 105.

to identify one or more signs of spiritual growth or personal transformation; (3) Participants are able to talk about ways in which the sessions supported them as they transition into the second half of life; (4) Participants begin to discern new ways in which God is calling them into service and inviting them to share their gifts with others; and (5) Some clear directions emerge to assist the congregation in creating future continuing education and faith development programming, and in building a meaningful ministry with Boomers.

Reviewing these goals, I would say that Goals #3 and #4 were the most successful. Again and again, participants shared with me, either in person or on their weekly evaluations or final evaluation forms, how helpful the program had been to them in transitioning to the second half of life, as well as alerting them to some of the problems or difficulties they might expect during this period. Several members asked if they could share information with their Boomer friends and family who were facing serious challenges in their marriages or with regard to their own personal well-being.⁸¹ One individual wrote: “This program has been extremely helpful in understanding the many issues that arise for the transition to retirement. It has reinforced the need to put an effort into thinking about retirement (other than the financial aspect only).” Others talked about the comfort they drew from knowing that they were “not alone” in their concerns and feelings, while several commented that they now felt “more excited about the adventure ahead” of them.

Regarding the fourth goal, people also began to see this time as “a gift” in which God was calling them into a fuller, more meaningful life of service. One individual wrote: “I seldom

⁸¹ One woman in our course wrote: “[My husband] and I currently have a brother-in-law who retired a couple of years ago. His dream when he retired was to move to a home up north in a relatively isolated area on a lake. His wife retired around the same time and knew this was her husband's dream so followed him. He did find that wonderful home. Now it is 2 years later and they are both very unhappy and currently receiving marriage counseling. We plan to share with them what we learned in this course.”

pause to think about my own life, values, and the value of my life. This was an awesome opportunity to “take stock” and really think about future directions.” Another person commented on “the fact that our generation has been given these extra years to make a difference. These years free from active work can be used to help many people. These years can bring much joy and meaning to our lives.” Still another said: “I found the entire experience to be a gift. I learned that time for reflection is an important part of the next part of my life.” Several people echoed the words of the one individual who wrote: “I am definitely not going to leave it (the second half of life/retirement) to the snake!”

While it is more difficult to assess the success of Goal # 2, I do believe that participants were able to identify one or more signs of spiritual growth or personal transformation, even if they did not actually use the language of transformation. For example, more than one person commented on “how pleasantly surprised they were to learn so much about themselves” and how they “so easily felt connected to the other members” in the group. Perhaps this could be seen as part of the unifying work of the Spirit! Some talked about gaining “new insights” or “new or changed perspectives” on things they had always taken for granted. Another found the program transformational in terms of the grief work she still needs to do. One of the individuals who said that they “have no intention of leaving it to the snake” also confessed that he “could easily fall into that. I need to listen to the spirit, look for opportunities to make a contribution and in this way feel truly alive.” Another individual remarked on the renewed “excitement” she now felt “for the adventure ahead”. This person said that she also experienced “a renewal of spirit” and felt she had been “given more choices” in a life that had been “mostly about survival.”

With regard to the success of the first goal, I have mixed feelings. Participants were

certainly given many examples from the scripture stories; but these might only have had real meaning for those in the group already very familiar with the Bible and the Church's story. For example, one person commented: "Some of the more religious, biblical references are beyond or not within my understanding." A more engaging handling of these lessons would likely have been helpful to this participant and others like him.

With regard to the fifth goal, again, I think there are several indications that suggest how this program could become a valuable ongoing ministry at Siloam. Several people said they "would strongly recommend it to others at this stage of life."⁸² One individual wrote: "I would like to do it again, or continue to meet with these people." One couple wrote and asked if they could get in touch with everyone in the group and test out a mission idea that they were excited about. Together with a few others, they wondered about planning some future get-togethers, intentionally staying in touch with each other and maybe even working together on a meaningful outreach project. As well, some felt that they could use their skills to develop and lead mentoring programs and retreats for new parents and young adults.⁸³

The group also talked about why they were drawn to the kind of community the church offers; as opposed to the sense of community other organizations may offer. Reasons cited included the following responses: 1) Anyone can join or participate; 2) It doesn't matter how much money you have or what kind of car you drive; 3) The church is inter-generational; 4) The

⁸² Another man wrote to me and said: "I believe [this program] is unique to what is currently available in the community and as such believe it could be "marketed" to the Baby Boomer population in the general community. We have a friend who has just retired and although she is in that "vacation" mode today, she is starting to feel the uncertainty indicative of the transition phase. I have to believe there are so many other Boomers in the same boat right now and will be over the next 10 years."

⁸³ Others still simply wanted to get together informally on a regular basis, starting this Fall, to discuss topics of interest to this demographic, maybe plan a spiritual walk, or arrange for guest speakers. A kind of support group for the second half of life, this group would have a rotating volunteer leadership.

church is one of the few places where people can come and sing; 5) The church provides them with meaningful opportunities for service.

In connection with the last item, while participants acknowledged that other associations also provide opportunities for service, there is something important that the church does – or can do – *differently*. The church can provide a framework or context that would enable volunteers to reflect on their service from a spiritual or faith perspective. The group felt that there was a need to explore the relationship between their actions or experience and their faith, what is usually referred to as praxis. What is key here is the way people reflect upon their actions and how their faith engages their service or volunteer work. By providing Boomers with a faith perspective that is different from the secular world they inhabit every day, the church can give them a unique set of tools to help them critically examine and improve their actions.

In conclusion, participants were very much in agreement that the Church has something unique to offer Baby Boomers, certainly something different and better than the social club down the road. All acknowledged, for example, that they were now in a period of life when they could spend more time reflecting on the deeper spiritual matters of life and death, something that they had not had time to address when they were younger, building homes and careers and raising families. The church, they said, could help them wrestle with the important religious questions they have. It could help them explore their faith through small group studies. To start, they want to learn more about the Bible, what it says and how they should approach the scriptures and interpret the Bible's meaning for their lives. However, equally important to them is the need to develop some spiritual practices, exercises that can help them live out their Christian faith in

concrete ways.⁸⁴

In contrast to the various secular organizations that seek to meet the needs of those in the second half of life, the Church offers people a safe environment in which to express their faith or spirituality. At the same time it provides social support, security and a sense of belonging to a larger family or community. The bowling hall, the curling rink and the golf course can provide Boomers with much needed exercise and social outlets, but it is the Church that is best able to help them around questions of meaning and identity. By the time most people have entered the second half of life, they have experienced at least one or more difficult changes: the death of a parent, loved one, friend or colleague; the end of a marriage; a job change; empty nesting; a major move or a health challenge. As many of them find themselves with greater time for personal reflection, questions of life and death become more urgent. With the pressures of raising a young family or striving in the workplace largely behind them, it is no longer possible to ignore the very real and often terrifying challenges facing their communities and the wider world. As they contemplate the changes that have come (and will continue to come) with their own aging, material concerns may become less important, while decisions around end of life matters take on a new and sometimes frightening relevance. The Church can help Boomers to grapple with these issues and provide a safe place to ask their questions. It can offer them the wisdom, strength, and witness of a 2,000-year-old tradition⁸⁵ in which men and women of faith have wrestled with similar questions and found courage and meaning. The Church can connect Boomers to these important religious values and heritage, and by doing so, it may help them to recover the sense of

⁸⁴ It is interesting to note that one of the reasons many ordinary people in Argentina were drawn to Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, is because he endorsed many of their popular religious practices. See Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis. Untying the Knots*. (London, Bloomsbury Publishing, Plc., 2013.), Chapter 2, especially pages 33-35

⁸⁵ (4,000 years if we include the witness of the Old Testament)

wholeness and spiritual well-being they seek.

Conclusion and Significance

I believe that the program described in these pages will be of benefit to other congregations seeking to connect with Baby Boomers in their communities. As discussed, Boomers are seeking answers to life's deepest questions and the Church is ideally situated to help them wrestle with these questions. For this reason a course like this one should benefit not only local congregations, but also presbyteries and conferences that want to hold workshops or retreats in evangelism and stewardship directed at Boomers. However, I first want to develop some auxiliary materials that include not only a leader's guide for them to use, but also more Canadian content, such as a series of DVD interviews with members of the local community who are making a difference in the third chapter of life.⁸⁶

Since a number of people who took the first course felt that they would like to follow up with each other and participate in a mission program, I can see how this course may lead to some practical experiments in mission and stewardship, such as local, national or even international mission trips. Another mission focus includes the writing of an ethical will or legacy letter that participants share with their children or grandchildren – or the children of the congregation – and which could lead to an ethical wills workshop or a life writing class. I foresee that some interesting inter-generational opportunities for learning and fellowship might also ensue. Opportunities for mentoring both in the congregation and community abound, but here it is important to create environments where the learning is multi-generational.

⁸⁶ To date I have completed one interview with Boomer and retired teacher Richard Cook, videotaped and edited by Rev. Wib Dawson.

With Siloam's worship team⁸⁷, I would also like to do some further work around the development of significant rituals to mark such milestones in our congregation as retirement, empty-nesting, and becoming grandparents. Such rituals would not only add meaning to these events and the people sharing in them, but they would also enhance the worship experience of the whole community, thereby leading to opportunities for personal and communal transformation.⁸⁸ Developing such rituals for our Siloam community may well become another fruitful trajectory for this thesis project.

In closing, I return to Douglas John Hall's statement that the real question of our time is "What are people for?" Hall says that I Corinthians 4:1 may well be the most important and yet also most neglected scripture text today. "Think of yourselves as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." Of course Boomers are not the only ones to whom this scripture text applies; but the fact remains that, as they enter the second half of life, they are uniquely placed to take up this challenge from St. Paul. As servants of Christ, stewards of God's mysteries, mentors to the young and the Keepers of Meaning, they have much wisdom to share and a vital role to play in our congregations and the wider community.

Indeed, as Grossman and Bateman have shown, the ability of those in the second half of life to look at issues from "a third person perspective"⁸⁹ and to restore "a dimension of long-term thinking to society",⁹⁰ are gifts we cannot afford to ignore. With the enormity of the global

⁸⁷ Four members, including the Chair, participated in the initial class.

⁸⁸ As Rohr observes, western culture is ritually starved. This is alarming, given what we have come to understand about the role of ritual in society. Theologian Martha L. Moore-Keish quotes ritual scholar Roy Rappaport, noting that "ritual is the basic social act." Ritual actions have the power both to modify or change existing relationships and create new relationships. Rituals not only establish relationships with human beings, but they also create relationships with the Divine. Their power, moreover, to transform individual lives and the life of the community, thereby creating new meaning, is well documented by ritual scholars. Martha L. Moore-Keish, *Do This in Remembrance of Me: A Ritual Approach to Reformed Eucharistic Theology*. (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), p. 95.

⁸⁹ Paul Knowles, "Older and Wiser", *The United Church Observer*, July/August 2014, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁰ Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Further Life. The Age of Active Wisdom*, p. 20.

problems we face, the wisdom, experience and passion of Boomers are needed now more than ever.

Thus, even if this project does nothing more than help clergy and other church leaders to understand and minister to the Boomer generation a little better, this is still a valuable outcome. Given that roughly 1,000 Canadian Baby Boomers a day have turned 65 since January 1st, 2012, and about 1,000 more will cross that threshold every day for the next 18 years, for a total of 7.3 million individuals, a resource like this one has the potential to change lives by helping people to discern their God-given calling.⁹¹ Baby Boomers have an opportunity to lead the way, and the Church has an obligation to help them in this important mission.

⁹¹ Quoted in Amar Canada.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: THE HISTORY OF SILOAM UNITED CHURCH

Siloam's early story is a fascinating one and is connected to the history of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The latter were a group of 19th century agricultural labourers in Dorset, England, who formed a friendly society to protest the low wages of their day. Here rural men and women were experiencing the worst effects of the industrial revolution. In the Dorsetshire town of Tolpuddle, a group of six farm labourers, led by Methodist lay preacher George Loveless, came together in 1834 with hopes of organizing themselves to encourage better working and living conditions. The rules of the society show it was clearly structured as a friendly society and operated as a trade-specific benefit society; but the aristocracy, still reeling after the bloody French Revolution, were alarmed by the society and therefore acted swiftly to put an end to it. All six men were arrested, tried and convicted on trumped up charges, and sentenced to seven years hard labour in the penal colony of New South Wales, now Australia. After two years of public outrage back home and constant attention in the newspapers, the six Martyrs of Tolpuddle, as they had become known, were granted a pardon and free passage back to England.

Five of the six men decided to immigrate to Canada, settling in the area now known as northeast London and Bryanston. Upon arriving in the London area in 1844, George Loveless took up his lay preaching again, traveling the countryside on horseback and proclaiming the Gospel to adherents before the erection of the first formal Siloam church building. It is said that Loveless performed services for the early congregation of Siloam using a bible which he had purchased while in transport to the penal colony in Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania in

Australia.⁹²

By the time Loveless settled in London Township, Methodists were already active in southwestern Ontario, and several sects had taken root in the London area. In 1823, London Township was made a Circuit for the Wesleyan Methodists. The first preachers were not necessarily ordained ministers, but were full of zeal and sincerity, and travelled the countryside on horseback. In these early years Methodists were often regarded with a certain amount of disdain, especially by the Anglicans. Some conservative leaders, such as Anglican Archdeacon of York, John Strachan, accused Methodists of disloyalty, ignorance, and religious extremism. In addition, because many Methodists immigrated to Upper Canada from the United States, they were accused of being republicans, and disloyal to the Monarchy. For the more staid Anglicans and Presbyterians, Methodist revival meetings smacked of emotional excess. It is likely that Siloam was not immune to such criticism.⁹³

A turning point came in 1925 when Siloam Methodist Church entered into the newly formed United Church of Canada. This was not only an important event in the history of the Siloam congregation; it was also a milestone in the early history of ecumenism. By bringing together Methodism and two varieties of the Reformed tradition (Presbyterians and Congregationalists), the United Church of Canada was the first modern experiment in union across confessional lines in western Christianity.⁹⁴ The impetus for this union was largely

⁹² Rose Marie Simpson and Ken Harding (editors.) *Siloam United Church, London Township, 1857-1982*. (London, Ontario, 1982) in Mark Davidson, *Our Roots and Our Legacy: 150 Years of Siloam United Church*. Editor: Jack Little. (London, Ontario, 2007), pp. 1-3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁴ In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren also entered into union with the United Church of Canada. Over the years other denominations, notably the Anglicans, Baptists and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), have considered amalgamation, but no such discussions are currently underway. While the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada shared a hymn book for a number of years in the last quarter of the twentieth century, discussions on church union came to a disappointing end in 1975. Today the United Church of Canada is

economical and political, and stemmed from concerns about supporting the needs of the many isolated congregations in the vast Canadian northwest. New immigrants were arriving in the prairies in droves and attempts to reach these new settlements stretched competing denominational resources. Such a union, it was believed, would strengthen Canada's foreign mission abroad as well.

The doctrinal agreement made by the three denominations contained a creed with twenty articles. The latter were based on two Presbyterian documents, the brief statement of "The Reformed Faith" of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., of 1905, and the "Articles of the Faith" of the Presbyterian Church of England from 1890. While the new doctrinal statement contained more than the Methodists and Congregationalists were comfortable with, it omitted more than the Presbyterians would have liked, notably, (1) the statement affirming the scriptures as "the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life"; (2) the requirement that new ministers subscribe to the new creed; and (3) the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms.⁹⁵ The foregoing notwithstanding, as University of Toronto professor C.T. McIntire writes, doctrinally the new United Church was still very much "an evangelical church in the heritage of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century".⁹⁶

The decades that followed saw the national church gradually abandon its original emphasis on the self as needing conversion or formation in favour of social justice as its chief mission goal. Some have argued that making social justice the "sole" focus of the church's

beginning talks with the United Church of Christ (USA) that could lead to full communion agreement. Other discussions have recently taken place with the United Reformed Church (U.K.), the Uniting Church in Australia, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, the Methodist Church in Ghana, and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. See Mike Milne, Cross-Border Church. *The United Church Observer*. (New Series Vol. 77, No. 7, February, 2014), p. 37.

⁹⁵ T.C. McIntire, "United Among Many" in *A History of the United Church of Canada*, Don Schweitzer, editor. (Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2012), pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

agenda has contributed to its decline. At the same time, the United Church can be proud of the stances it has taken over the years, notably in the area of universal healthcare, women's rights, the abolition of capital punishment, prison reform, the ordination of gays and lesbians, same sex marriage, and the rights of Canada's First Nations, especially its apology to First Nations peoples for the abuses many of their people suffered in residential schools.

Today Siloam's Mission Statement largely reflects this emphasis on social justice. As members of Siloam United Church, we believe we are called "to be Christ to each other and God's world". Moreover, we recall with pride our roots in the quest for justice and equality that is our legacy from George Loveless and our Tolpuddle ancestors. While we acknowledge our many shortcomings, we nevertheless struggle to live out of our five core values, which were adopted in 2006: spiritual integrity, inclusiveness, outreach, community and stewardship.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ See Appendix II, Siloam's Core Values.

APPENDIX II:

Siloam's Core Values (2006)

We are guided by five Core Values that we strive to live by in our daily lives.

SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

The presence of God is within our midst. We are not alone in our journey.

Our faith and beliefs, as stated in the new creed of the United Church of Canada, guide our choices, activities and relationships with others.

We value our Christian heritage, while embracing change to ensure our mission continues to be relevant in today's world.

We value the search for spiritual truth and carry it forward with integrity.

We take personal risks in our journey to understand our relationship with God.

We acknowledge and welcome diversity in interpretation of scripture, and encourage dialogue among those holding differing opinions.

INCLUSIVENESS

We are a multigenerational church family that provides programming and worship opportunities for all ages.

As a non-judgmental community, we welcome everyone with open arms.

We feel a strong sense of community with other people who worship at Siloam.

We have tolerance for diverse perspectives that exist within a faith community and honour, without necessarily reconciling or resolving, the tensions associated with such diversity.

OUTREACH

Our congregation, and the United Church of Canada, are an important part of the fabric of our community.

We put our faith into action and define who we are when we reach out to help others and support those in need.

We believe that outreach is the glue that holds a community of faith together and defines who we are.

As individuals, and as a faith community, we challenge situations we feel are unjust.

We extend invitations to our neighbours to be part of our diverse community through a ministry of hospitality.

COMMUNITY

We welcome everyone with a warm greeting.

We support others in our faith community in their time of need.

We develop relationships on a personal level by participating actively in a wide range of programs and worship activities.

We recognize and value the contributions made to the life and work of the church.

STEWARDSHIP

We share our time, talents and leadership to enhance worship for ourselves and others.

We commit to supporting our Church financially.

We endeavour to be fiscally responsible.

We believe our faith grows through active involvement in all aspects of church life.

APPENDIX III: THE TEN LIFESTYLE CLUSTERS FOUND IN AND AROUND SILOAM

Upscale, educated couples and families	98.4
Older, upper-middle-class couples and families	95.7
Wealthy, middle-aged suburban families	97.7
Large, upscale suburban families	99.5
Upscale, dual-income exurban families	97.4
Younger, thriving immigrant families	99.1
Mid-scale mix of young and mature singles and couples	99.7
Middle-aged, upper-middle-class blue collar families	99.9
Upper-middle-class exurban families	100.0
Younger-middle-class exurban families	100.0

From: The Environics Analytics Report prepared for Siloam United Church, London, ON, September 27th, 2013, pp. 3-17.

APPENDIX IV: FROM “A SONG OF FAITH”

God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.

In the church,

 some are called to specific ministries of leadership,

 both lay and ordered;

 some witness to the good news;

some uphold the art of worship;

some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;

some build up the community of wisdom;

some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.

To embody God's love in the world,

*the work of the church requires the ministry and discipleship of all believers.*⁹⁸
 (italics are mine.)

⁹⁸ *A Song of Faith*, A Statement of Faith of The United Church of Canada/L’Eglise Unie du Canada, 2006.

APPENDIX V: EMPLOYING OSMER’S PRACTICAL THEOLOGY MODEL

Practical theology is the practical application of theology to everyday life. Richard Osmer explains that the four key questions and tasks in practical theology are:⁹⁹

What is going on? (descriptive-empirical task)

Why is this going on? (interpretative task)

What ought to be going on? (normative task)

How might we respond? (pragmatic task)

I begin with Osmer’s first task, the descriptive-empirical task. *What is going on?* In answer to Osmer’s question, and as stated earlier, I believe that there is a real disconnect between most Boomers and the church. For example, according to the 2013 Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “one-in-ten Canadians born between 1947 and 1966 had no religious affiliation in 1981, but one-in-five are unaffiliated in 2011.”¹⁰⁰ Returning to the Environics Analytics Service Report prepared for Siloam United Church in September, 2013, more than 95% of Boomers in the Siloam service area remain untapped.¹⁰¹ Thus the evidence strongly suggests that we at Siloam have not been able to connect our love of the Christian story with most adults aged 50 to 65 in a way that helps them to discern and respond to God's call on their lives.

What we are seeing - and what we have been seeing for a long time - is a major decline in church participation by younger and middle-aged adults. Not only do they not possess anything

⁹⁹ Richard Robert Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ “Canada’s Changing Religious Landscape”, *Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project*, June 27, 2013, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ “*The Environics Analytics Service Report prepared for Siloam United Church, ON*” September 27, 2013, pp. 3-17.

like the same level of commitment to the church that earlier generations like the Builders had, they also do not have the faith vocabulary that would enable them to share their faith with the next generation. For the most part they are ignorant of the stories of their own faith tradition. They have no overarching Christian narrative by which to steer the ship that is their lives. To use Kenda Creasy Dean's words, they have no creed or articulated God-story or belief, and no language with which to transmit the faith to those who follow.¹⁰² With few exceptions, they do not attend worship on a regular basis, and many are Christmas and Easter Christians only. Even though many act as coaches for their children's sports teams or leaders in Scouts and Guides, and even though many hold down responsible positions of leadership in their workplace, they do not feel comfortable talking about their faith with their young people or taking leadership positions in the church.

What Dean writes about teenagers and young adults is also true of most Baby Boomers in Canada. A recent conversation with Rev. Wib Dawson, one of the members of my AGM, is illustrative. Dawson has been an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada for over forty years and is recently retired from the Canadian Bible Society, where he served for over twenty years as Director of the London and Western District of the CBC. Dawson's observation is that most Boomers have no real memory or recollection of what it means to be part of a church community. At best, he says, "they have a series of cameos or vignettes" which form the basis of their understanding of the church. Focused for much of their lives on the needs of their own nuclear families, they don't know what it means to be part of a larger extended family like the church. In many ways, he notes, "they are starting from scratch. They have not had time to

¹⁰² Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian. What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2010).

connect their life story to the larger Christian narrative.” The bottom line is that many Boomers do not know their Christian story.¹⁰³

This leads me to the second of Osmer's tasks, the interpretive task. Here the question to be asked is: *Why* is this going on? Why is there such a disconnect between Boomers and the church?

With Canadian theologian Douglas John Hall I agree that this is part of a much larger theological problem, namely, that many of us in the church today have lost touch with who we really are. As he argues, there are no quick or easy fixes for the situation in which we find ourselves in the church today and that, if we really desire renewal in our congregations, "we must begin with the basics."¹⁰⁴ The church in Canada today is in crisis. The mission field is no longer in far away Africa or India or China.¹⁰⁵ The mission field is right here.¹⁰⁶

While the mission field includes people of all ages, there is a special opportunity to reach out to those in the Baby Boomer generation, who are struggling in many cases to find meaning and purpose in life and who, as Bibby shows, are seeking spiritual nourishment. This is a challenge for many congregations, including Siloam. The problem, as I have suggested, seems to

¹⁰³ Conversation with Rev. Wib Dawson, Monday, November 25th, 2013. As noted earlier, leading Canadian sociologist of religion, Reginald Bibby, has written extensively on trends in Canadian religion, and believes that the Anglican and United Church denominations will soon be on life support. Reginald W. Bibby, *Restless Gods and Restless Youth: An Update on the Religious Situation in Canada*. University of Lethbridge. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Sociological Association, Ottawa – May, 2009 and Reginald W. Bibby, *The Emerging Millennials*. (Lethbridge: Project Canada Books, 2009), pp. 162-187. Reginald W. Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back. Religion's Demise and Rise and Why It Matters*. (Project Canada Books, 2011), pp. 186ff.

¹⁰⁴ Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free. A Theologian's Journey*. (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005), p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1-3.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Wuthnow, America's leading sociologist of religion, denies that Christianity in North America is in significant decline. Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005). Other scholars, like Diana Butler Bass, believe that what North American churches are experiencing is a "new awakening". Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*. (New York, Harper One, 2012). See also Phyllis Tickle. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*. (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2008).

be a disconnect between Boomers and the church, of which a telltale symptom is the inability of many Boomers to be able to share their own faith story in any clear or meaningful way. We are narrative beings - storytelling creatures - who have lost our ability to tell our story. More than ever before, therefore, there is an urgent need to help our people learn the overarching Christian narrative, so that they can engage the story and allow it to bless them as they take it into the world.

Hall attributes this inability to connect to the Christian narrative, and the decline in the church in general, to a lack of sound teaching. He writes:

"Churches...become collectives of a nebulous sort of 'fellowship' or of random activism or of undifferentiated 'spiritually', or of moralisms old or new, or simply of 'nice' people who don't quite know why they are there but feel they ought to be....there is a greater need for sound teaching than ever before in church history. Therefore, it is imperative for us to reclaim for ourselves the biblical and Reformation insistence upon theology as vocation."¹⁰⁷

Some of the most common complaints we hear from people suggest that the church needs to do a better job in helping people to discern where and how God is calling them, what is really important in life and how to set priorities. This is can be seen from the excuses that people offer, notably, that they are far too busy and life is just too stressful. Most are dual career couples who have no time to do Christian Education at home. There are high demands on their time. As well, they involve their children in endless rounds of sports and other extra-curricular activities. Since Sunday morning is often the only time they get to sleep in or get caught up on grocery shopping, house work and yard work, we don't often see them and their families at church. Separation and divorce can also mean that children are frequently away at the other parent's house on weekends. Juggling schedules can be even more challenging in such circumstances. In addition, some have

¹⁰⁷ Hall, p. 13.

been horribly wounded by the church and are loathe to return. Some never received a good grounding in the faith to start with, while others find that what they learned as children no longer has any relevance for the lives they live now.

Clergy also are a part of the problem. We no longer have adequate time to devote to what Paul refers to as "the stewardship of the mysteries of God." There are so many things that we are called upon to do that often the theological work to which God calls us turns out to be the last item on our list of priorities. Much of our time must be spent on organizational matters, which means that there is little time left for study and teaching. In fairness, many congregations do not value or appreciate clergy who spend time in reading, contemplation and discussing the faith with parishioners. There has been a devaluation of the traditional calling of the ministry of preaching and teaching in favour of the counseling professions. Moreover, as Hall has written, what many "desire from religion today is an escape from thought: escape into action, escape into liturgy, escape into piety, or simply to have their minds turned off for at least one hour weekly,"¹⁰⁸ what some call "fast food religion".¹⁰⁹ (In my own preaching, I notice that people are generally following and interested when I share a joke; but when I get serious or focus on the meaning of scripture or belief, there are many who tune out. Although I try hard to make the humorous story relate to the deeper message, I am aware that I myself have been a major contributor to this dilemma.)

¹⁰⁸ Douglas John Hall, "*Stewards of the Mystery of God*", Lecture delivered at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg Seminary on Oct. 27, 2005. Sponsored by the Stewardship of Life Institute and the Arthur Larson Stewardship Council. Copyright 2005 Douglas John Hall, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Rohr, p. xiii.

Rohr identifies the problem facing us as a cultural one. He says that "we are a 'first half of life culture', largely concerned about surviving successfully."¹¹⁰ Our people and our churches remain focused on first half of life issues like establishing an identity, a home, relationships, friends, and security. "Our institutions, our expectations, including our churches," he writes, "are almost entirely configured to encourage, support, reward, and validate [these] first tasks of life."¹¹¹ Mired in what he calls the egocentric first stage of life, he adds, quoting Bill Plotkin, we live in "a patho-adolescent culture."¹¹²

Rohr argues that the major problem facing us is that our churches have not found a way to do the age-appropriate tasks of the two halves of life. Echoing Hall, he writes that "the would be mature believer is not challenged to any adult faith or service."¹¹³ For this reason our communities are starved of mature men and women who can not only share their faith and life experiences with the younger generations, but also serve as important coaches or faith mentors. "Without elders," he argues, "a society perishes socially and spiritually."¹¹⁴

Without the wisdom of our elders or any overarching narrative to guide us, many of us find ourselves in a position where we have to make our own meaning. Added to this challenge is the fact that we live in what British sociologist Anthony Giddens describes as a highly fragmented, secular and pluralistic society.¹¹⁵ There are lots of alternatives to Christianity now. And, as Hall notes, "the fringe benefits of being Christian are few and far between."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. xiii.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 27, 43.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

¹¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1991).

¹¹⁶ Douglas John Hall, "Stewards of the Mystery of God", p. 3.

As they try to wrestle with the problems and crises of contemporary life, many honest seekers understandably are just not satisfied by the answers offered by conventional Christianity. Much of this has to do with the fact that the problems we are facing today are much more complicated than those faced by our grandparents and great-grandparents, who did not have to combat such things as terrorism or the possibility of environmental disaster and extinction.

It is clear that the challenges facing us are astronomical. Never before, therefore, has there been a greater need for sound teaching and for mature Christians who can articulate their faith clearly and pass on their wisdom to the next generation.

Turning now to the third task in Osmer's model, we ask the normative question: What *ought* to be going on? While all Christians should be able to articulate their faith story, it is especially important that Boomers be able to do so, since they have a special role as mentors to share the faith with the next generation. The vision of St. Paul in I Corinthians 4:1 thus has particular importance for those who find themselves in the Boomer generation: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Finally, we come to the fourth of Osmer's tasks: the pragmatic task. *How* might we respond? I think we begin to do this in the following ways:

1. We help Baby Boomers first of all to discover their Christian story.
2. Secondly, we attend to the needs of Boomers by helping them to transition from the first half of life to the second life, including marking their transitions ritually.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Another problem which this project seeks to address is the lack of any rites of passage that would assist in the transition from the first half of life to the second half of life. As Rohr and Plotkin point out, western people are a ritually starved people. Boomers are a visual generation. They appreciate symbols. It is important therefore that we begin to provide them with some meaningful rituals and symbols that enhance their faith experiences and ease the

3. We help Boomers to discern their calling, biblically and theologically, and assist them in reclaiming the vision of St. Paul in I Corinthians 4:1.

4. Finally, we engage Boomers in meaningful ministry, including Christian vocation, service, and nurturing of the next generation.

transition to the second half of life. Such rituals would include things like retirement, empty nest, loss of partner, becoming a grandparent, to name just a few.

APPENDIX VI: WHY THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN CANADIAN BOOMERS AND THE CHURCH?

The question here has to do with why it is that so many Boomers feel disaffected from the United Church. To obtain some clues as to why this may be the case, we need to return to the work of Reginald Bibby, who has been at the leading edge of research in this field since the mid-1980's.

It is important to note at the outset that Bibby disagrees with the “secularization thesis,” which posits that religion generally declines in importance as populations become better educated and societies experience high levels of development.¹¹⁸ Nor does he entirely accept the thesis that the United Church, for example, has been losing all kinds of people to the more conservative evangelical groups.¹¹⁹ While noting that the time pressures on families, resulting from the growing number of women joining the work force between 1960 and 2000, have led large numbers to become less involved in church life¹²⁰, Bibby nevertheless states that it is mostly due to two overriding factors that church attendance has declined in Canada. “In reality,” he writes, “the primary reason Mainliners saw their share of the population drop so significantly is that...they weren't having enough kids and their immigration pipeline was going dry.”¹²¹ Whereas earlier generations benefitted from immigration from Great Britain and other parts of Europe, the post-1960's saw increased immigration from Asia. As a result, an important source

¹¹⁸ Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, p. 179.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

¹²⁰ Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back. Religion's Demise and Rise and Why It Matters*. (Project Canada Books, 2011).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

of previous growth had now been vastly diminished. Because of this, Bibby says that mainline Protestants – the United Church, Anglicans and others – may soon be on “life support”.¹²²

Rev. Steve Willey, Education for Justice Co-ordinator of the United Church of Canada, discusses the gravity of the situation in which the United Church now finds itself. Commenting on the recent temporary suspension of admissions to the Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, and Bachelor of Theology programs at Queen’s University, founded in 1841 and the oldest Protestant theological school in Canada, Willey says that the decline in applications to these programs is not surprising. As he notes, “It’s a reflection of heavy changes in society and the western world at large.” Religious pluralism and multiculturalism in Canada may account for the fact that more and more Canadians are opting for alternative spiritual paths rather than traditional organized religion. “The quest for meaning and spiritual vitality.” Willey notes, “is greater than ever, and in some ways can be read as a sign of the profound alienation people are feeling in modern culture.”¹²³

While the situation is indeed grave, Bibby nevertheless sees reasons to hope. In this he echoes Roof, who asserts that “concern for the sacred never goes away.”¹²⁴ Elsewhere Bibby writes that mainline groups should be able to turn things around by improving their ministry to their own affiliates. He observes that “Conservative Protestants” (Evangelicals, including the Baptist, Pentecostal, Alliance, Mennonite, Wesleyan, Nazarene denominations and many independent congregations) are growing. Of these, he notes, “Their central commonality lies in their emphasis on people becoming Christian through making a personal, explicit decision to do

¹²² Reginald Bibby, *Beyond the Gods and Back. Religion’s Demise and Rise and Why It Matters*, p.

¹²³ Vincent Matak, “Queen’s School of Religion Suspends Admissions”, in *The United Church Observer*. (New Series, Vol. 77, No. 7, February, 2014), p. 38.

¹²⁴ Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers. The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boomer Generation*. (San Francisco, Harper, 1993), p. 250.

so.”¹²⁵ While the latter are not as successful in reaching people outside their own boundaries, they nevertheless do a much better job of retaining their children, as well as their people when they relocate to other towns and provinces.¹²⁶ Clearly there are lessons that mainline churches can learn from them.

Of greater significance, especially for this project, is the opportunity which Bibby sees in working with Boomers. He observes that much of the popular thinking would have us believe that Baby Boomers have it all – educational and material success, youthfulness and exciting sex lives! Yet, while Boomers have generally made significant advances over their parents in terms of educational achievement and their standard of living, Bibby’s study suggests that Boomers, especially men, are not as emotionally or financially satisfied as we would expect. Many Boomers are not feeling very fulfilled, at least when compared to previous generations, particularly as they reflect upon family life, marriage, career, and life as a whole. Surveys show that 3 in 10 Boomers in Canada feel that there is a void in their lives, that there is something missing, and that they “should be getting more out of life.”¹²⁷ Bibby says that the expectation is that such feelings would decrease with age; but this has not been the case with Canadian Boomers. “In 1985, when Boomers ranged in age from 20 to 39, 32% said they were troubled about needing to get more from life. Two decades later, the figure is 31%.”¹²⁸ Clearly life is not as rosy for Canadian Boomers as we or they might wish. Something is missing in the lives of many of these independent and self-sufficient achievers.

¹²⁵ Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, p. 199.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

One of the questions that Bibby and his associates have been tracking since the mid-1980's has to do with the issue of “the purpose of life”. According to their studies in the eighties, 1 in 4 Canadians said that the question of life’s meaning troubled them a lot. Here again, Bibby says that they would have expected that over time the “purpose of life” question would not be as troublesome to people as it was when they were younger. Such is the not the case. Bibby concludes:

Yet, since at least the mid-1980's, when we first asked the question, a core of about 20% of Boomers have continued to be bothered about life’s purpose. Concern levels have gone down a bit for men, but overall have remained remarkably similar for both women and men. Following the anticipated pattern, the purpose question has become less of a concern for the Pre-Boomers as they have been getting older – much like the pattern that was expressed with the “getting more out of life” issue.

If anything, as Bibby notes, Canadian Boomers’ quest for meaning has not gone down, but is very much in the fore. Indeed, along with the increased interest in spirituality since the early 1990's, he has discovered that all Canadians are expressing spiritual needs. This includes Boomers, who continue to struggle with questions of meaning and purpose. Like many of their American counterparts, they will shop around until they find a religion or spirituality that offers them the right fit.¹²⁹

What is the right fit? Bibby’s research suggests that Boomers will need to find groups that touch their lives and the lives of their families, everyone from the toddler in the nursery to the parent juggling two or more jobs to the grandparent in the nursing home. In addition, such groups must be able to connect them and their families to the “sacred” and help them fill what many regard as a spiritual emptiness. They must also be able to offer concrete support as

¹²⁹ Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, p. 141.

Boomers and their families grapple with the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows, and all the stresses that go with living day-to-day.

Far from being a story shrouded only in darkness and gloom, the story of Canadian Boomers presents the Church with an exciting and unique opportunity. Not feeling as fulfilled in their lives as the generation before them and the one following behind, Bibby's surveys reveal, in addition, that some 7 in 10 Boomers are not only receptive to greater involvement in the Church, but also that they are hungering for spiritual nurture, as well as for some "clarity" among all the different voices that call to them in Canada's very pluralistic society.¹³⁰ As his counterparts Hoge, Benton and Luidens in the United States argue, "the mainline churches have a potent product that many Baby Boomers seek. They are religious or spiritual answers to life's questions."¹³¹

Bibby concludes his chapter on religion and spirituality by quoting Margaret Wenté, a well-known columnist for Canada's leading national newspaper, the *Globe & Mail*. Wenté sums up the spiritual challenges of Canadian Boomers this way:

I think the longing for God – call it soul hunger – is universal, and hard-wired into our genes...I've always suspected that history was just lying in wait to take its exquisite revenge on us boomers who sought meaning in sex, drugs, rock'n'roll and the entire menu of Eastern mysticism. And so it has. The 60's are finally over, folks. Time to move on.¹³²

As Bibby observes, maybe Saint Augustine was right. "Our hearts are restless until we find rest in Thee." Echoing sociologist Rodney Stark (1985) and Ron Rolheiser (2006), there is a

¹³⁰ Bibby, *The Boomer Factor*, pp. 204-205.

¹³¹ Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson and Donald Al Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries. The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*. (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

spiritual need and a cry for meaning that only our faith can satisfy. The Church thus has a unique opportunity and, indeed, a responsibility to respond to these needs as best it can. By really meeting Boomers where they are with meaningful ministry, the Church can draw them into deeper faith and a fuller sense of their Christian calling. Moreover, in reaching out to Boomers, the Church goes a long way to ensuring that the legacy of faith is passed on to younger generations of Canadians, those children and grandchildren about whom Boomers care so much. Indeed, as Benedictine Sister and Spiritual author Joan Chittister writes, “It is the older members of society who not only teach us how to live. They also teach us how to die, how to make sense of unity between life and death....”¹³³

¹³³ Joan Chittister, *The Gift of Years. Growing Older Gracefully*. (Katonah, N.Y., Blue Bridge, 2008), p. 104.

APPENDIX VII: TOOLS OF EVALUATION:

The conclusions drawn from this project come from the various evaluative tools used in this course. In addition to comments made to me personally or sent by email, there were essentially four types of evaluation employed in this program. These included weekly “exit tickets”, a weekly blog or forum, a final written evaluation form at the end of the course, and small group follow-up interviews approximately four weeks after the end of the course.

Ongoing evaluation was provided through the weekly “exit tickets”. On these exit tickets, participants were invited to respond very briefly and in point form to the following questions: What is one thing you will take away from this evening? What is one question you still have? The latter provided some real-time feedback for learning. I was able to address issues as they arose, either through group emails or at the beginning of the following session.¹³⁴

The weekly forum or blog was not successful at all and very few people used it, while those who did only really used it to introduce themselves. As mentioned earlier, there were problems with the set up of this resource from the start. In addition, many participants did not feel comfortable using this kind of forum, and many others simply did not have time to make use of it. Since it was an optional resource, there was also no commitment to using it.

The overall project goals were evaluated through a final evaluation form that used a Likert scale and qualitative measurements, such as questionnaires. The results of these are included in the Appendices. Small group follow-up interviews were also conducted about a

¹³⁴ For example, sometimes people were simply seeking more information, as was the case one evening when we discussed Robert Putnam’s work and his explanation for the decline of social capital in North America since the last quarter of the twentieth century.¹³⁴ Others, as discussed earlier, had questions around William Bridges’ change theory and were either struggling to discern when they had moved from an ending to the neutral zone or how long they should stay in one phase. As noted, at least one found the theory too simplistic.

month after the program ended. The assessment tools included open and closed-ended questions.

Overall I think the program was successful in providing participants with resources and opportunities to reflect on the second half of life, as well as its challenges and possibilities for growth. With a couple of exceptions, I think the architectural metaphor worked well for most people, as did Bridges change model. The times when people seemed to be most engaged were during the power point sessions, the video and film presentations, and during the small and large group discussions around case studies of individuals who had made a made a difference in their communities in the second half of their lives. Other exercises that people really seemed to learn from and enjoy were: the Getting to Know Yourself quiz, the Life Map, the Needs Assessment, and the Ethical Will. A few, but certainly not all, appreciated the two guided meditations we did, although the latter were a bit rushed. Again, there were one or two people for whom these were not helpful exercises, but generally speaking all were appreciated by most of the group. In addition, while the closing worship service took place after the written evaluation, many people commented on how helpful and moving this was as they were leaving the final session. One change that would be helpful, though, would be to share the first half of the ritual “Letting Go” earlier in the program, maybe halfway through the course.

The major complaint about the program was that it was too content heavy and there was not enough time to process everything that was presented. People appreciated the variety of topics and resources, as well as the optional homework suggestions, but many felt that there was not adequate opportunity to digest everything properly. During the final sessions we went overtime quite considerably, which meant that people were often tired by the time we got to

some of the most important learning. Nor did it help that we were having serious problems with our furnace – people were either too hot or too cold!

I would certainly like to offer this program again, but I would definitely make it either an eight-week or ten-week course, making some of the other changes noted above. Moreover, although the shared meal helped people to get better acquainted, some still complained that it was hard to feel really comfortable with everyone in such a short time. The next time I offer this program, therefore, I will omit the meal but make the class size much smaller, certainly not more than 15 people. In this way people will not only be able to get to know each other better; but they will also enjoy greater comfort from having more space in which to move around.

APPENDIX VIII

RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

**Spring, 2014
Siloam United Church,
London, Ontario**

Prepared and led by Sheila Macgregor

Re-Composing A Life: Transitioning into the Second Half of Life
For Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1966

April 23rd to May 28th, 2014,
Siloam United Church

1. Week One: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.”
– Psalm 127:1
Getting to Know Each Other
Brief Outline of Program
How Our Lives Have Changed: Re-Envisaging the Life Cycle: Building an Atrium
Who Am I? Who Do I Want to Be? “Not leaving it to the snake!”
2. Week Two: “Dismantling the House”
Who am I when I am not what I used to do?
Managing Transitions
Ending, Losing, Letting Go
3. Week Three: “How to Survive Home Renovations!”
The Neutral Zone: Living in the Midst of Chaos
Finding Meaning in a Smaller World
How Retirement Impacts Our Lives, Our Marriages and Other Relationships
4. Week Four: “Building A Cathedral”
Uniting Our Avocation with Our Vocation
The River of Life
Vocation or Calling versus Job and Occupation: A New Definition of Calling
5. Week Five: “What to Leave Behind, What to Keep or Carry Forward”
For the Love of It: Making a Contribution
What We Want to Preserve or Keep
Affiliation, Power, Achievement
Engagement is Key
Creating an Ethical Will or Legacy Letter
6. Week Six: “Inviting the Neighbours Over!”
“Pass it On”
Creating a Mission Statement for the Second Half of Life
Keepers of the Meaning and Stewards of the Mysteries of God
A Ritual for Entering into the Second Half of Life
Evaluation and Thank You

SESSION ONE: RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

“Building An Atrium”

1. Graffiti Question (posted on the wall will be sheets of paper where people respond to one question in one sentence or in point form.) Tonight: Share a goal or dream you have.
2. Welcome, Prayer, Supper and Ice-Breaker – your favourite room in the house when you were seven
3. Outline of Course/Expectations/Questions (including Graffiti questions, Exit tickets, Blogs, and final Questionnaires/interviews)
4. Imagine a house that has been your home for a number of years. Unexpectedly you receive a large inheritance which provides you with the resources to add a room to your house. What will be that room be? Will it serve a need that you were not aware of when you first move in? You might, for instance, have decided that you now need a study or an exercise room. Or will it allow you to elaborate on something that has always been part of your life? Perhaps you have always cared about books and have bookshelves spread throughout your home, but now you want to gather those books together in a room you will call a library. You may want to have a room where a guest could stay. Or maybe you want to offer hospitality to a married son or daughter with a new generation of children. You may want to take up an avocation... gourmet cooking... perhaps a craft room....or a wood-working room....or maybe you want to expand an existing room...

Questions:

- i) You have been given unlimited resources to add a room to your house. Draw a plan of your house with this extra room. What will it be used for?
 - ii) Now find someone in the room that you have not met before – or whom you may not know that well – and share your ideal renovation with them.
 - a) Talk about the room you are adding to your house and what it will be used for.
 - b) Now talk about how this new room will affect the way you use the rest of your house?
4. Lecture: Building an Atrium (Text: Psalm 127:1-2)

I hope you had a bit of fun with this exercise. The Bible and many other spiritual writings often refer to our lives as a kind of house, a home that we inhabit during our earthly years. Of course, Jesus also depicts the life to come as a house, a mansion with many rooms.

Some of you have been involved in home renovations in the past. If so, the first thing you may have discovered when you added a room to your house is that ‘add’ is generally the wrong word, because the way you use all the rest of the house, the way you live and organize your time and even your relationships, will be affected by the change. My friend, Maralyn, and her

husband added a beautiful big family room onto their house a few years ago. Now she tells me they never use their living room or dining room. They live in the family room. In fact, recently they converted their main floor living room into a bedroom for their eldest daughter.

This is often what happens when we renovate or add an extra room to our house. Existing rooms will be used differently, sounds will echo in new ways, community and privacy will have new meanings. Gaps will open where familiar items have been shifted to the new space and new acquisitions will fill them. The new room is not simply ‘tacked on’ to the east or west side of the house; it represents a new configuration of the entire building and the lives it shelters.

This is what longevity is like. In the 1920's, the life expectancy for a Canadian man was 60 and for a Canadian woman it was 62. Now we can expect to live far longer. Demographers tell us that since the beginning of the 20th century, many have been given another 30 years, twenty of those since World War II. Today, for example, when people turn 50, most can expect 30 more years of productive life compared with previous generations.

Cultural Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson says that “We have not added decades to life expectancy by simply extending old age; we have opened up a new space partway through the life course, a second and different kind of adulthood that precedes old age, and as a result every stage of life is undergoing change”.

Bateson says that the first thing that clued her into the fact that there is now a whole new stage in the life cycle occurred when she was working in the Middle East. A colleague who had worked abroad all her professional life retired at 65 and went home to look after her mother. Bateson says that up until that point it had not occurred to her that people had mothers alive when they were 65. It was one of those moments of epiphany when you realize that something that you have always taken for granted is not true. And for her it was a major indication that she and many others were living with a conception of the life cycle that was obsolete.

Traditionally the human pattern has followed a three-generation structure:

- 1) infants, children, and those approaching adulthood (now called adolescents)
- 2) adults, who work to maintain society and who produce and rear children
- 3) older adults, who are past their reproductive and child-rearing years, often in declining health

Back in the 1980's, an historian at Cambridge University by the name of Peter Laslett realized that this pattern was changing. If you think of these stages of the life cycle in terms of boxes, you have DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, AND LEISURE. In the past, if people made it to retirement, they were often worn out. But in the late 20th century Laslett noticed that something very different was happening. The period known as the leisure period of life was lasting longer for many people. Moreover, many people in this period were healthy and vital. He saw that the healthy, active, early part of retirement wasn't very much like the frail, inactive,

later part. They were altogether different ages in life. At the same time, the last years of the second box were becoming more and more varied. Some workers were retiring, or semi-retiring, in their fifties. They were still supposed to be in the second box but were living more like the healthy, active early part of the third box. Laslett realized that to understand what was going on, and to make plans for ourselves, we need a fresh map of life. This is what he came up with (See page 16, Nelson and Bolles):

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH
Dependence	Independence	Flexibility	Dependence
Immaturity	Maturity	Freedom	Decrepitude
Socialization	Responsibility	Fulfillment	Death

You see, thanks to advances in bio-medicine, there has been a profound change in the human condition. We have inserted a whole new developmental stage into the life cycle, a second stage of adulthood, not an extension tacked on to old age. Laslett calls this The Third Age. Bateson prefers to call this stage Adulthood II (Adulthood I being that very busy and productive time, when many people chose a life partner, established a home, raised a family and built their careers. Bateson sees Adulthood II as also a productive time, but with different tasks.) As she notes, Adulthood II is the period of relatively robust health that precedes the onset of frail old age. It may begin as early as age forty (for example, for athletes, whose first career may last only twenty years) and extend past eighty (for example, for politicians, if they reach the Senate, and many self-employed people) for many years of participation and contribution.

The point is that now, for the first time in history, we have a four generation society, one with lots of active grandparents who are mobile and engaged, while the pattern of "long memories and short walks" has shifted to the great grandparents, who are present in unusually large numbers for the first time in history. As I have said, Laslett calls this The Third Age, characterized, he wrote, as a newfound opportunity. Rather than being "over the hill", he argued that people in this stage could be "climbing the summit of life". Laslett is a good role model for the Third Age. His book on this subject was published when he was 74.

Bateson calls this Third Age or third generation "Adulthood II." She also refers to it as the age of "Active Wisdom".¹ Traditionally 'wisdom' has been associated with 'old age'. Think of Erik Erikson and the eighth or final stage in his theory of life cycles. Wisdom comes at the end. It's believed, for example, that often younger adults are so busy that they really don't have time for the kind of deep reflection that leads to wisdom. So, in the past, wisdom has generally been considered to be the purview of the elderly. But now, as she notes, what we have are people who are healthy and energetic and have probably had more diverse experience than previous generations. Whatever wisdom they have gleaned, they both *act on it* and *pass it on*.

¹For those of you familiar with Erik Erikson's pioneering work on the eight stages of the life cycle, I think this new stage would fall somewhere between Erikson's seventh stage: Generativity versus Stagnation (Middle adulthood, 25-64, or 40-64 years); and his final stage, Ego Integrity vs. Despair. (Late adulthood, 65-death).

I like how psychoanalyst George Vaillant describes people in this stage of Active Wisdom. He calls them the “Keepers of Meaning”. They are the ones who dispense wisdom and experience to the next generation. The Keepers of Meaning are not simply concerned with the care of individuals, but they are also concerned with preserving the best of the culture's traditions.

Daniel Levinson is another thinker who builds on Erikson. Levinson argues that we Boomers can serve as important models, supporters, sponsors, and teachers to younger generations in the church and the wider community. Moreover, we are the ones who act as "encouragers" of the next generation by "believing in their dreams". Levinson says that we are particularly well positioned to seek out those in whom special talent, virtues and ideas may be struggling to emerge. And the gift of another twenty or thirty years means that we are uniquely placed to become their mentors.

Here's another way that I invite you to think of this time. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul writes that we are “called to be servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Now, Paul is talking about all Christians, and in particular those who take on leadership roles in the church. But lately I have been toying with the idea that this is the special role of all of us who have entered into the second half of life. In a special way, we are called to be stewards of the mysteries of God, stewards of the Word, those who pass on our faith, our stories and traditions to those who follow. But we are more like runners in a relay race, you know how the runner behind us runs by our side for a while and then we pass on the baton of our traditions to that person. I see us as being in that part of the race where we are running side by side with those who are coming up behind us.

As I said at the outset, Bateson regards this extra period of time that many of us are given as an extra room in our house. But she believes that it should be thought of not so much as a room added onto the back, but rather as a kind of atrium in the center of our house, with doorways to all other stages or relationships or rooms and even open to the sky. As she writes, "We have changed the shape and meaning of a lifetime in ways we do not yet fully understand." Just as adding a new room to our physical house changes the way we use the other rooms, so also this extra room that has been added to our lives will have a major impact on our marriages, our relationships with children and siblings, our friendships, education, work and retirement.

The metaphor of the atrium at the center of our house seems most appropriate to the transition into Adulthood II, as we search for our next step. How we navigate this transition into the second half of life will be the focus of our time together. First, just a few preliminary thoughts.

If you have attended a lot of church weddings, you will know that the marriage service frequently begins with a passage of scripture from Psalm 127. “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. In all your ways acknowledge God and God will make straight your path.”

As we build our new room or navigate our new atrium, it is important that we keep this scripture passage in mind. For example, how we keep our focus, or become enlightened in this new period of our lives, comes in part by making the soul or the center of our lives. This requires a few ongoing practices.

First is *knowing yourself*. Knowing what gives you joy – even as that changes over time. What are the things that feed your soul and nurture your spirit and give your life meaning? This is important. Many people come up to retirement with a good financial plan, but very few have a good plan for what they are going to do next. They may say, oh, we're going to relax, without realizing that full-time recreation isn't going to be satisfying to most of them. So we really need a time to ask, "What is fundamental to me, and how can I have that in the years ahead?" We're going to be considering some of these things in our time together.

Another essential aspect of knowing God's grace or having a soul, is *what we are willing to give away*. The practice of giving away our treasures is a lifelong spiritual practice. The best lived life is one where we give and not just receive – the more giving the better. Giving here is not primarily about things, although it does include things; but giving here is more about looking for the light of life, that holiness that makes us humans reach out to one another. When we spend our lives giving love and kindness we build a storehouse of good will and make this earth a home that we want to live in, a world that takes seriously the future of our grandchildren and our great nieces and nephews. And just as important as giving love away, we'll see, is the importance of knowing *what things we ought to leave behind*.

Another thing is the willingness to address the difficult questions in life and the need also to remain open to surprises. For example, I love the story about the son who wanted talk to his aged and somewhat forgetful mother about what inevitably lay ahead, her death, but he was stumbling about a good deal. Finally he said, "Mother, you're getting along in age, and who knows what may happen? I mean, shouldn't we make a few decisions about arrangements?"

The old lady kept silent, but was smiling calmly, so the son pressed on. "I mean, Mom, do you want to be buried or cremated?"

The mother patted his cheek, then replied, "Well, son, I don't know. Why don't you just surprise me?"

As we move into the second half of life, our spiritual health requires three things:

- 1) We must know ourselves
- 2) We must practice generosity
- 3) We must develop a good sense of humour

5. Exercise: Knowing Ourselves:

How We Identify Ourselves, then after each, question ask: Who Am I?

After – remove three of these responses; then remove another three. What is left?

Who Am I? (from Wilmes, Scott & Rice, created by Juan Moreno)

Tell participants you would like them to respond in writing to 10 questions. Then ask them 10 consecutive times to respond to the question "Who am I?" At the end of the "quiz", ask them to cross off 3 of the items, then 3 more. Process what types of responses they wrote for their identity (acknowledging that some may have hidden identities that they may not wish to share). How did it feel to cross items off? What types of responses were crossed off first/last (e.g. most negative, less important, etc.)? What did you learn about how you see yourself?

Next week we will look more closely at the question of identity (who we are). As we prepare for this time together, I invite you to think about the exercise we just did. Maybe blog about it during the coming week. How have you linked your identity to what you do? How can you begin to identify yourself in ways that reflect who you are really are, rather than what you do (or have done for much of your working life)? If you are retired, think about who tells you who you are? Can you start to think of yourself as a "human being" rather than a "human doing"?

6. Closing Devotion: Scripture: Genesis 3:1-7

Many ancient religions have creation myths which try to make sense of the world and its origins, as well as our place in the world. The story I just read to you from Genesis is a familiar one to those of us who come from a Judaic-Christian background.

According to this story, Adam and Eve were the first human beings in all creation. They had talked with God, their creator, and they understood what God wanted. God tells them that they will have dominion over all the plants and animals in the Garden of Eden, but there is one tree in the center of the garden which God prohibits Adam and Eve from eating. However, as you recall, the serpent tricks Eve into eating fruit from the forbidden tree. As a consequence, God curses the serpent and the ground and punishes Adam and Eve by banishing them from the garden.

In the past many theologians have thought that the problem was that Adam and Eve disobeyed God's rule about the tree. Normally we have seen 'pride' as the real villain in this story – the fact that Adam and Eve desire to be wise like God.

Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, however, sees this story differently. He once wrote a wonderful book called *On Not Leaving It to the Snake*. The problem, he says, wasn't that Adam and Eve disobeyed God's rule. The real problem was that they let the snake decide whether they should eat the forbidden fruit. Cox says this story is not about pride or our human attempt to be more than what we are. Rather, he says, it is more about sloth, our unwillingness to be everything we were intended to be.

I think you know what sloth means. It's an ugly word, which in English has come to mean indolence or laziness. It is also the name given to an unattractive animal who likes to hang inertly from tree branches.

This story from Genesis contains an important message for those of us entering the second half of life or that period we call retirement. Too often we suffer from the sin of sloth, not the sin of pride. That is, too often we leave things to the snake! The danger as we enter this period in our lives is our inclination to let chance decide how we will live the rest of our lives. By refusing to take responsibility for our future, we miss our calling. Sloth is letting the snake decide what we will do with these for the rest of our lives.

The urgent point of retirement is here in the creation story. Retirement is the opportunity we are given to choose our place in the future. Many of us spent years preparing for the first half of life. There were the years we spent in elementary school and high school. Then, for some, there was college or university or maybe an apprenticeship or on the job training. We invested a lot of time and energy in preparing for the first half of life. Should we not do the same for our second half of life? After all, this extra room – or extra period we have been given – is a unique opportunity was not available to many in previous generations. We are standing on “holy ground”, friends. There is a whole new room at the center of our lives, a whole new opportunity not to be wasted. I think the second half of life can be one of the most fulfilling and rewarding periods of our lives. And I thank you for joining me tonight and over the coming weeks as we journey together down this exciting path.

Before we close in prayer, please remember to fill in an “**exit ticket**” and place in the box as you leave. (This is a place where you can indicate in point form: 1) One thing you have learned this evening; and (2) one question you still have.)

Video Resource: Opening Scenes of “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel”, Director: John Madden

Year of Release: 2012

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel follows a group of British retirees who decide to outsource their retirement to less expensive and seemingly exotic India. Enticed by advertisements for the newly restored Marigold Hotel and bolstered with visions of a life of leisure, they arrive to find the palace a shell of its former self.

Though the new environment is less luxurious than imagined and the food is difficult to adjust to, they embark on their individual missions to build a new life. They are each forever transformed by their shared experiences, discovering that life and love can begin again when you let go of the past. The movie centers around Evelyn Greenslade (Judi Dench). Evelyn is a newly widowed housewife whose home is being sold to pay off her husband’s extensive debts.

Despite her son's protestations, Evelyn decides to make her new home in India, in a home for the “elderly and beautiful” called The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel. Once in India, she keeps a blog to inform her family of all that she does and all whom she encounters.

Character to watch: Judi Dench as Evelyn Greenslade.

Journal your answers to the following questions after you watch the movie.

- How does this particular character's journey compare with yours?
- Did the character develop certain characteristics during the movie that you have or that you would like to have? If so, what are those characteristics?
- What obstacles did this character face? What was his or her biggest challenge?
- What would you have done differently if you had been in the same position as the character?
- Is this character the type of person you would be friends with? Why or why not?

HAND-OUT FOR SESSION ONE:

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND/OR BLOG ABOUT THIS WEEK:

How have you linked your identity to what you do?
How can you begin to identify yourself in ways that reflect who you are really are, rather than what you do (or have done for much of your working life)?

If you are retired, think about who tells you who you are?
Can you start to think of yourself as a "human being" rather than a "human doing"?

Are there other ways you can come up to describe the period of retirement (empty-nesting, change) you have entered or will soon enter? i.e. Instead of "retirement", you may think of this period as a time of "Re-Firement", "Re-Wirement", "Renewment", "Re-Engagement", "Adulthood II", the "Age of Active Wisdom", "Second Adolescence", "The Bonus Years", "Building An Atrium".

Begin to think about composing your life story. What would your Table of Contents look like? List the chapter headings for your autobiography. If you decide to group your chapters in sections, come up with the names for the sections. In choosing titles, go for words and phrases that capture the spirit of that time in your life. "Gasping for Air", "On Top of the World", "My Sojourn Through the Desert", or "Dancing Through the Seventies". For example, "My Life as a Goldfish" is better than "Toronto: 1976-1980".

SESSION TWO – RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

"Dismantling the House"

1. Graffiti Question: (posted on the wall will be sheets of paper where people respond to one question in one sentence or in point form.) Tonight: Name an event in your life that had a major impact on your life or which has contributed to making you the person you are today.

2. Welcome, Supper and Ice-Breaker:

Introduce yourself referring only to those *things that are **not** changing* in your life.

3. Watch the first 20-25 minutes of ABOUT SCHMIDT.

Discussion Questions:

What's going on here?

What makes Warren Schmidt such an "empty" and depressed person?

Feeling displaced in his own home and always trying to evade family conflicts, Warren Schmidt, for decades has defined himself by his work.

Schmidt appears to lack even the slightest spark of intellectual curiosity or passion. Days after a meaningless retirement dinner he returns to the office only to find that his young replacement has upgraded Warren's entire system and discarded his files, using none of the legacy of business acumen Warren left behind.

At home his wife Helen tries to be cheerful and surprises him with breakfast in a new RV. The stale dialogue displays a yawning absence of meaning in their marriage. Neither understands any longer who they are to one another. One night Warren finds himself, after 42 years of marriage, asking, "Who is this old woman next to me in bed?"

Even as ineffectually as his marriage and work filled the void of his life, when both suddenly vanish Warren sinks into a depression.

4. Lecture – William Bridge's Change Model

Schmidt does not actually utter the words, but what he is thinking is self-evident. If he were to put his thoughts into words, they would sound something like this:

"I don't even know who I am any more without my job."

Other people have expressed the same sentiments, using words like:

"If I'm not his wife, who am I?"

"The loss of our house in the fire made me feel as though I'd lost a piece of myself."

"With our last child off to college or university or to find her future, we don't feel like the same people anymore."

"Who am I now?"

Back in 1991, William Bridges published a book called "Managing Transitions" in which he outlined a change model for businesses and organizations that were going through transition. I think his model is helpful as we consider the way we navigate life after 50. Bridges' change theory was born out of an experience that happened to him when he was actually much younger, about age 38 or 39. He chose to give up a position he had held as an English professor at a small but reputable college in California. He and his wife, and a group of their closest friends, decided to move to the country to live in a kind of commune. This was something he was actually

looking forward to doing. He would enjoy growing much of the food they would eat and tending to the garden. He thought he would also have time to write, something he loved to do. So naturally he was very confused to discover, when he got to the country and into his tightly knit group of friends, that the first thing he experienced was a painful sense of loss. His old friends and neighbours were puzzled too because they knew how much he had wanted this move. Everyone was surprised by the fact that he was now just moping around acting grief-stricken instead of enjoying his new found freedom.

One day shortly after they had arrived at their new community, Bridges' youngest daughter Margaret came home from the second grade to say that her teacher had asked all the students to find out what their parents were. She already knew that her mother was a counsellor, but what was Dad? Bridges said he groped for an answer, rambling on about doing some speaking and doing some writing and doing a lot of gardening and raising chickens. Margaret's eyes glazed over. She was looking for a noun — *teacher, farmer, carpenter, doctor, waiter* — but the best her Dad could give her was a string of participles: doing this and doing that. Participles didn't answer her question, *what are you?*

What he was, he realized, was a person *in transition*. And that's what many of us are too: in transition or looking at transitions down the road.

A quick definition. According to Bridges, transition is different from change. Change is something that happens to people, even if they don't agree with it. Transition, on the other hand, is internal: it's what happens in people's minds as they go through change.

Basically transitions are characterized by the same three phases. Bridges describes these phases as: (1) endings that are followed by (2) a neutral zone, the time between the old life and the new, and (3) a new beginning. All transitions, Bridges says, follow a similar cycle, taking us from endings, through emptiness and darkness, to fresh life and new beginnings. We've seen this pattern in nature. This movement reminds us of the cyclical nature of life: the changing seasons, the ebb and flow of the ocean tides, and the waxing and waning of the moon.

In the ending, we lose or let go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old attitudes, our old values, our old self-image. We may resist this ending for a while. We may try to talk ourselves out of what we are feeling, and when we do give in, we may be swept by feelings of sadness or anger, like Bridges himself was when he left his teaching job for a place in the country, or like Schmidt was when he retired from the job that had given his life meaning – or at least some semblance of an identity for decades – only to watch some young pup move into his old role and throw out everything he had worked for and created. A common question of this phase is: Why is this happening to me? (By the way, most people don't fear change. What they fear is the "loss" that comes with change. What's this going to cost me? What am I losing?)

Next, we find ourselves in the neutral zone between the old and the new – yet not really being either the old nor the new. This confusing state is a time when our lives feel as though they have broken apart or gone dead. We get mixed signals, some from our old way of being and

some from a way of being that is still unclear to us. Nothing feels solid. Everything is up for grabs. Yet for that very reason, it is a time when we sometimes feel that anything is possible. So the in-between time can be a very creative time too.

Finally, we take hold of and identify with some new outlook and some new reality, as well as new attitudes and a new self-image. When we have done this, we feel that we are finally starting a new chapter in our lives. No matter how impossible it was to imagine a future earlier, life now feels as though it is back on track again. We have a new sense of ourselves, a new outlook, and a new sense of purpose and possibility. In other words, we have a new beginning!

Those, in a nutshell, are the three phases of transition: Endings, Neutral Zone, Beginnings.

Exercise:

Earlier I asked you to introduce yourself according to those things that are *not* changing in your life. Now introduce yourself again, this time referring to the *things that are changing* in your life. (*After people have introduced themselves the second time, ask them to note differences in the two ways of introduction and which way felt most comfortable to them. Why?*)

NB: We customarily define ourselves or are defined by those who want to describe us in terms of the categories we fall into. The second way of introduction is often more alive than the first, maybe accompanied by an initial pause or some nervous laughter, but is also often more interesting.)

Disengagement, Dismantling, Dis-identification, Disenchantment, and Disorientation:

Tonight we are going to look at five characteristics of Endings. According to Bridges, these are: Disengagement, Dismantling, Dis-identification, Disenchantment, and Disorientation.

1. Disengagement

It seems to be a universal belief among traditional peoples that at times of inner transition people need to be separated from their families and their communities. So, for example, many tribal cultures have an initiation rite, where a boy, upon reaching puberty, is sent off to live in the wilderness by himself. Often he is circumcised first, a tooth might be knocked out, and his face and body whitened with clay so that he is no longer recognizable. He probably spends a couple of months in isolation before he rejoins his community. But when he returns he is no longer the person he was. That person is dead. His parents signified his death by burning the sleeping mat he had used throughout his childhood. When he returns to the village, he will not even recognize them – at least at first. Because he is no longer theirs. In the first few weeks of his new life back in the village, he will not even remember his old name. He is reborn. He has been given a new calling.

Many of you will recall the story of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. We read it just a couple of months ago, at the beginning of Lent. We tell this story every year on the first Sunday in Lent. It too is a story about Jesus leaving home, leaving his family and his village, wrestling with the challenges that come from living in isolation in the desert, and then emerging as man who has been given a mission.

Dis-engagement or separation from the norm happens when people get divorced, when a loved one dies, when you or your partner become ill, when you move to a new community, when you take up a new job or leave a job, when you retire, or when the kids leave home, as well as many other events that disengage you from the contexts in which you have known yourselves.

2. Dismantling

Remember our metaphor about renovating our house that we talked about last week? Endings involve a dismantling of the house we call our life. Like the house under renovation, this is when our lives become completely dismantled; when we're stripped right down to the studs and the boards. This is the grieving process. This is where we left Schmidt. He is in grief, mourning the loss of his old life where everything was known and familiar. Now his life has been stripped right down to the studs. And as the contractors always warn you, remodeling always takes more time and money than new construction. This is good advice for anyone in transition too. That's why Bridges says the common mistake of people entering into retirement is that they rush into being busy. Don't rush this ending period, he says.

3. Dis-identification

When you become separated from your old community, whether it be a physical place or a marriage, you also lose your old ways of identifying yourself. Many experience this as a loss of role that prescribed their behaviour and made them feel really identifiable. No longer being Bob's wife, or Mary's husband, no longer a teacher or nurse or construction worker or the Vice President of Marketing. Feeling that you no longer have an identity. Again, that question that troubled Schmidt: who am I now that am no longer defined by the job, by what I did?

4. Disenchantment

If the first half of life, especially our first 20 years, were about learning new things, the second half is often about *unlearning* things. This is when you realize that some significant part of your old reality was in your head, not out there. The flawless parent, the noble leader, the perfect spouse, the wonderful boss, and the utterly trustworthy friend. It's also, I suspect, a time when we have to come to grips with our disappointment with our own selves. Later in the movie, for example, Schmidt comes to a place where he is able to admit to himself: maybe I

wasn't the greatest husband. Maybe I could have treated Helen better.

The point about disenchantment, whether minor disappointment or a major shock, is that it is often a signal that things are moving into transition. That something is ending, and that maybe it is time to look beneath the surface of our lives.

5. Disorientation

The "reality" that is left behind in all endings is not just a picture on the wall. It is a sense of which way is up and which way is down. It is a sense of which way is forward and which way is back. It is, in short, a way of orienting oneself and of moving forward into the future. In the old passage or initiation rituals, the one in transition would often be taken into unfamiliar territory, beyond the bounds of former experience, and left there for a time. All customary signs of location would be gone and the only remaining source of orientation would be the heavens. This is the part of the ending process where we feel most lost, confused, and where we have that don't-know-where-I-am- feeling. The old sense that life as "going somewhere" breaks down, and we feel like shipwrecked sailors on some existential island. Things that used to be important don't seem to matter much now. We feel stuck, dead, lost in some great, dark world. Like Schmidt. Like Jesus being tempted by the devil in the desert. Like the people of Israel lost in the wilderness, with the familiarity of Pharaoh's Egypt behind them and the promise of the Land of Milk and Honey, still far off in the future and nowhere to be seen.

Summary

Stage 1: Ending, Losing, and Letting Go

This stage is often marked with resistance and emotional upheaval, because people are being forced to let go of something that they are comfortable with.

At this stage, people may experience these emotions:

Fear.

Denial.

Anger.

Sadness.

Disorientation.

A time of drifting without clear purpose.

Frustration.

Uncertainty.

A sense of loss.

People have to accept that something is ending before they can begin to accept the new idea.

Remember: It is important to let yourself or others in transition experience an ending. You may not be the first person who ever lost a job (or moved or had heart surgery), but telling you that is of no help. It is important that you give yourself time to live with the ending. Don't rush endings. People who try to rush endings often make poor choices that affect themselves and others. (This is often a problem more for men than women. Recall the old saying: "Women grieve; men re-marry.") Take time with your ending. The last thing you need when dealing with an ending is for someone to tell you to stop crying over spilt milk and put on a happy face. You need time to live with your ending.

More importantly, remember that endings are essential if something new is going to be born in your life. Consider the witness of the scriptures:

Romans 6:4

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

I Corinthians 15:36

The seed you plant does not come to life unless it dies,

John 12:24

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

T.S. Eliot summed it up beautifully when he wrote:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

– T. S. Eliot
"Little Gidding"

Exercise:

The Path You Have Followed

Draw and colour a large map of the journey you have followed in life. Take time to share with the person sitting next to you or with the whole group, as you feel comfortable.

There are things that you can understand about your life when it is laid out visually in space that are very hard to see when it is abstracted into words. So I am going to ask you now to draw a large map of the journey you have followed through life thus far. Use the crayons and coloured pencils provided and don't worry about your artistic abilities. Unlike the exercise that some of you may have done (the Chapter headings of your life), you can include more information in this map. Also, you can include things that may be difficult to put into words. Here are some things you will want to note:

- Crossroads where you faced a big decision and made a significant choice
- Side roads that were attractive, but that you didn't let yourself explore
- Sharp curves where you changed your direction completely (Were you steering around an obstacle, or did you suddenly discover a new destination?)
- Places where you found yourself back where you started or dead ends where you had to retrace your route.
- Significant mileposts
- Stopover points – for rest, for fun or for...what?
- The sites of wonderful experiences (“points of interest,” they’re called on the highway)
- Destinations you were headed for – before you decided to bypass them and just keep going
- Swamps, deserts
- Washouts, detours and roadblocks
- Steep grades where it was really hard to make it, or downhill stretches where you had to ride the brakes to keep from wiping out
- Places where you broke down, ran off the road or had a collision with someone else
- There are places – natural spots and communities all along your route with names (Name some of the places on your path.)

See William Bridges, *The Way of Transition*, pages 88 to 89.

6. Closing Devotion

A Meditation of Endings and Beginnings

I invite you to sit in a quiet place and close your eyes lightly, not tightly. Take a couple deep cleansing breaths and allow your body to relax into slow, even breathing.

Imagine yourself looking out a window, seeing the landscape change before your very eyes. One season is ending, blending into a new season. The colour of the sky is changing from an icy grey-blue to a warmer pink. The trees begin to look just a bit fuller --no sign of green yet, but you can sense branches beginning to welcome their own new growth. What do you notice?

Open yourself to your own new season. What endings are beginning to happen in your own life and what beginnings are dawning for you? What changes are you almost ready to welcome--not quite perhaps, but the almost imperceptible direction is in your heart and on your own branches?

Imagine yourself shedding heavy coats and gloves and hats. How does that feel? What else needs to be shed in order to live fully in the new season? What is melting? As you enter spring what remnants of the colder season do you need to leave behind? Is there a chance of flooding and how will you prepare?

How do you feel as you take these new steps? As you embark on a new beginning? Are you

excited and eager? Scared? Uncertain? All of the above?

Now is a good time to take another deep breath. Relax and restore yourself to slow, even, in and out and in and out breathing. Remind yourself of all the seasons of life you have moved through. So many endings and beginnings, beginnings and endings. You know how to do this. You can do this one, too.

Spring will come, and then we will have summer and fall and yes, another winter. More chances to practice endings and beginnings. What is it you want to begin in this new season and what is asking to be ended?

Take a couple deep breaths, and when you are ready, open your eyes and return to this time and space. Take a few minutes to note, perhaps in a journal when you get home this evening or just by whispering to yourself, what you felt, noticed, or learned during this brief time of meditation. What will you now bring into your life?

Blessing

May all be well as you move from one season to another.

May you do so with awareness and intention.

May you honour your own steps.

May you find peace as you end and as you begin.

An Invitation to Blog

What endings and beginnings are present in your life right now? What are the gifts and the challenges? Of course, not all endings and beginnings are major, but even the minor ones have lessons for us. What are you learning?

Exit Tickets

Before you leave this evening, fill in your exit ticket. What is one thing you will take away from this evening? What is one thing you still have a question about?

HAND-OUT FOR SESSION TWO

1. Dis-engagement: the acknowledgment that ties are loosening between ourselves and present roles. This realization may come in a shock, as change is thrust upon us by external choice: our spouse leaves us, we are fired from a position, we receive an unanticipated promotion but it comes with the demand that we relocate. Other times, it dawns on us. There is a realization that we must change, but the end point is dim or imperceptible. It may also happen more naturally, as in the case of retirement or when the last child leaves home.

2. Dis-mantling: the process of gradually thinking less in terms of “we” and more in terms of “I.” It’s taking down a structure in our lives. There is a shift, and with this shift comes the next

aspect....

3. Dis-identification: the loss of our old understanding of who we are. I'm this person's spouse, or "I'm that person's partner", or "I'm part of the staff at this organization." It can even be more generic: "I'm always a winner." Most people in transition have the experience of not being quite sure who they are anymore. It's really the inner side of the disengagement process. Going Deeper.

4. Dis-enchantment: the dawning acceptance that the reality in which we blindly trusted is false. Our lifetime contains a long chain of disenchantments, small and large: loved ones who proved unfaithful, leaders who were corrupt, people we looked up to who turned out to be petty and dull, organizations that betrayed our trust. Worst of all, there were times when you yourself turned out to be what you said (and even believed) that you were not. Disenchantment is a recurring experience for anyone who has the courage to trust in the first place.

5. Dis-orientation: when we're no longer pointed in a comfortable, well-defined direction. We feel like a vessel bobbing on the water without compass or star sightings. We are confused, feeling out of sorts. Our goals no longer hold and there is nothing to take their place. We need to go through the painful, but crucial, step of acknowledging the end of a life we have known. This is why so many of us do not pursue the evolution of our transition. The pain of ending is just not tolerable.

Questions to Think About and/or Blog About this Week:

Choose one or two of the following to reflect on in the coming week:

Think of a situation in your life right now that is changing, and consider these questions.

What part of your life will actually change?

What will you lose in the change? What will you gain?

Have you defined clearly what is over and what isn't?

Have you permitted yourself to grieve and acknowledge the losses even when they seem like overreaction?

Have you worked hard to unpack old baggage, heal old wounds, and finish unfinished business?

What pieces of the past will you bring with you into the future?

Have you equipped yourself with all the information you need to manage the transition?

Which old ways of doing things must you give up?

What needs do you have that will no longer be met, and how can you meet those needs in other ways?

Which parts of yourself, and the way you see yourself, are now out of date?

Have you marked the ending and symbolically said good-bye?

“Transition as the Way Through” by William Bridges

One of the main points I always try to make in presentations on transition is that it is not the same as change. In organizations, this distinction is confused by the way the word, "transition," is used: they talk about transition teams and a transition plan and transition services—which turn out to be help for when you find yourself out on the street. As I see it, most of these items are really focused on the change that is happening to you, not the transition you are experiencing.

Transition is not just a nice way to say change. It is the inner process through which people come to terms with a change, as they let go of the way things used to be and reorient themselves to the way that things are now. In an organization, managing transition means helping people to make that difficult process less painful and disruptive.

The recently published *The Way of Transition* (2001) tells about my own recent journey through transition—triggered off by the death of my first wife, Mondie. In writing the book—and then in discussing it with readers—I came to understand another dimension to transition. I remember particularly a radio show call-in that I had from a man whose wife, like mine, had died of cancer. "I just can't get over it!" he said with great feeling. "How do I get over it?"

As he talked, I had a picture of his wife's death as a high wall that blocked his path, a wall that he was struggling to climb over. That is the way change often feels in our lives: like a barrier across our path, a disruption of our plans, a big hole that's opened up at our feet. Naturally, we look for a way to "get over it."

Getting through transition is not easy, but unlike the change-wall, transition represents a path to follow. To change your attention away from the change-barrier and toward the transition-path, you need to start where the transition itself starts: with letting go of the inner connections you had to the way things were. The question that always helps you to shift your focus from the change to the transition is, "What is it time for me to let go of?"

In the case of my wife's death, what I had to let go of wasn't so much the person I had been married to for 37 years or the marriage we had had. Those were the changes. To cross over the line into the transition, you need to ask yourself what inner relinquishments you'll need to make because of the change. What needs will you have to find other ways to get met? Because of your change, what parts of yourself are now out of date?

If your change was the loss of your job, what might you have to let go of? Let's see: a regular income, a group of colleagues and friends, a regular place to go every morning, a way to use your talents, a way to structure your time, a bunch of plans for the future, a way to get appreciated. You'd also lose an identity—or at least an answer to the question, "What do you do?" Those are the things that losing your job would force you to do without.

So, what is it time for you to let go of? (Yes, I mean you...now) In some area of your life, you are probably in transition right now, so that isn't a hypothetical question. I've always found that

asking that question opens up the path I have to follow. It often is a path I'd prefer not to have to follow, but given the change, I don't have much choice. Fortunately, it is also a path that often leads to personal growth.

In what sense, could it be time for you to let go of that particular way to use your talents? In what way are you outgrowing the identity that you've been trading on for these past years? And if you can't get appreciated any longer in your old work situation, is that loss in any sense a timely one?

Such questions give you a place to start, a path to follow. Every one of them suggests some learning, some discovery that may lie ahead. Each of them represents a gate in that change-wall that blocked your path.

I am not suggesting that this is a path that you wanted to take or that you will necessarily find it enjoyable. I am saying that it is a path with meaning for you, that following it will bring you out somewhere. What I am saying is that, since change is a wall and transition the gate in that wall, it's there for you to go through it. Transition represents a path to the next phase of your life.

SESSION THREE: RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

"Living in Chaos – How to Survive Home Renovations!"

1. Graffiti Question (posted on the wall will be sheets of paper where people respond to one question in one sentence or in point form.) Tonight: Name an important value or lesson you learned from a parent, spouse, child or friend.

2. Welcome, Supper and Ice-Breaker:

Talk with your neighbour about a time when you were involved in home renovations. What was that experience like for you? If you have never carried out a major renovation at home, then describe a time of renovation at the office or in your work place. Or describe how your friend survived home renovations.

3. Taking Up Homework: How Did You Make Out With Your Life Maps? Please share as you are comfortable!

4. Welcome to the Neutral Zone! – Power Point Presentation:

Last week we talked about William Bridges' change theory, with its three stages of Endings, Neutral Zone and Beginnings. We focused mostly on Endings. We noted that it is important to live with the Endings, not to rush them. This is even truer of the Neutral Zone, to which we turn now.

The Neutral Zone is the time when the real business of transition takes place. This is when the true work of transformation happens. Looking back, people often say that *"everything happened back then – even though, at the time, I didn't know what was going on."* So, again, it is important that we take the time to really live in the Neutral Zone and not rush things. Too often

in our society we want the quick fix. But as the saying goes, “No pain, no gain.”

This often tends to be a very lonely time for many people. Most relationships forged in the workplace tend to fade after retirement and need to be replaced. So often people feel lost and lonesome during this period. Remember the passage journey we talked about last week? The old passage rituals provided the young person with an experience of deep aloneness by sending them out into the wilderness. Interestingly, the Hebrew word for the “wilderness” in which Jesus, Moses, and Buddha spent time during critical periods of their lives is the same word that means “sanctuary”. Do you remember what God said to Moses at the burning bush?

...4When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is *holy ground*." 6He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God....(Exodus 3:4-6)

It was in the wilderness that Moses found Holy Ground, that he found God.

The historian Arnold Toynbee pointed out that most great creative individuals in history have withdrawn to some lonely place on the eve of their rebirth. He called this “*the pattern of withdrawal and return*”, and he traced it out in the lives of Jesus, St. Paul, St. Benedict, Gregory the Great, the Buddha, Muhammad, Dante and others.

The Neutral Zone is the time between the old life and the new. As such, *it is or can be a particularly rich time for developing new insights about your life*. It’s a time of inner reorientation, a kind of fallow time in our lives. Think of it as Time-Out.

Let’s take a closer look at this Time-Out by examining our relationships during this period. Turn to Case Studies.

Case Studies:

See Chapter one in Hansen and Haas and also examples from Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. Divide into groups and read through the Case Study you have been given. What is going on here? Identify the losses each has experienced. Do you see any common themes?

Return to the larger group and share your responses.

Finding Meaning in a Smaller World:

Identify four ways from Hansen and Haas in which newly retired people experience their world growing smaller. (Print case studies from Chap. One)

- 1) A smaller world of authority or responsibility. No activity to engage their abilities.
- 2) A more limited sphere of significant influence in the lives of other people.
- 3) A smaller world of interactions and the loss of stimulating interaction with interesting people.
- 4) A smaller world related to recognition and appreciation.

When most people retire or become empty-nesters or move to a new community, one of the major losses they experience (more significant than even the change of routine) is their connection to other people. Many of their former relationships end or at least change.

This is also true of our personal or family relationships. One person's transition can put everyone within a family into transition too. Often this can result in good changes. For example, many people report developing closer relationships with siblings after they retire or become empty nesters.

But retirement can also impact relationships in challenging ways. Whenever a member of a system changes, the other members will feel a twinge. Children are bothered when divorced or widowed parents begin to date again. Siblings conspire to keep one another in line long after they have stopped living under the same roof. And, of course, partners in an intimate relationship react with alarm to unexpected changes in the other person.

Bridges recounts the story of the man whose wife went back to school and how this affected his life. "It's fine for you to go off and get all that new education," he told her when she got home late from class one day. "But that don't mean that I have to give up getting my dinner cooked...and...and...having a *wife!*" Or perhaps the conversation goes more like this: "I'm *thrilled* you are going back to school or back to work – I don't know why I forgot my promise to cook dinner....straighten the house before you came home." It's as though the wife is in violation of an unspoken rule by being in transition.

And she is. Relationships are always structured by unspoken agreements, although people are seldom conscious of it. Beginning very early there is a psychological division of labour within a relationship. One person takes care of the financial issues and the other handles the human ones; or one expresses emotions and the other anchors the relationship in practical ways; or one is full of plans and the other is the tough critic.

When one of the partners is in transition, it is natural that the other partner may experience panic. It's like the anxiety an actor would feel if his cue produced no entrance and no response. Or worse yet, a response that isn't in the script. ("My God! She said *no*. She was

supposed to say *yes*. How do I reply, and where does our drama go from here?") Where indeed?

Sometimes the second one to retire unconsciously places expectations on their partner to be available to him or her to do things and go places that were not possible when working full time. For example, a woman retired two years before her husband. By the time he retired, his wife had already developed her own routine. I remember she said to me: "When Alan retired it was just like having a big black spider sitting in the corner watching me all the time!" Now she sends him off on errands every day and, since he runs into people he knows all over town, he is often gone for hours – and out of her hair for hours too!

Some couples agree to dedicate two days a week just for themselves. I call this marriage insurance. You might call it "date time". Others may agree to schedule individual activities Monday through Thursday, keeping Friday through Sunday as their time together. I know of one couple that agreed that they would not expect to eat breakfast or lunch together, but that suppers would always be shared with each other. As one woman said, "I married him for love, not for lunch."

There is no question, however, that for many couples post retirement marriage represents "an ongoing adjustment and work in progress." Marriage relationships in the early stages of retirement can sometimes be strained not only by the absence of outside schedules but also by the reality that both are trying to figure out "who we are in this new stage of life." What Mary Catherine Bateson says about aging in general is especially true of marriage in the retirement years: It "has become an improvisational art form calling for imagination and willingness to learn...To know what they will need and what they need to offer, both men and woman must explore who they are." The key – as in many other aspects of life (married or otherwise) – is communication. Talk about your expectations and feelings. And do this *before* you retire!

Here it is imperative to emphasize the importance of community as we move into the second half of life. Writer Paul Clayton even goes so far as to say that "our choice of communities is a matter of life and death."

The Social Portfolio: Investing Wisely:

The late Gene D. Cohen, gerontologist at George Washington University, came up with a simple but brilliant concept to help all of us stay engaged with life as we age. But to make it work, we need to get started before we are truly aged. In general, people of retirement age are in the ideal position to implement it. The concept is the "social portfolio," and it looks something like this:

The Social Portfolio

	Group Efforts	Individual Efforts
High Mobility / High Energy	Your activities list	Your activities list
Low Mobility / Low Energy	Your activities list	Your activities list

What does this mean?

Simply put, you can think of your activities much the way you think of your investments. A savvy investor plans a financial portfolio with four things in mind: liquidity, diversification, emergency funds, and long-term growth. Just as you are wise to diversify your investments into different classes, so too you are wise to diversity your activities and interests into different classes. The reason for diversification is similar to an investment portfolio as well: some of your classes of activities can go badly over time, much as some classes of investments can.

The same four concepts that make a good financial portfolio apply to our lifetime investments in relationships and activities.

You need to have *liquidity* – hobbies, interests and relationships to which you can easily gain access.

You need to have *diversification*, because depending on circumstances, some of these activities and relationships will be better developed to draw upon than others.

You need to have *alternative resources* – emergency funds – with which to express your creative self, in the event that you suffer a physical decline or suffer the loss of a loved one with whom you shared social experiences.

Finally, you need to think about *long-term growth* of your creative potential through the years.

The Social Portfolio balances *individual* with *group activities*, *high energy* with *low energy*, *high mobility* with *low mobility*.

Take a few minutes to fill in your Social Portfolio according to those things you are involved in now. Share with your group.

Now think about some things that you might add to your Social Portfolio when you retire? Remember to strive for a healthy balance of individual and group activities with both low and

high energy. Share with your group.

IN CLASS HAND-OUTS:

Xerox Pages 265 to the top paragraph of page 269.

Xerox also page 273 to page 274: The Creativity Game.

*The Creative Age: Awakening
Human Potential in the Second
Half of Life*, by Gene D. Cohen,
M.D., Ph.D..
(HarperCollins / Quill, 2000)

Closing Devotion:

Text: Acts 1:1-14

One of the best examples of how people cope during the confusing and bewildering time of the Neutral Zone comes from the Book of Acts. (Acts 1:1-14) The author paints for us a very sad story, a story about saying good-bye. You will remember that after the Resurrection Jesus stayed with his disciples and continued to teach them for forty days. Then, after he had completed his instructions, " he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight". And so, Luke tells us, "The disciples returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city".

Luke doesn't actually tell us how they were feeling. He doesn't have to. We can well imagine that their mood must have been one of deep sorrow as they watched Jesus being taken from their sight. This is a shattered community. They have lost their leader. Worse, they have lost their best friend.

And so they don't know what to do. They remember some words of Jesus and they go to the upper room to try and figure things out, and to hope that his words might come true and something might happen. But for the moment they find themselves in a state of shock, a kind of limbo. They are in the Neutral Zone, living in the "in-between time", between loss and promise. In the Church year we would say that they are between the Ascension and Pentecost, between the departure of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit. But what's really going on is that they no longer know who they really are. Their beloved leader is gone. What do they do now? Go back to their jobs as fishermen? And what about Matthew? He can hardly return to his former career as tax collector. Without Jesus, who are they? How are they supposed to act now?

Luke tells us that the first thing they did was to pray. Remember it was a very difficult time for them. Their beloved leader was dead and, while he had promised them the gift of the

Spirit, this had not yet happened. They didn't know whether they had a future as a sect or as a religion, or whether they should just split up and go back into the mainstream. So they sought solace by joining together in prayer.

But note that the scripture story says that they joined “together” in prayer. They came together as a community. In the end, friends, all genuine experiences of aloneness lead us back into community. The individual in the passage ritual may need to spend a good length of time on his own in the wilderness; but inevitably he returns to the village to share the wisdom he has learned in solitude and re-joins the community.

Communities, while never perfect, can provide innumerable benefits. Developing good friendships will also be important in the retirement period. Research has shown, for example, that friendship:

- Increases your sense of belonging and purpose
- Boosts your happiness
- Reduces stress
- Improves your self-worth
- Decreases your risk of serious mental illness
- Helps you weather traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss or the death of a loved one
- Encourages you to change unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise
- Helps you celebrate your good times, with the offer of comfort during the bad.

There is no question that good friendships take work, especially in the post-retirement period when it is not as easy to make friends through your work or through the Home and School Association or Little League Baseball. But developing new hobbies, participating in your church or house of faith, or other organizations, can bring new friendships and a new sense of community.

The disciples had given up jobs and families in order to follow Jesus. It was only natural, therefore, when Jesus was taken from them, that their first reaction was to seek comfort and solace in one another's company. That's what friends do. They come together to support one another through major life transitions and to help each other navigate times of confusion and chaos when the home that is our life appears to be in shambles.

Closing Prayer

Exit Tickets

Before you leave this evening, fill in your exit ticket. What is one thing you have learned this evening? What is one thing you still have a question about?

HAND-OUT: SESSION THREE

"Living in Chaos – How to Survive Home Renovations!"

1. How will you go about strengthening long-term friendships in retirement?
2. How can you get acquainted with new people on an ongoing basis in retirement, and how can you foster these new friendships?
3. If you are moving, does taking on the challenge of building a new network of friends seem appealing or overwhelming?
4. If you are planning to relocate in retirement to be closer to children or parents or other family members, consider both the advantages and disadvantages to such a move.
5. Think about some of the important questions you need to discuss with your partner for you or s/he retires? What steps might be taken to bring your differing expectations into alignment? Answer this question also with regard to (1) Elderly parents; (2) Adult children; (3) Siblings; and (4) Grandchildren, Nieces and Nephews.

Love and Work Transition Checklist by Bill Bridges

1. Take your time. The outer forms of our lives can change in an instant, but the inner reorientation that brings us back into a vital relation to people and activity takes time. This does not mean that everything must come to a total standstill as you wait for self renewal. But it does mean that your commitments, either to the old situation that you haven't yet left for the new situation that you haven't yet invested yourself in are going to be somewhat provisional. And it means that you cannot rush the inner process whereby this state of affairs will change.
2. Arrange temporary structures. You will need to work out ways of going on while the inner work is being done. This may involve getting a temporary job while you look for a real job; it may involve agreements at home or at work to carry on in some modified fashion until something more permanent can be devised; or it may simply involve an inner resolve to accept a given situation as temporary and to transfer some energy to the job of finding a replacement for it.
3. Don't act for the sake of action. The temporary situation is frustrating and there is likely to be a temptation to "do something–anything." This reaction is understandable, but it usually leads to more difficulty. The transition process requires not only that we bring a chapter of our lives to conclusion, but that we discover whatever we need to learn for the next step we are going to take. We need to stay in transition long enough to complete this important process, not to abort it through premature action.
4. Recognize why you are uncomfortable. Distress is not a sign that something has gone wrong

but that something is changing. Understanding the transition process, expecting times of anxiety, expecting others to be threatened, expecting old fears to be awakened—all of these things are very important...

5. Take care of yourself in little ways. This is probably not the time to be living up to your highest self-image, although it is time to keep your agreements carefully. Be sensitive to your smallest needs and don't force change on yourself as though it were medicine. Find the little continuities that are important when everything else seems to be changing...

6. Explore the other side of the change. Some changes are chosen and some are not, and each kind of transition has its own difficulties. If you have not chosen a change, there are a dozen reasons to refuse to see its possible benefits—for by seeing such benefits you may undercut your anger at whoever forced the change on you, or you may realize that the old situation wasn't all that you thought it was. On the other hand, if you have chosen your change, there are just as many reasons not to want to consider the cost—for that may weaken your resolve, or make you aware of the pain your transition brings to others. In either case, you will need to explore the other side of the situation.

7. Get someone to talk to. Whether you choose a professional counselor or just a good friend, you will need someone to talk to when you're going through an important transition in your work-life or your relationships. What you primarily need it is not advice, although that may occasionally be useful, but rather to put into words your dilemmas and your feelings so that you can fully understand what's going on. Beware of a listener who "knows exactly what you ought to do," but also be suspicious if you find yourself explaining away your listener's reactions if they don't happen to fit with yours—especially if several people have reacted the same way to what you say.

8. Find out what is waiting in the wings of your life. Whether you chose your change or not, there are unlimited potentialities within you, interests and talents that you have not yet explored. Transitions clear the ground for new growth. They drop the curtain so that the stage can be set for a new scene. What is it, at this point in your life, that is waiting quietly backstage for an entrance cue? What new growth is ready to germinate in this season of your life? These are questions that you can talk about with a confidant, or you can privately explore them in writing in a transition journal. You could get a piece of paper right now and right at the top, "What is Waiting to Happen in My Life Now," and begin writing. (Don't plan it out or try to figure out the answer in advance; just start writing and write as quickly as you can. You will be surprised what comes out once you have given up deciding in advance what you're going to say.)

9. Use this transition as the impetus to a new kind of learning. You knew much of what you needed to know for what you were, but what you are going to become will require new understandings and new skills that you may not yet possess. Edward Gibbon wrote that "every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second more personal and important, from himself." This transition point in your life may

well be the time to launch that second education—or to begin it again, for while the first education follows a fixed curriculum to a stopping point, the second education opens out into new areas at every turning point.

10. Recognize that transition has a characteristic shape. Arnold Toynbee pointed out years ago in *The Study of History* that societies gain access to new energies and new directions only after a “time of troubles” initiates a process of disintegration where in the old order comes apart; and he showed how often the new orientation is made clear only after what he calls a “withdrawal and return” on the part of individuals or creative minorities within the society. The crucial change, it seems, takes place in some in between state or outside the margin of ordinary life. That is so with individual lives as well: Things end, there is a time of fertile emptiness, and then things begin anew.

Bridges, William. *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1980), pp. 78-82.

Other Relationships that May be Impacted by Retirement or Change:

There are also of course many blessings that come to couples and their families in retirement. There is the gift of being able to spend more time with adult children or nieces and nephews, especially if your children live a long way away and you need time to be able to travel to see them. Some couples or individuals decide to sell up and move across country to be near their children. But this can be both a plus and a minus, especially if it means leaving behind close friends, church and other organizations that have brought one's life meaning.

It's often said that “grandchildren are the reward for not having killed your kids.” If you missed a lot of time with your own children when they were growing up because you were busy working, you may look upon this as a very special time and an opportunity that you don't want to miss this time around. However, we all know of grandparents who never seem to have a life because their kids are always dropping the grandchildren off at their place. There are many grandparents too who are actually raising their grandchildren. For them, there will be far less freedom to pursue the hobbies and interests and traveling they may have hoped to pursue upon retirement. They may even need to keep on working so that they can afford to help their adult children and grandchildren, who have moved in with them.

Individuals and couples without children and grandchildren enter retirement with a somewhat different experience. They may feel left out as they hear their friends refer to “the kids” or “the grandkids”. They may also wonder who will care for them when they need it. Relating to children and grandchildren may also be more complicated when they are stepchildren and step-grandchildren. And let's face it, even when they are our own kids, this does not mean that they are going to be easy to get along with or even supportive. They may live thousands of miles away. They may be too busy to get home very often. Or they may just not be very nice kids! There is a tendency for us to sentimentalize our relationships with our children and

grandchildren, in much the same way that one may sentimentalize one's relationship to a deceased spouse. Under such circumstances, it is important that we create or seek out new friends and new communities, where we can feel supported but also where we can help and encourage others.

QUESTIONS RE: BRIDGES' CHANGE MODEL AND PUTNAM'S BOWLING ALONE

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your participation in our session again this evening and for being willing to extend our time together to 9 p.m.

I want to respond to two questions that came up tonight, the first regarding the normal length of time one might expect to spend in the neutral zone (according to Bridges) before making a new beginning, as well as concerns around the formulaic nature of his change model.

Bridges says that people will go through each stage at their own pace. For example, those who are comfortable with the change will likely move ahead to stage three (beginnings) more quickly, while others will linger at stages one (endings) or two (neutral zone). A new beginning can happen as a result of an external cue or an inner signal, but when it presents itself it will resonate with you. You will hear the `clunk`. Out of the formlessness of the neutral zone, a new form starts to take shape and step by step, you start to build a new reality with a new sense of self and possibly new ideals, beliefs and values.

He admits that he himself has often struggled to discern when an ending is completed and when he has been in the neutral zone long enough. He writes: "We forget how indirect and unimpressive most new beginnings really are, and we imagine instead some clear conscious steps that we ought to be taking. The English novelist John Galsworthy was surely right when he wrote that "the beginnings...of all human undertakings are untidy." As examples, Bridges says, "Think of the time you bumped into an old friend you had not seen in years, and he tells you about a job at his company that has just opened up. Or the time you met your spouse-to-be at a party that you really had not planned to attend; or the time you happened to pick up a book that changed your life simply because it was the only one lying on your friend's coffee table when you dropped by for an unexpected visit..." "The lesson in all such experiences," says Bridges, "is that when we are ready to make a new beginning, we will shortly find an opportunity."

Bridges rightly points out that trying to start anew without doing the hard yards of endings and neutrality is a futile exercise that will only lead to more frustration in the long term. It's like the person who jumps from relationship to relationship without stopping in-between to reassess why the same patterns keep occurring. But when the hard work is done, you can enter a new phase of life with energy and vigour.

I also came across another article in which Bridges himself acknowledges that the change model

may not be as strictly linear as he had initially conceived it to be. See below where he attributes this change in his thought to Canadian Donald Skilling:

The Three Phase Overlap

In transition there is an ending, then a neutral zone, and only then a new beginning. But those phases are not separate stages with clear boundaries. The three phases of transition are more like curving, slanting strata in any situation. Or we might see them as overlapping.

In either case, you are in more than one of these phases at the same time, and the movement through transition is marked by a change in the dominance of one phase as it gives way to the next.

This way of portraying transition was suggested to me by Donald Skilling, an organizational consultant in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

The second question that came up in tonight's session had to do with the reasons for the decline in social capital which Robert Putnam has documented since the last quarter of the 20th century. Putnam identifies the following factors as contributing to this problem:

Changes in family structure (i.e. with more and more people living alone), are a possible element as conventional avenues to civic involvement are not well-designed for single and childless people.

Suburban sprawl has fractured the spatial integrity of people's civic involvement. They travel much further to work, shop and enjoy leisure opportunities. As a result there is less time available (and less inclination) to become involved in groups. Suburban sprawl is a very significant contributor.

Electronic entertainment, especially television, has profoundly privatized leisure time. The time we spend watching television is a direct drain upon involvement in groups and social capital building activities. It may contribute up to 40 per cent of the decline in involvement in groups. Generational change is also a very significant factor. A "long civic generation," born in the first third of the twentieth century, is now passing from the North American scene. 'Their children and grandchildren (baby boomers and Generation X-ers) are much less engaged in most forms of community life. For example, the growth in volunteering over the last ten years is due almost entirely to increased volunteering by retirees from the 'long civic generation'.

I hope the above is helpful. Thanks for the great questions and for sharing your ideas! Wishing you all a very enjoyable and relaxing holiday weekend,
Blessings,
Sheila

SESSION FOUR: RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

Building Your Cathedral (What You Have Been Doing Your Whole Life)

1. Graffiti Question

(posted on the wall will be sheets of paper where people respond to one question in one sentence or in point form.) Tonight: An accomplishment you are proud of.

2. Welcome, Supper and Ice-Breaker -

i. Talk with your neighbour about something you have done in your work life or pre-retirement life that you are proud of or which was meaningful to you? What was it about this experience that you enjoyed or which helped you to feel fulfilled?

3. The River of Life -

I want to invite you now to take an imaginary journey.

A. The River of Life Guided Meditation from Richard Morgan's book, *Remembering Your Story*, pp. 46-47. (See also William Bridges, *The Way of Transition*, pp. 89-90.)

10-12 minutes

B. With your neighbour share the following:

5 minutes

Thinking of your river as a whole, did you notice a theme emerging? What would you say is the theme of your life? Where do you see God's hand at work in your life? Where is the source of your river? Are there any places where your work and your joy seem to merge?

4. Vocation and Calling versus Job and Occupation:

One of the reasons I asked you to reflect upon the various twists and turns your life has taken, and if you have noticed a theme emerging, is to help you to think of your life's calling. I want to be clear at the outset, though. Vocation is not one's job history.

It is rather the core thread around which one's various jobs or activities are often wrapped.

Christians believe that everyone has a God-given calling. Our calling, according to the Apostle Paul, is stated in the fourth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthian church. "Let everyone regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2) We're going to say more about our calling as "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" in a later session. For now I just invite you to tuck that one away and think about it when you get the chance.

Paul believed that all work has sacred meaning. In chapter 12 of Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*, he writes: "There are many ways of serving, but the same God is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to each of us. The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all." (I Corinthians 12)

Martin Luther: Vocation is the mask of God. It's how God works in the world, through all of us.

Too often, however, we confuse our job with vocation. A colleague in ministry once said after she retired, "Who am I now that I am not working? If I have no job, then I have no calling." Clergy are not the only people to make this mistake. For example, many people make the following assumptions:

Assumption 1: To be called is to be employed.

Discerning our call in retirement is not a job-placement process. Although we may have been called to a particular occupation, our calling is larger than a job.

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word "vocare", which in Latin means "to call".

In the New Testament, Jesus called his disciples to follow. He promised no employment, no job, no occupation. They were simply invited to be disciples, followers, learners.

Over the centuries, the meaning of the word "vocation" changed. The church linked the calling of the disciples to the role of clergy or those in religious orders.

The Protestant Reformation changed this, expanding the understanding of "vocation" to include lay people as well.

However, over time the term "vocation" was changed again by common usage so that most people came to equate "calling" with "employment."

Somehow we need to recover the original meaning of the phrase "called by God" To be called is to follow in the way, not to have a specific job or profession. When the job comes to an end, you still have a calling, a vocation.

Assumption 2: To be called is to have had a spiritual experience.

While it is often true that a calling involves a spiritual experience, two underlying assumptions need to be addressed.

i. First, if we are called, does that mean we have heard the voice of God? Maybe, but it is probably more likely that God speaks to us through an aunt, a friend, a teacher, a parent, or even a stranger.

GRIMM'S STORY OF THE DEATH MESSENGERS

Death's Messengers

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

In ancient times a giant was wandering along the highway when suddenly a stranger jumped toward him and shouted, "Stop! Not one step further!"

"What?" said the giant. "You, a creature that I could crush between my fingers, you want to block my way? Who are you that you dare to speak so boldly?"

"I am Death," answered the other one. "No one resists me, and you too must obey my orders."

But the giant refused, and began to wrestle with Death. It was a long, violent battle, and finally the giant got the upper hand, and knocked Death down with his fist, causing him to collapse by a stone. The giant went on his way, and Death lay there conquered, so weak that he could not get up again.

"What is to come of this?" he said. "If I stay lying here in a corner, no one will die in the world, and it will become so filled with people that they won't have room to stand beside one another."

Meanwhile a young man came down the road. Vigorous and healthy, he was singing a song and looking this way and that. Seeing the half-conscious individual, he approached him with compassion, raised him up, gave him a refreshing drink from his flask, and waited until he regained his strength.

"Do you know," asked the stranger, as he stood up, "who I am, and whom you have helped onto his legs again?"

"No," answered the youth, "I do not know you."

"I am Death," he said. "I spare no one, nor can make an exception with you. However, so you may see that I am grateful, I promise you that I will not attack you without warning, but instead will send my messengers to you before I come and take you away."

"Good," said the youth. "It is to my benefit that I shall know when you are coming, and that I will be safe from you until then."

Then he went on his way, and was cheerful and carefree, and lived one day at a time. However, youth and good health did not last long. Soon came sickness and pain, which tormented him by day and deprived him of his rest by night.

"I shall not die," he said to himself, "for Death will first send his messengers, but I do wish that these wicked days of sickness were over."

Regaining his health, he began once more to live cheerfully. Then one day someone tapped on his shoulder.

He looked around, and death was standing behind him, who said, "Follow me. The hour of your departure from this world has come."

"What?" replied the man. "Are you breaking your word? Did you not promise me that you would send your messengers to me before you yourself would come? I have not seen a one of them."

"Be still!" answered Death. "Have I not sent you one messenger after another? Did not fever come and strike you, and shake you, and throw you down? Has not dizziness numbed your head? Has not gout pinched your limbs? Did your ears not buzz? Did toothache not bite into your cheeks? Did your eyes not darken? And furthermore, has not my own brother Sleep reminded you every night of me? During the night did you not lie there as if you were already dead?"

The man did not know how to answer, so he surrendered to his fate and went away with Death.

ii. Secondly, if we are called, does that mean God is now in charge of our lives? God created the world, but it doesn't mean that we are puppets at the end of a string.

God calls us to follow by empowering us to make choices, to envision goals, and to take responsibility for our actions.

Assumption 3: To be called is to have a single direction in life.

Many people feel locked for life into one task. But Jesus himself did not have a single calling. As a young man he was called to serve in the family carpentry shop. Then, at the age of 30, he was baptized in the River Jordan, sent out into the desert by the Spirit, and emerged with a new calling, to share the love of God with God's people.

Now note when this happened. Jesus was 30 years old, which in our culture is still considered to be a young adult. But in Jesus' time, he was actually entering the final third of his life. We know, for example, based on the records we have a various censuses taken in Egypt during the Roman occupation that the average life span for men in Jesus' day was 39 or 40, and that average life span for women was 34. Given that this was the case, this means that in contemporary terms Jesus would have been about age 60 when God called him into ministry (or when he finally acted on God's call.)

By the way, the Buddha was 35 or older and Mohamed was 40 or older when they began to teach, and Abraham and Sarah were considered to be very elderly when they received God's call to travel to a new land.

Winston Churchill was 66 when he became Prime Minister of Britain. So God continues to call people to serve well after the time of mid-life.

Moreover, as I've said, we are not locked into one task or one job for life. The disciples were called first to be followers and learners. Then, with the death and resurrection of Jesus, they were to be leaders, healers, the embodiment of Christ himself. Although they were called to follow Jesus, their role changed over the years and with the changing circumstances. Thus, within our calling too is the requirement to be open to change.

I think of the famous scientist, William Lawrence Bragg, a physicist and X-ray specialist, who is still the youngest person ever to have received the Nobel Prize. He was only 25. When he left his teaching position at the University of Cambridge and moved to London, he missed having a garden and so worked as a part-time gardener, unrecognized by his employer, until a guest at the house expressed surprise at seeing him there. Apparently he would just wander the streets until he found a garden that looked interesting and had potential and then would ask the owner if he could do the gardening.

Assumption 4: To be called is to have a God-given map of life's journey. Not only do we need to be flexible and open to the Spirit's leading, we have to recognize ahead of time that none of us is given a map at the outset which we are instructed to follow. In the *Book of Acts*, the disciples had no advance notice of what was going to happen next. Like us, they stumbled along, praying to God that they were going to do the right thing.

Praying to God is the point here. Being called means staying tuned to the Spirit's leading.

A New Definition of Calling:

Three components are included in our calling:

Our Identity (Who am I?)

Our Gifts (What are my talents and abilities?)

Our Occupation (What is my unique place in this crowded and complex world?)

Their call was to the whole journey.

Our occupation might also include several places positions, jobs, or careers, from childhood through retirement. Our occupation might evolve from student, to employee, to spouse, to parent, to volunteer. It might include two or more occupations at the same time. The call is not to a specific occupation but to a pilgrimage in which one venture may lead to another.

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

This is a good clue as you search out what you are being called to do or be in this second half of

life. (See circles.)

5. Watch first two segments of the Video: "For the Love of It"

1. After listening to DeWitt Jones, what do you think is the distinction between a job and a calling?

2. During which periods of your life so far have you felt closest to your calling? Again, what are the things in the first half of your life that have brought you meaning, fulfillment and joy? Share with your neighbour.

6. Small Group Discussion of Profiles:

Divide into groups and read Profiles of people who have found meaning in retirement or in the second half of life. What is their secret? Discuss with your group and be prepared to share with the larger group.

7. How to Find Your Passion:

Benjamin Disraeli, a 19th century British Prime Minister, once said, "Man is only great when he acts from passion."

1) Inventory your talents – what are you good at?

2) Look for your passion in your suffering.

Christine Hassler encourages us to look for our passion somewhere we might not think to look: in our suffering.

What does she mean by this?

Well the original definition of the word PASSION is actually SUFFERING (referring to the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and his death). Over time, we have evolved the word passion to mean: "love; a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept."

So the word passion means two things: suffering and love. There is key information in this.

Many people who are truly doing something they are incredibly passionate about were inspired by their own suffering.

Canadian reformer Tommy Douglas: Shortly before he left Scotland, Douglas fell and injured his right knee. Osteomyelitis set in and he underwent a number of operations in Scotland

in an attempt to cure the condition. Later however, in Winnipeg, the osteomyelitis flared up again and Douglas was sent to hospital. Doctors there told his parents his leg would have to be amputated. Fortunately, a well-known orthopedic surgeon took an interest in his case and agreed to treat the boy for free if his parents would allow medical students to observe. After several operations, Douglas's leg was saved. This experience convinced him that health care should be free to all. "I felt that no boy should have to depend either for his leg or his life upon the ability of his parents to raise enough money to bring a first-class surgeon to his bedside", Douglas told an interviewer many years later. Therein was born the dream and Douglas's passion for a system of universal health care.

It was after Adelaide Hoodless lost her precious infant son Jack at age 14 months that Adelaide began her public life. Jack had died from drinking contaminated milk. From then on her passion was to ensure that women had the knowledge to prevent deaths like those of her beloved 'Jack', and she devoted herself to the betterment of education for new mothers.

Candy Lightener founded MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, after her young daughter was killed by a drunken driver in a hit and run accident on her way to a church fair.

Looking at how you have experienced suffering in your life may be a place for you to start considering what it is you are passionate about.

Here are some other exercises to help you uncover your passion.

3) Pay attention to who makes you annoyed or jealous.

Are there people doing things that are "frivolous" who annoy you? Take a closer look at that annoyance. Is the truth behind your annoyance that you really wish you could live so freely, that you didn't have so many serious responsibilities and could be as "immature" as they are?

Dr. Susan Biali says that after a lifetime of being an over achieving and doing what-everyone-expects-of-me student, when she embarked on my Mexican adventure in order to give herself a break and find time to pursue her passions for writing and dancing. Most people thought she was nuts, but her father got the angriest. He told me her that she was wasting her life and should let him help her set up her own clinic instead.

He pounded the kitchen table with his fist, shouting "Life isn't supposed to be fun! When are you going to grow up like the rest of us?"

Thankfully she ignored him, as she did everyone else who tried to discourage her.

A few years later, when it was clear that living, writing and dancing in Mexico was one of the best decisions (and career moves) she ever made, her dad sold his business. And moved to Hawaii. To write his first novel.

Susan is convinced he was largely so upset because he wanted to do what she was doing. At the time, she was quite sure he didn't know that. But eventually he figured it out!

4) Think of what you loved to do as a child. Revisit your childhood. What did you love to do? Business consultant Rob Levit suggests making a list of all the things you remember enjoying as a child. Would you enjoy that activity now? For example, Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the world's greatest architects, played with wooden blocks all through childhood and perhaps well past it. Revisit some of the positive activities and events of childhood. Levit suggests asking yourself these questions to get started: What can be translated and added into your life now? How can those past experiences shape your passion now?

5) Notice when you lose track of time, or what you hate to stop doing. Notice what you love. Notice what makes you feel like a kid. Notice what you long to have more time for.

6) Try new things! When you deliberately open yourself to noticing things you might enjoy doing, don't be afraid of getting it wrong. It's all an adventure, you're learning and growing as you go. Happiness research shows that trying new things increases dopamine levels in the brain, contributing to sustained levels of contentment. So try away!

7. Is there something you already love doing? Do you have a hobby, or something you loved doing as a child, but never considered it as a possibility? Whether it's reading comic books, collecting something, making something, creating or building, there is probably a way you could transform it into a passion. Open a comic book shop, or create a comic book site online. If there's already something you love doing, you're ahead of the game. Now you just need to research the possibilities of making money from it.

8. What do you spend hours reading about?

9. Cultivate your passion.

Cal Newport is a computer scientist and author of four books about passion. He doesn't buy into the "follow your passion" mantra. He says, "There is no special passion waiting for you to discover. Passion is something that is cultivated."

With this in mind, Ryan Chatterton has developed the following equation:

$$(curiosity + engagement) \times time = passion$$

Start with something you are curious about. (There is no "right" or "wrong" choice.) Pick an interest and roll with it. It doesn't have to be something you are really excited about; just something you are curious about.

Then acquire as much knowledge as you can about that subject. Read some articles or books. Watch videos about your interest.

Get together with people who share your interest. This serves two purposes.

- i) First, it's easier to gather detailed knowledge from people than from static media.
- ii) Second, social engagement revolving around our interest reinforces our commitment and fuels that interest even further.

There's a reason parents don't want their kids hanging out with the bad crowd: we become like the people we hang around. "People's lives are often a direct reflection of the expectations of their peer group."

What Robbins is saying is that we set the bar for our lives based on how those around us set theirs. If we've picked the violin as the passion to cultivate, but we don't hang out with other musicians, there's nobody to compare ourselves to or to share our thoughts and experiences with. On the other hand, when we join a music scene, we meet people who become our mentors and peers. They cheer us on and hold us accountable.

By the way, if you have never played a musical instrument before (or it was such a long time ago that you can't remember anything about it), think about joining the New Horizons Band here in London. Simon Cole is their conductor and they meet Monday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m. at First Baptist Church.

Closing Devotion/Story:

Page 77, *The Five Stages of the Soul* by Harry R. Moody

There is an Eastern tale of a poor man who is discouraged by life. He lives in a tumbledown cottage and scratches out a meager living on the land surrounding it. One day a mysterious stranger arrives at his door.

"You live in a vast mansion," the man tells him. "You just do not realize it yet."

The man laughs. Anyone can see his house is small and falling down around him. But the stranger is insistent.

Slowly, with the guidance of his new friend, the man begins to discover hidden parts of his dwelling. First, he finds one forgotten room, then another and another, until entire lavish suites are revealed. In the end, the man becomes proprietor of a thousand-room palace, a huge mansion, the same that he had once mistaken for a single dilapidated room.

Well, the story of hidden riches in one's own backyard turns up time and again in

folktales and myth. The message is clear. There are hidden riches right in your own backyard! Or as Jesus once said:

“The kingdom of God is within you.” –Luke 17:21

I invite you to remember Jesus’ words over the coming week. “The kingdom of God is within you.” What you are looking for is hidden within yourself. Think about what makes you curious. Think about those things in which you become so engaged that you lose track of time. Think of those ordinary messengers who have touched your life and maybe suggested a path for you. Above all, remember Buechner’s words:

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

Exit Tickets

Lord’s Prayer (Unison)

HAND-OUT – SESSION FOUR

Building a Cathedral

Think about and/or journal/blog about the following:

1. If you are still working, what are the primary reasons that you get up and go to work every day? Are you satisfied with the answer? If not, what can you do to change it?

If you are already retired, what are the primary reasons that you used to get up and go to work every day? Did these reasons bring you satisfaction or personal fulfillment? Why or why not?

2. Make a list of three things that fill up your cup. How much time do you dedicate to these activities or people? How can you increase the amount of time you spend filling up your cup outside of work? Now that you are retired?

3. In your opinion, what is the difference between loving what you do and doing what you love? Are they equally as motivating? Is it possible to do both?

4. Reflect and comment on the quote from Robert Frost:

My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,

Is the deed ever really done
For heaven and the future's sakes.
– Robert Frost, *Two Tramps in Mud Time*, 1934.

Identity, Gifts, Occupation:

Our Identity is a set of characteristics that make us recognizable, by which we are known, that make us unique. "That's Judy walking over to meet us. I would know her anywhere." It's also a set of characteristics by which we are recognized to be part of a group. "He is Irish; his accent makes it clear." Our identity is both our uniqueness and our link to a larger group of people.

Our Gifts These are our talents. A gift represents an endowment, an aptitude or a natural ability we have been given. These capabilities are bestowed upon us by God, and no compensation is expected from us. Even if we ignore the gift, it is still there and often comes alive much later in our lives. Winston Churchill took up painting in his later years and discovered he had a real talent for it.

The link between identity and gift is clear. Both are bestowed upon us by God's grace; both grow and develop; both are ingredients of our calling. But they are also distinct from each other. Identity is that which makes one recognizable as a unique person and one who shares a common heritage with a larger community. Our gift is the talent, aptitude, or ability that was bestowed upon us from the beginning and in the course of life.

Occupation Occupation has several definitions. We occupy a dwelling, a residence, a workplace. "He occupies the house on Pine Street." "To occupy" is also to seize control, to maintain the land. "Rome occupied Palestine." Still once again, one can occupy an office or position. "Rev.Dr.Kate Crawford occupies the pulpit at First St. Andrews-United Church." All these definitions focus on *place*.

Our calling is also about a place in the world - not in the geographical but in the theological sense of the word. God makes room for us on the ground, a place for us in history, a role for us in the community. God called Abraham and Sarah to leave their home in Ur and move to a place that God would show them. Abraham and Sarah were to vacate their place in Haran, and occupy the land God would show them. But that place was a moving target. They went from Ur to Haran to Shechem to Bethel and the Negeb.

What is the destination of this pilgrimage? When do we arrive? "Where is the Nageb?" You might ask. In the days of Abraham and Sarah, the Nageb was a large area of Canaan, just another stop along the way. The point of God's call is not that we will arrive at some blessed location at the end of the journey. The blessing comes along the way, as part of the pilgrimage.

Profile # 1: Peter DiCicco and The Work Connection

Marc Freedman, *Prime Time. How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*. (New York, Public Affairs, 1999), pp.1-3.

The Work Connection was inspired, in part, by Peter DiCicco's conviction that labour unions needed to think bigger, to range beyond the narrow objective of improving contracts for their members. They needed to become involved in strengthening the community and in standing for the disenfranchised.

Peter was the VP of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) and head of its New England District Council. He was thus in a position to act on his conviction.

However, it was a personal experience as much as anything that sparked The Work Connection idea. DiCicco's 19-year-old son was in a car accident and ended up in court. At the hearing, DiCicco came forward to ask the judge for a community service sentence rather than a fine. "My son wasn't working," the union leader recalls. "He couldn't pay. So the court was fining the parents – not the boy. It isn't that I was unwilling to pay, but I was concerned because it didn't hold my son accountable for what he did." The judge agreed – but was simply too busy to get involved with creating new programs.

So DiCicco took on the idea himself, and so the local electrical workers union VP began to create what would become The Workers Connection. Basically this was an alternative sentencing program for young people who got into trouble and committed non-violent crimes. In other words, they had to repay owners for all those televisions and computer games they stole in order to buy drugs.

For any of the kids to succeed, DiCicco realized that they would need extensive hand-holding, pragmatic advice, and new connections. In particular, they would need the kind help that probation officers and social workers could not provide.

At roughly the same time as DiCicco was trying to get this new program off the ground, he was required to leave town to attend an IUE conference. There he encountered a large number of retirees, men who had lots going for them – excellent pensions, health benefits, years to live – but what they lacked was a sense of purpose in their lives. They were unhappy and spent much of their time grumbling. Many of these people were individuals who had taken early retirement, often through incentive packages, but who were unprepared psychologically and socially to retire.

So DiCicco thought: Why not solve two problems at once? Get union retirees involved in mentoring kids and helping them break into the job market, and in the process, give the retirees themselves a new lease on life. Thus was born The Work Connection, a program that helps and mentors kids who get in trouble with the law with retirees who have not only plenty of time on their hands, but also lots of good practical work experience and connections in the community. It

has been a win-win solution for both the kids and the retirees.

Profile # 2: Foster Grandparents Aggie Bennett & Louise Casey, Marc Freedman, *Prime Time. How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*. (New York, Public Affairs, 1999), pp.75-78.

Aggie Bennett and Louise Casey, now 80, worked together for well over a decade as Foster Grandparents on the Pediatrics Ward of Maine Medical Center in Portland. For that entire period, virtually every day, they worked with children in dire need.

Aggie: I came for one week but stayed for 16 years. I saw that there was a need for you. And it was something actually that we needed. Older people don't want to sit around the house all day. I'm sure I don't. We get more out of being with the young people. They keep you young.

Louise: I've been here going on 10 years. I'll be 77 in a couple of weeks.

Aggie: Ever since Louise came in I've had nobody but Louise as my partner. In fact, the kids refer to us as cousins. We see each other every day – unless one of us is sick or taking a vacation.

Louise: Not only that, I think we serve a purpose because these children come from all over Maine and the northern border, sometimes four hours to get here, and these children have cancer – there's a lot of cancer – these children have to stay several weeks for chemo and radiation. Their parents have to go home. They have siblings to take care of. And the children get to know us. We're the red coats (the Foster Grandparent uniform in the hospital). The white coats, the staff, have the needles, you know. The kids kind of shy away from them. But they know that we comfort them, and the parents appreciate it so much. Send us notes.

Aggie: That little girl that just came up – just had an I.V. put in – I've had her since she was six days old, first time we saw her. She's 15 (years old) now. I was saying today she sometimes seems to be mine. Sometimes we have to remember – don't we, Louise – that the children go home sooner or later. But they do come back to see us.

Louise: And some of the children cry when they have to go home. One little girl who broke her leg said last week, "You know, I've gotta come back to get my cast off, and I'm awful glad because I'd never see you otherwise." So you get real close to the children. And there's a lot of abused children today. I can't get over some abused children coming along, just wanting to be loved.

Aggie: I only come because of one individual, Jeannie (the former supervisor). She called me up and said, "I heard you might be a candidate for a Foster Grandmother." I said I can't be a Foster Grandmother, I don't have any grandchildren. They said we can find you some! So she came up to see me and I said to myself, now how'm I gonna get rid of this woman, you know, but you

don't get rid of her very easy. My daughter had called her. My husband had died, been gone a year, and my daughter didn't like the way I was living. After my husband died I didn't want to go out, to see people. Anyway, I said to Jeannie I'll go up and spend one week, but I won't promise you any more than that. That one week was 16 years.

It wasn't a hard decision – you just see the need. You can't be here an hour that you don't see those children need you, and you know you need something besides just sitting home. I don't like to rust away, I want to wear away!

Louise: I had retired, about three years, and I was doing crocheting, things like that, makin' satin coat hangers. And I got so stiff I didn't even want to get out of the car to walk to the grocery store. I saw in the paper that there was Foster Grammys, and it said, "See Jeannie," so I thought I'll take a ride up to Parnell (where the program office was located) to see Jeannie. She said, "We have an opening in Yarmouth with handicapped children this summer. Would you like to work with handicapped?" I said I'd love it, and later I moved here to the hospital.

It's like family, the Foster Grandparents. We meet once a month and we kind of have a fellowship together, and speakers and trips, all kinds of things going. It's really like a family when we get together.

Aggie Bennet: Everybody will say, how can you take it when you lose a child, and I think Aggie and I feel the same way – heartbroken. But if we can do something when they're here to make that little child happy, to smile, it's worth it all. We lose them, and it is heartbreaking.

Aggie: I don't think I'd been here a year – when Sue Forth was head of the unit – and she asked me, "How strong a person are you?" I said "Well, I've always prided myself that I was strong." She says, "We've got a baby that is dying, and we promised that mother that her baby would not die in a crib. Do you think you could hold her?" Well, they put me in a room here, they keep checking on me, and that baby didn't die in no crib...that baby died in my arms. And I was always so grateful for that. I didn't feel any fear...I just felt good. You know how it is, Louise, when you just sit with them, and your heart's aching, but you don't let them know it, that's all.

Louise Casey: They let me go in and sit with Tanya after she died. They said would you feel better, because I loved her so. And they said would you feel better just going in and sitting for a while. And I said yes, I would. And Cheryl, I was there when Cheryl died, almost in my arms. This is a family. When anything happens, and we can get there to the funeral, we're there.

Aggie: You know something, though, it does make you a stronger person. It does. It's hard, but I don't think I could be anywhere else. This is home.

Profile # 3: Marv Welt: A Passion for Fishing Turns into An Environmental Education Program: Marc Freedman, *Prime Time. How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*. (New York, Public Affairs, 1999), Pages 217-221.

In his retirement, Marv Welt has turned his lifetime passion for fishing into an environmental education program operating in nine low-income Portland, Ore., public schools.

"When I retired, I was ready to stop working. I had been successful, but a lot of things were getting to me. In consulting, it's nothing to work 14- or even 16-hour days. The pressure is terrible. You're dealing with millions of dollars, and the company expects you to pay for yourself on the bottom line. I was away five days a week, sometimes more. I missed out on raising my own kids.

"But after being retired a while, I started getting itchy. I didn't want to just sit. That's when a friend of mine with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife said, 'Hey, you've done a lot of fishing all your life. There's an Angler Education Program, and we'd like you to be involved.' That's really where it started. I started teaching kids living in housing projects how to fish. I'd take them on fishing trips, and I noticed that some kids were in awe of the outdoors, but others were afraid of it, or had no understanding of nature.

"I enjoyed the kids and the fishing. Really, anything to do with water or marine biology is my hobby. It always has been. My happiest times growing up were going with my aunt and grandmother to Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. I would fish and swim, and I'd walk alone at night, coming back along the lakes. I'd see deer. I'd see raccoons. And I would see things in the water, things I knew weren't fish. And I was fascinated. What were they? That's how my interest started to evolve. It was an escape from the city to learn about these different things.

"After being involved in the Angler Education Program for a while, I thought, 'This has been my hobby all my life. Why don't I do something other than just take kids fishing and then drop them?' Which is what I was essentially doing. The kids would ask, 'Isn't Marv ever coming back?' And that bothered me, so I started thinking, 'What can I do that is more ongoing?'

"I decided to go back to school, to Portland State, and started taking courses – entomology, aquiculture – so that I knew more, and that I could do something more....By the time I finished my studies, the Watershed program was ready....So I started taking groups of kids on field trips to Whitaker Pond and the Smith and Bivey Lakes....

At one point my son said, 'What about teaching the children about water testing?' So I got some kits and I'd say to kids, 'Why would we want to test the water? Can fish live in orange juice or battery acid?' I taught them how to use the kits and to test the acidity of the water. But I kept asking them: 'Why do we want to know about this? Did you know fish need oxygen, and the water's got oxygen in it?' Kids don't know that. It's a little introduction to ichthyology and to some of the other sciences, and teachers seem to like the program because it helps build

vocabulary. It also teaches kids about the life cycle, especially when we're learning about salmon.

"It's great to see the kids respond. Sometimes I think I could run for mayor if they could vote! Why wouldn't they respond? They have fun. Now I'm not saying everyone, some of them are afraid of the outdoors. Some figure when they're not in the classroom, it's a holiday. Some are also angry kids. But I can relate pretty well to them because I was an angry kid myself.

"But when I was a child being raised by my aunt and my grandmother, this gentleman took me under his wing, Mr. Riggs. I remember, he said he was going over to the Lincoln Park Casting Club, and would I like to go? (I thought, 'Casting? What's that? Is he making ball bearings or something?') And once I got started I would get backlashes, and being an angry kid, I had no patience. Mr. Riggs would calmly help me pick out snarls. He taught me patience and he taught me sportsmanship. But he didn't lecture; he just did it by example. He made a big difference in my life. He was really a grandfather figure, even more than a father figure. He was already gray-haired when I knew him. And something from that is still with me.

"In fact, when I retired I remember thinking back and feeling, 'Don't I owe something?' And I felt I did. I felt I owed it to Mr. Riggs, but mainly I think I owed it to myself. Not to sit down, start watching television, drinking beer. That's what my neighbour did, and he was dead within two years. I worried that would happen to me, too, that I'd just sort of waste away. I knew I had to keep active. Then it was a question of what do I have to give.

"There are some selfish reasons, too. The things I love, whether it's the Painted Turtle or the clean water, whatever it is, these kids are going to decide what happens to our environment. Faster than the blink of an eye. I can't believe how fast the years have gone by since I was 40. How fast it happened. Here I am, an old man. [laughs]

"When the program expanded beyond the slough, I changed its name from Watershed to Waterworld. I got into the rivers, asking kids: 'What is a river used for? What kind of fish are in the river? What do these fish need?' All these questions. Then it led to the estuaries, and to the sea. And of course this tied right in with salmon because the fry turn into par and they live for a year in the river before they go to sea. And I started talking to them about the wetlands: 'What purpose do they serve? What is a flood plain? What happens if water comes to a wetland? Suppose you pave it over?'

"I ask a lot of questions and let them give me crazy answers. But mostly, they come through. You can't sell these kids short. You just lay the foundation and then, layer by layer, they figure things out. I think sometimes we tend to not challenge children enough.

"I'm always pushing them, and when you have a rapport going between you and the class, and a few students start to get into it and the interest builds and suddenly the whole class is with you, it's very exciting. To be involved in something that is real and important when they're getting it

and they're having fun doing it and you're having fun doing it, it's like a symphony coming together in the end. It builds into something very moving.

Before I retired I had no idea what I was doing to be thinking about what's next. But it gives a purpose to life that I think everybody needs. Sitting out in your RV contemplating your navel is, to me, a total waste. What are you doing? Taking up space. You've got to give something of yourself, and I don't just mean paying your taxes. You've got to give something of what you can do.

"I have one friend, he has terrible asthma, but he delivers food every Thursday, brings food to people in their house through Meals On Wheels. This is what he likes to do. And he is contributing something. It gives him a reason to get up in the morning, and he feels better about himself. It is a strain on him. We used to take walks by Smith and Bybee Lakes, but he can't do that anymore. He couldn't walk from here to the corner. But he manages to deliver meals by car. He is doing what he is capable of doing.

"If everybody could just do that – just give a little bit – what a difference it would make."

Profile # 4: Harold Allen: Re-inventing Retirement, Marc Freedman, *Prime Time. How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*. (New York, Public Affairs, 1999), pp. 169-173

After retiring, Harold Allen began teaching prison inmates the skills they would need to find work after being released. In his early 60s, he retired for a second time and joined Experience Corps where he mentors children in Philadelphia, PA.

"I came up at a time when we thought we were going to change the world. And you dedicated your whole life to that. But at a certain point, there was just the feeling that nothing was happening anymore. It just stopped; everything stopped. But when I heard about Experience Corps, it was like a wake-up call.

For 30 years I worked for the Philadelphia Water Department in waste-water treatment. I got in at the right time because in the 1960s they started to become ecologically conscious, and the job was upgraded from semi-skilled labor. We received training and certification, learned lab processes. So it became a challenging job, and it gave you a feeling not just of making a living, but of doing something you could really feel good about.

When I retired from the city in 1988, I wasn't ready to retire. When I was working, I was involved in decision making; there were certain standards to meet. All of a sudden you don't have a specific time to get up. You read the paper...do crossword puzzles. People look at you and say things like, 'I can't wait until I can retire, so I can sit around like you.' But in reality, you wake up in the morning and wonder why.

So I took a job with the state, working with guys who were in prison, helping them develop a trade so they could go back into society. I taught them about waste-water treatment. A number of guys got their licenses.

But it's sad to see life in prison. Most of the prisoners were not professional criminals. And none of the guys I was working with was any threat. They made stupid mistakes. It taught me compassion. One of the guys I was helping was scheduled for early release. Just before you're released they give you a drug test. When they checked him he tested positive. I realized, he did not want to go out! He didn't have one visitor the entire time he was in prison. Here's a guy who had no family to go home to. Prison inmates were the closest thing to a family for him.

There are children, just like this, who have given up. They feel like there's no point. They don't know how to overcome adversity. That's where we, the Experience Corps members, hope we can help. We may not be able to do anything about this parent generation, but we can help these kids feel some sense of worth, some sense that 'I am somebody.'

For me, the work in Experience Corps has a special significance. It deals with the problems of the inner city. The family has been just about demolished in our neighborhoods, and the young people considered just about expendable. They're supposed to be our future, but they have literally been cast aside.

I was drawn to Experience Corps by the possibility of being able to effect some kind of positive change. Like most of the people here, I heard about it through AARP (American Association of Retired People – in Canada – CARP). But once I got into the program, and into the classroom, and began to relate to the children one-on-one, I began to really see the depth and scope of the issues – to become aware of the enormity of the task. So many of these kids have tremendous potential. Their natural abilities are unquestionable, but they live in such negative environments that they have already given up on themselves.

One kid I was working with was put into a program for slow learners, which he is not. But the system cannot deal with a kid that doesn't read and refuses to try. He lives with a single mother. And when you meet that mother, when you're finally able to break through and communicate to her, you see how negative she feels. In a lot of cases, the parents take out their frustrations on the child, particularly if it's a young mother who feels her life has been terminated by this child.

And the children are so starved for attention that they just latch on. When you arrive, they run to you, and when you miss a day, right away, it's 'Why weren't you here?' They are practically writhing for attention.

In general, we are able to supply two main things the children are missing: that family tie they are not always getting at home, and the individual attention that's impossible for the teacher to give in the classroom of 30. And in so many of the classes now, you have even more, because they're not putting the necessary money into the public schools. We also teach the children

respect, especially respect for the teacher. I like to tell the children that when I was coming up, the two people who I could not talk about were the teacher and the preacher.

I try to reach out to every child. You get involved with them, and you find out about their personal lives, and you're aware of what's really going on with them. Sometimes you're the only one that these children can talk to...tell what's going on in their lives. You need to ensure them that they are all right. Children think that they are to blame in a lot of their situations. They need a lot of praise, and love, and recognition.

We also need to take the steps necessary to bring about more systemic kinds of change. The school system here has no money. Kids don't even have books. If more people were active and created a new awareness of these conditions, there would be a change. There has to be a rebirth of involvement. This is basically a struggle for survival.

In the meantime, we'll take the one-to-one approach – to help one child, or a small group of children at a time. Hopefully, they will remember this group that got together to help them. These kids are the potential organizers for change in the future."

Profile # 5: How My Neighbour Became My Model for Retirement

SARA LAWRENCE-LIGHTFOOT in Who Is Your Retirement Role Model? April 23, 2014
The Wall Street Journal:

I had never met him, but for years I had seen him returning from work in his blue designer suit; a handsome silver-haired, square-shouldered man with a long-legged, purposeful stride. It was when I noticed that he had changed his costume that I became intrigued. Instead of the corporate uniform, he began wearing a work shirt and overalls, and I would see him returning home each night covered with dirt; looking bone weary, his gait labored, a smile on his face. I was in the midst of collecting stories for my book, "The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50," and was intrigued by what looked like a major life-change happening before my eyes. So I decided to approach my across-the-street neighbor whom I had never met, and he happily told me the story of his costume change.

The last artifact Charles Watson carefully packed as he left the corporate law office that had consumed the last 40 years of his life was an old photograph of his mother and himself—at eight years old—standing in the garden behind their house in North Carolina with shovels in their hands, smiling into the camera, faces happily smudged with dirt. Looking at the photo always reminded Charles of his greatest childhood pleasure; planting the gardens—flowers in the front, vegetables in the back—with his mother. When he was a very small child, his mom would let him sit on the edge and dig in the dirt or run up and down the rows of corn and cucumbers. When he got to be school age, he would run home from the bus stop, quickly change his clothes, grab a snack, and join his mother in the garden.

As Charles packed up his law office—the last 15 years of practice had grown numbingly boring and stressful—he carefully wrapped the photo; he knew where he was headed. He began very modestly, fixing up the tiny plot in front of his brownstone; designing an elegant Japanese garden. Within months he had volunteered his services to the neighborhood association, planting the narrow garden in the middle of the block, then on to the newly renovated children's art center where he started from scratch, constructing the outdoor brick patio and planting handsome shrubs and Magnolia trees. Now he has found a "regular gig," a neighborhood away, in Chinatown, working side-by-side with Chinese elders, mostly grandparents themselves, some with young grandkids twirling as he once did down the aisles of vegetables. Today, if you drive by, you will see one tall man in a Red Sox baseball cap in the midst of a bunch of Chinese elders in their broad, flat straw hats, bent over tilling the soil, working away silently in the sun.

At 65, Charles approached his work with his mother's garden tips still clear in his mind (and heart), but he quickly discovered that he had a lot to learn. He learned by carefully watching and witnessing, not talking and explaining. He learned how to plant economically and strategically on the unforgiving city soil; he learned the Chinese names for produce he had never tasted; and he learned to love the slow pace, the sun on his face, the physical weariness after a day of digging. For Charles, each day feels like "looking back and giving forward."

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot is the Emily Hargroves Fisher professor of education at Harvard University.

Profile # 6: John Edwards: Building the Kingdom—One Nail at a Time, from *Halftime*.

When John Edwards heard about the damage caused by a hurricane along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, he knew he wanted to do something to help. He arrived a week after the storm hit and wound up staying for 35 days. He cleaned hundreds of homes, rebuilt others and enjoyed watching his efforts bring life and hope back to the victims' families.

After that experience, John made a commitment to spend two weeks each month for a year helping with the work along the Gulf Coast. John didn't do this work alone. He says, "Thanks to football and a demanding career as a union carpenter, the resulting arthritis and knee problems keep me from doing all the work I once did." He spent less time hands-on, and more time coordinating the work, training volunteers, assessing needs, enlisting teams, securing supplies, checking codes, and speaking in churches.

"All I ever wanted to do was to be a carpenter," John recalls. He had a great job with good benefits, doing just that. He was active in his church, serving as a deacon, and doing just about anything a layman could do. Then he went on his first mission trip to Ecuador in the '80s. He was hooked. "God ignited a passion in me to go to these places and help people build a church. I began to look for places to go." For years John spent his vacations on mission trips doing construction. Since that first trip to Ecuador, he's gone to eight countries and many U.S. states.

Gradually, as John worked on more construction serving projects, people began turning to him to lead the teams, find places to serve, organize the work, and train unskilled volunteers. They had learned that when he was in charge, more was accomplished and even people with no skills could do the work and make a contribution.

God planted the desire in John to do this full time. His carpentry job paid the bills, but his passion was the mission trips. The faces of the people, who now had a place to worship, made him want to keep going.

But John and his wife, Vicki, couldn't see how they would manage financially before early retirement at 62. Then an unexpected policy change at John's work meant he could now retire because of his tenure. It seemed to them that God was working out the details.

Today John prays for God's guidance about the jobs he does, assessing needs, securing materials, coordinating the work, and training volunteers. Over winter break John trained a team of 10 college students to hang sheet rock to replace walls ruined by flood waters. He can see God leveraging his wisdom, expertise, and experience in these students' lives and hearts, which they will likely never forget. "If I am willing to work, God can do a lot with a little in my life."

"Everyone is called to work in the kingdom," John adds. "God gave me a passion for building, but not everyone needs to do that. I know a barber who goes every Monday to cut hair at a retirement home. It's not so much what you do; it's your willingness to do what you are asked by God to do."

What is Vocation?

"Teaching is a way of being in the world = a calling, a vocation. It's a statement about truly what you believe and what you are committed to – not something you do to make money.

You believe profoundly that there is an ethic which attaches to being a teacher.. It's a part of your life. It's something you do because you believe that there is an ethic of commitment to your students and there's an ethic of commitment to discovery, and that shapes your life. It's a part of your life, in the classroom, in the hallway, at home, on the street corner.

Teaching is a way of being alive." -- Rod Macdonald, 1948-2014, Professor and former Dean of McGill Law School, Montreal, Quebec

SESSION FIVE: RE-COMPOSING A LIFE

Moving In – What to Leave Behind, What to Keep

1. Grafitti Question: Identify some of the activities to which you have devoted your time.
2. Welcome, Supper, Ice-Breaker: Show video clip from “For the Love of It” – “Making A Contribution.” Discuss with your neighbour: What is the difference between making a difference and making a contribution? Is one better than the other? How do you make a contribution in your work? In your personal life? Where is one place you would like to make a contribution in the second half of your life? Have you ever experienced a time when your contribution went unnoticed or unappreciated? How did that make you feel? How did you handle the situation?

Introduction:

In the thirteenth chapter of Exodus and the nineteenth verse is found this brief, seemingly insignificant statement: “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him....”

The people of Israel had lived under the whip and lash of the Egyptian slave masters for a period of four hundred years. Then, from among the Hebrews, God raised up Moses to lead them from their bondage, to organize them into a nation, and take them to the freedom of the Promised Land. After Moses attempted to negotiate their release with the pharaoh, aided by ten plagues, the time of their departure finally came. Moses commanded the slaves to pack quickly and secretly, and when the hour approached, to make haste to leave. The Bible indicates that within hours nearly a million Israelites moved out of Egypt: “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him....”

Now, why drag along the bones of a patriarch who had been dead for two centuries? Well, remember that Joseph was the little Jewish boy who was sold by his jealous brothers in Palestine to Egyptian traders who, in turn, took him to Memphis. With his ability and talent, Joseph, upon maturity, became a statesman, the prime minister no less of Egypt. In this favoured position, led by his faith in God, he brought his Jewish kinsmen and women to Egypt when a famine threatened their existence. Joseph excelled in faith, in moral practice, in wisdom, and in leadership. The people must take his bones with them on their forty-year journey, so they would not forget his righteousness, his leadership, his faith and his wisdom. So “Moses took the bones of Joseph with him...” By this recall they would know they were a keeper of destiny.

You may remember that when we began our sessions together, I referred to the psychiatrist George Vaillant, who describes those entering into the second half of life as the “Keepers of Meaning”. They are the ones who dispense wisdom and experience to the next generation. The “Keepers of Meaning”, Vaillant maintains, are not simply concerned with the care of individuals, but they are also concerned with preserving the culture's traditions. If we use the biblical language of the *Book of Exodus*, they are the ones who have been charged with the task of carrying the bones of Joseph with them.

A colleague of mine talked about attending a conference where a number of businesses and organizations had booths set up in the entranceway or narthex of the convention hall. These businesses were advertizing their work. A company that helped other organizations relocate their personnel to and from overseas assignments had a booth there advertizing its services. AT the booth, it gave away as advertizing little packets of stickers that a person in transit could use to communicate with movers. There four labels in the packet. They read as follows:

AIR

This was to be used for important things that you would need at the new location immediately.

SEA

This was for things that you wanted to take along, but that were not so important as to require fast transit.

STORAGE

This sticker was to be used with things that you didn't want to discard, but that you also knew you really didn't want to use just now.

THIS STAYS

This was to be put on things that you realized that it was time to get rid of and leave behind.

This evening I would like us to consider how we might use these stickers in our lives as we move, not from one geographical region to another, but as we move into this new phase of our lives. We are mostly interested in the first two stickers. Now that the renovations to our house are nearly completed, what do we want to keep from our past? What are our non-negotiables? What do we want to bring into our newly renovated space? What are the bones we want to carry with us?

What from the old life do we want to preserve?

To figure this out, we're going to look first of all at what motivates us – or what has motivated us in the past.

Psychologist David McClelland says he believes that “a person's motivation and effectiveness can be increased through an environment, which provides them with their ideal mix of each of the three needs” – the needs for affiliation, power, and achievement. These needs can be described simply:

The Need for Affiliation: The need for friendly interactions, popularity, and a deep sense of community make people with this need good team players.

The Need for Power: Some people feel a need for personal power over others – not a desirable quality. Others desire institutional power, seeking to direct the efforts of the team – a positive contribution to the community.

The Need for Achievement: Some need to excel and succeed; they enjoy working on their own and don't need praise. Their achievement is all the reward they need.

McClelland used his research to improve leadership. But it can also be used to enhance our retirement or how we navigate the second half of life. If we understand our need for affiliation, power, or achievement, we can shape our retirement or second half of life to meet that need. The volunteer assignments, the groups we join, the hobbies we develop will be different for each motivating inclination. In planning ahead, we need to recognize what has motivated us in the past.

Exercise:

Each participant will complete McClelland's Needs Assessment Quiz. What did you learn about yourself from this exercise? What is your greatest need? What other needs are important to you?

Engagement is Key

As Baby Boomers, you and I are part of the most targeted market that has ever existed. Marketers have carefully researched the consumer values of boomers, which are different from previous generations. They are now creating products and pitches that appeal to Boomer values. Basically they want to sell us a lifestyle. They want us to value consuming the right investments, the right insurance, the right real estate, the right travel, the right retail goods, and the right anti-aging products. Instead of discovering our identity, they want to sell us an identity, or at least they want us to identify ourselves as a consumer. So if we buy all the right stuff, we'll have the right lifestyle. We'll have the "good life". The challenge that lies before us in these years is this:

Do we want to be sold a *lifestyle* dreamed up by an advertising agency? Or do we want to design a *life* based on our own values?

Remember the story of the snake in the Garden of Eden that I shared with you in our first session together? Are you going to create your own life or are you going to leave it to the snake or the advertising agencies that want to sell you a lifestyle but who cannot give you a life?

Since all of you are here, I am thinking that you want to design a life, not purchase a lifestyle. So I want you to think some more about the exercise you just completed and reflect on those times when you have felt most excited or engaged by what you were doing.

For a long time now we have spent a lot of time and billions of dollars to create a

mountain of detailed knowledge about the thousand and one ways that people be unhappy. This is important information because there many people who need the help that good research into this discipline can provide.

But to balance out all this knowledge about unhappiness, a new discipline called positive psychology emerged around the turn of the new millennium. This is not just a variation on “positive thinking”. The inquiry into positive psychology was championed by the renowned research psychologist Martin Seligman and others. Thanks to the findings of this new discipline, we now know about approaches for increasing our “psychological well-being”, although I personally think that this is something that people of faith have known about for years.

Seligman suggests that there are, essentially, three approaches to happiness; that is, three basic ways to be happy. There are of course an unlimited number of specific ways to be happy, the approaches come down to three basic ones.

- 1) Pleasure
- 2) Engagement
- 3) Meaning

Pleasure or Enjoyment:

- an afternoon at a ball game
- lunch with a friend
- an entertaining movie or play
- a game of golf or tennis or swimming at the beach
- a romantic dinner or BBQ with friends or extended family
- a nice holiday or a weekend at the cottage

Pleasure brings a burst of positive emotions that come and go quickly. The pleasure doesn’t usually last much longer than the events themselves, and we often need to go back do these things again and again, to get more happiness. There is nothing wrong with this. We all need to do things that bring us pleasure. But we need to understand that these things in and of themselves to not bring lasting happiness or fulfillment.

Engagement or Involvement:

Positive psychology researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (“Me high. Chicks sent me high.”) uses another word for this kind of happiness, an experience you can almost feel. He calls it “*flow*”. Flow happens when your abilities are well matched to some challenging task. You get so deep into the activity, whatever it is, that you lose all track of time. You may feel like it’s been only a few minutes, but it’s been much longer. Either way, when you’re that engaged, you

lost yourself in what you are doing. You may not even be aware that it makes you happy *while* you are doing it, but *afterward* you say, “That was great!”

Engagement involves challenge, and it demands something from you, so it’s not as simple as pleasure. It can’t be purchased or consumed in the way that pleasure can be. When you use this approach, it can stick with you longer than pleasure does. Over time, it can build up into a lasting satisfaction with life.

Remember: flow is about enjoyable effort. It isn’t even remotely like the laid-back, whatever attitude of “go with the flow”. No, this second level is more like “make the flow”.

Example: Let’s say you’re interested in baseball. You could choose to be a spectator at a baseball game, or you could choose to be a player on a team. The low level of skill need to be a spectator would produce a pleasant experience. But the higher level of skill needed to be a player would produce an engaging experience .

What engages you?

Meaning:

The way you get this kind of happiness is to use your abilities in the service of something larger than yourself. Like engagement, this approach requires something from you too. Note that meaning doesn’t come from just believing in something larger than yourself; it comes from being in service to that something.

What’s larger than yourself? God, your religious faith, your family, the environment, your community, your political party, a safer neighbourhood, the sick, the poor, the needy, our educational and health care systems. It may not be service to something larger than yourself but to something beyond yourself: a neighbour who needs help with chores, a child who need help with school, a cleaner and litter-free walking path or more green space or age-friendly parks that young and old can both enjoy.

We can’t buy or consume meaning, just as we cannot buy or consume engagement. And contributing your money to something you believe in doesn’t provide the same sense of meaning or happiness that working for it provides (although giving money is still a good thing and I hope you all signed up for PAR!).

This is very biblical. Remember Jesus said: “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.” Matthew 16:25, NIV There is real truth in that. The famous missionary doctor and celebrated concert pianist Albert Schweitzer once said to a group of young people he was addressing: “The only ones of you who will ever be truly happy are those who seek and find a way to serve.”

Strengths:

What strengths can we build on? Because identifying and building on our strengths is going to be a major factor in our successful transition to the second half of life.

Exercise:

There are lots of exercises you can do to determine your strengths. Some require an hour or several hours of your time to complete. The following is a quick way into learning about your gifts and strengths, developed by Cambridge educated Marcus Buckingham

On a piece of paper and in point form, describe a task or activity that you have done about which you can say:

- 1) You are really good at this;
- 2) When thinking about the task, you are *excited* – you anticipate the activity;
- 3) When doing the task you find it easy to concentrate and get absorbed in the activity, even losing track of time;
- 4) Once the task is completed, you have more energy than before.

Share your findings with your neighbour. Group sharing afterwards, as time permits and as people are comfortable.

What Kind of Legacy Do You Want to Leave?

Amy Hanson who has a ministry to people in the second half of life, and who has written extensively on the subject, talks about a time she was speaking with a retired gentleman. She asked him how it happened that he devoted so much of his time to serving his church and community. Here's what he said:

“When my granddaughter was a little girl,
I used to sing a song to her that went like this:
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
All good girls go to heaven.
When they get there, they will say,
'We love Jesus every day.'

”One day, I overheard her singing the
song in another room. She sang:
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven,
All good grandpas go to heaven.
When they get there, they will say,
'GOLF, GOLF, GOLF, GOLF, every day!'

“WE LOVE JESUS EVERY DAY.”

At this point Amy says that she cracked up laughing, but he looked her straight in the eyes with a serious look on his face and said, “Amy, in that moment, I saw myself through the eyes of my granddaughter. She saw what my passion was, and this was not the legacy I wanted to leave.”

Creating an Ethical Will or Legacy Letter:

Instructor will lead the class through a power point presentation on creating an ethical will or legacy letter. This is another good way to help people figure out what is really important to them and what they would like share with the next generation. It is a good place to consider how we become “Keepers of Meaning” and “Stewards of the Mysteries of God”, and how we live out of our generativity.

"We all want to be remembered and everyone leaves something behind."
What is an ethical will?

Ethical wills are a way to share your values, blessings, life's lessons, hopes and dreams for the future, love, and forgiveness with your family, friends, and community.

Ethical wills are not new. The Hebrew Bible first described ethical wills 3000 years ago (Genesis Ch. 49). References to this tradition are also found in the Christian Bible (John Ch. 14-18) and in other cultures. Initially, ethical wills were transmitted orally. Over time, they evolved into written documents. 'Ethical wills' are not considered legal documents as compared to 'living wills' and your 'last will and testament' which are.

Today, ethical wills are being written by people at turning points in their lives: facing challenging life situations and at transitional life stages. They are usually shared with family and community while the writer is still alive.

Ethical wills may be one of the most cherished and meaningful gifts you can leave to your family and community.

Slide # 2 – "We all want to be remembered, and everyone leaves something behind." -- Rogergcam. This is not an obscure 4th century saint. It's just my surname spelled backwards! But the sentiment is universal. This is why people, down through ages, have chosen to write an Ethical Will.

Slide # 3

What Is An Ethical Will?

An Ethical will is a way to define and pass on our:

- values
- beliefs

- life lessons
- dreams
- hopes for the future
- love
- forgiveness

Slide # 4 – Examples of Ethical Wills – Change!
Read an Ethical Will.

Slide # 5 – History of Ethical Wills

For those biblical scholars in the audience, some references include:

Hebrew Bible--Old Testament

Genesis 49: Jacob's final words to his children

Burial instructions were often included in earlier ethical wills.

You may want to refer to "Unethical" contents of an Ethical Will.

Scolding, guilt-tripping, or trying to script someone's behaviour

Jacob's ethical will is a 'good' example of using an ethical will in this way for at least some of his children.

Deuteronomy 32-33: Moses' farewell to the children of Israel.

Christian Bible--New Testament

John 15-18: Jesus' last words to his disciples.

Although this custom has strong Judaic roots, evidence of this tradition can also be found in other cultures, (China, Babylonia, Assyria) which supports it's trans-denominational appeal.

Originally Ethical Wills were transmitted orally. As writing became more commonplace, they were recorded as written documents. Over the centuries, they were often found with wills of inheritance. Later on, they became a separate document. Some ethical wills from as early as the 12th century still survive today. They are generally identified as Ethical Literature – hence the name.

Slide # 6

Difference between Ethical Will and a Last Will and Testament: A Last Will and Testament bequeaths valuables, while an Ethical Will bequeaths values.

A Living Will contains specific instructions about medically related issues to be followed while a person is still alive but unable to communicate his or her wishes directly.

Slide # 7 – Why Write An Ethical Will?

Slide # 8 – Why Write An Ethical Will?

Slide # 9 – Why Write An Ethical Will?

Identifying what we value most and what we stand for can be particularly helpful for writing a living will, or for creating an estate plan that can help these values "live on" after we are gone.

Slide # 10 – When Might You Write An Ethical Will?

Challenging life situations can also be positive, as in the birth of a grandchild. Basically, these situations cause us to view our lives from a different perspective, and highlights issues of leaving a legacy.

Slide # 11 When con't

Although the overall divorce rate in North America has declined to about 50%, the above statistic for newlyweds is eye-opening. If clergy are involved with a pre-nuptial couple, it is common that a "values clarification" exercise is done prior to a wedding.

Slide # 12 – When con't.... divorcing couples

Slide # 13 – When con't....Middle Age and beyond

Slide # 14 – When con't...Approaching End of Life.....

This is the area that launched Dr. Baines' (my mentor) interest in ethical wills. It was a response to a recurring theme I encountered in the hospice setting, where a number of people would suffer enormously as they faced the end of their lives and felt that they were leaving no trace of their existence on earth. Creating an ethical will allowed them to pass on a legacy, thus tapping into their transcendent dimension ... the idea that we are a part of something that stretches beyond our individual existence.

Reinforce that any time is appropriate for creating an ethical will!

Slide # 15 – How to Write an Ethical Will

- Starting with an outline and a list of items to choose from
- Starting with guided exercises to create content
- Starting with a blank sheet of paper
- Attending an Ethical Wills Workshop
- Employing the services of a Professional

Slide # 16 and # 17 – "Linking the Generations" Pass out sheets with pencils and give people 10-15 minutes to write their questions. (Now that you have looked at the questions that you would like to ask your ancestor, imagine that your great-grandson or great-granddaughter is

doing this same exercise and has chosen you as their subject matter! (Preface this exercise with comments about how this is a good exercise to create some ideas for things to write about. You can ask how many people in the audience were named after a deceased relative and if they ever knew them in their lifetime.)

Slide # 18 – Reflective Exercises = another example of how to start

Slide # 19 – Remember: Writing an Ethical Will:

- Provides opportunities for personal growth
- Creates a tangible connection from one generation to another
- Adds meaning and purpose to your life
- May enrich family relationships
- Results in a cherished "gift of self"--the value of which can't be quantified.

HAND-OUT: RE-COMPOSING A LIFE – SESSION FIVE

Moving In – What to Leave Behind, What to Keep

Complete the Ethical Will/Legacy Letter you began in class.

OPENING:

- I write this to you, my...
- In order to...

THE FAMILY

1. My parents, siblings, ancestors were/are...
2. Lessons they taught me...
3. Events that helped shape our family

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES, INSIGHTS

1. The ritual(s) of most meaning to me...
2. Specific teachings from values, spiritual or religious resource(s) that move me most...

PERSONAL HISTORY

1. People who strongly influenced my life...
2. Events which helped shape my life...

ETHICAL IDEALS AND PRACTICES

1. Ideals and values that found expression in my life...
2. Things I am proud of...
3. I would like to suggest to you the following...

CLOSING

1. My ardent wishes for you...
2. Dreams I have for the future...
3. Lessons (or legacy) that I would like to leave behind...
4. May God bless you...

Ethical Wills – Biblical Wills – Genesis 49, John 15-17,

RE-COMPOSING A LIFE: SESSION SIX

Inviting the Neighbours Over!

Supper/Ice-Breaker:

(1) What is one thing you would like to do in the second half of life, which you have never done, and which will just be for pure pleasure; and (2) one project you can see yourself really digging into now (or when you retire); and (3) one thing you would like to do to help someone else or your community.

Presentation:

Once upon a time there was a tribe of Native North Americans who lived north of the Arctic Circle. This particular winter, the people were struggling to find enough food to avoid starvation. The Chief announced one day that it was time to move on in search of caribou, but this time they must leave behind two old women because they have become a drain on the tribe. The two old women could not believe that they are to be left to the mercy of the elements around them; but they didn't have a choice.

The tribe moved on, and the two old women had to decide whether they would try to survive or just resign themselves to a death sentence. They decided that it was best at least to "die trying." They decided to go back to a place that they had camped many, many years ago because the place was fruitful and beautiful. However, it was quite a distance from where they began. The journey took six days of constant walking. The women pulled makeshift sleds behind them with animal skins and their belongings. Because they were now old, their joints and muscles ached every night, and in the morning they felt they could not go on. Somehow, though, they managed to keep going, and on the sixth night they arrived at their destination.

They survived the winter, and in the spring they began to prepare for the future in earnest. They trapped muskrats, beavers, and rabbits. They smoked the meat to preserve it and made clothing and hats out of the skins of the animals. They caught great quantities of fish to preserve. They also gathered firewood and stacked it all around their camp for fuel for the winter.

Meanwhile, the rest of the tribe had suffered terribly. They barely survived winter, and by the time they had found enough summer food to regain their energy and strength, winter was upon them again. Several of the children died from starvation. Eventually they decided to return

to the camp where the two old women were abandoned and were surprised to see no traces of the women. The Chief decided to send some scouts out to find the women.

When they found the two old women, they were surprised at how well they had managed without them. The women had plenty to eat and good furs to keep them warm. At this, the Chief and the rest of the tribe realized their terrible mistake in sending the women away; for the old women had great wisdom to share. They remembered places they had visited when they were young and knew of lands to go in times of famine and hardship. They knew how to survive in times of great difficulty. They had much to teach the younger generations.

The Chief and the tribe repented of their ways, and the old women gave them clothing and shared with them the food they had hunted and preserved. Most of all, they shared their wisdom.

Reunited with the younger generations in the tribe, the two old women lived several more years before dying happy.

Our western society has tended to undervalue those in the second half of life. To a large degree we are, in the words of Richard Rohr, “a first half of life culture”, largely focused on the tasks we associate with the first half of life: establishing an identity, a home, relationships, friends, career, and security. Our institutions, including our churches, tend to encourage, support, reward, and validate these first half of life tasks. Mired in what he calls the egocentric first stage of life, Rohr quotes Bill Plotkin who says that we live in a “patho-adolescent culture”.

But a society that forgets those in the second half of life, denies itself many important resources, as we saw in the story of the two old women I just shared. Every society needs to have living exemplars or models who can serve as life’s guides and replenish and nourish the rest of society. Every society needs its mentors, its Memory Keepers and its Stewards of the Mysteries of God, men and women who can show others the way.

Carl Jung once said: “The afternoon of life must also have significance of its own and cannot merely be a pitiful appendage to life’s morning.”

Maybe you remember the prophet Anna in Luke’s Gospel? In Luke 2:36-38, we discover quite a few facts about her. She was old. She was a widow. She worshipped, she fasted, and she prayed. She taught others about the Messiah. We’re told that she never left the Temple. I get the feeling that she led a very engaged life – she might have lived at the Temple, but more likely she was there when the doors opened each day and she didn’t leave until they closed. Every day people came to the Temple to pray and offer their sacrifices. I can just see Anna welcoming and encouraging and teaching and advising the people who came there. I can hear her speaking about her faith and the promised Messiah. Like old Simeon, she was acting as a mentor and witness to others. She was the Memory Keeper, the one who kept the stories alive by sharing them with others. As such she was a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God, the stories of

the people of God.

We spent a fair bit of time earlier in our sessions talking about those things we need to leave behind, as well as some of the things we want to keep. Tonight I would like to invite you to see yourself not as someone who is “retiring from” something, but rather as someone who is “retiring to” something. In other words, make a new beginning!

I would also like to return to our metaphor of the house. Now that we have completed our renovations, built our atrium, kept what we need, thrown out what we don’t need any more and moved in, there is one thing we still need to do. We need to invite people in. Invite the neighbours over! And who are our neighbours? According to Jesus, our neighbours are those who need our love and compassion.

Some of you may know that the reason this church has so many big windows was no accident. It wasn’t just to let lots of natural light into the building. It was so that people would be beckoned out into the community, to go and share the Good News of God’s love with the whole world. You see, friends, a home does not stop at the edge of a well-manicured lawn. It reaches out to those beyond that lawn, especially those in need. It invites them in, while at the same time going out to where they live.

What it Means to Become a Mentor, Keeper of Meaning and Steward of the Mysteries of God:
Creating a Mission Statement for the Second Half of Life:

Most businesses and organizations have a mission statement. Here at Siloam United Church, our mission statement is emblazoned above the entrance into our sanctuary, included in our weekly bulletins, and repeated every Sunday in our commissioning and benediction: "To be Christ to each other and God's world."

Sadly, most individuals do not have a mission statement. A lot of us have been content to "leave things to the snake". Like that video clip I sent you last night! Wasn’t that powerful! (Decide to Abandon Retirement as the Reward for Your Life!) But a mission statement can provide us with clarity to enable us to be focused on what really matters to us, and then we can intentionally let other things go. Planning makes the difference between having a mid-life crisis or a deadly boring second half, or one that is filled with meaning, service and deep satisfaction.

At this stage of life, you have a wealth of knowledge about yourself that you did not have, for example, when you were graduating from high school or even college or university or your first apprenticeship. You have an idea of what you are passionate about, what your strengths are and where you perform best, how you interact with people and how you react to varying situations. You also have a sense of how much "alone" time you need versus interaction with others, and you know whether you function better in a structured environment versus one that is unstructured.

Step One:

Think about what makes you most passionate? What has made you angry or sad in the past? What articles in the newspaper make you want to get up and do something? What painful experiences in your past could provide a passion for the future? Or think about something you are curious about. Just get something down, and begin there rather than trying to get it right on the first try.

– What causes, issues, and group of people concern you most?

– What change do you most want to help bring about in the world or right in your own neighbourhood?

Step Two:

Look back at the exercise you completed on strengths. Write down your three greatest strengths. (In the Church we often refer to these as our spiritual gifts.)

Strengths (from handouts in Session Five):

What strengths can we build on? Because identifying and building on our strengths is going to be a major factor in our successful transition to the second half of life.

Exercise:

There are lots of exercises you can do to determine your strengths. Some require an hour or several hours of your time to complete. The following is a quick way into learning about your gifts and strengths, developed by Cambridge educated Marcus Buckingham

On a piece of paper and in point form, describe a task or activity that you have done about which you can say:

- 1) You are really good at this;
- 2) When thinking about the task, you are excited – you anticipate the activity;
- 3) When doing the task you find it easy to concentrate and get absorbed in the activity, even losing track of time;
- 4) Once the task is completed, you have more energy than before.

Share your findings with your neighbour. Group sharing afterwards, as time permits and as people are comfortable.

Step Three:

Develop your personal mission statement. Keep this in place where you are likely to see it every day. For example, you may paste it to the bathroom mirror or the refrigerator.

According to management guru Peter Drucker, a mission statement is designed to say what we do why we do it, what we want to be remembered for. It is not intended to describe how we will go about doing what we do because our tactics will change as our environment and technology change.

Key Elements in Our Personal Mission Statement:

What is your greatest strength or area of competence?

What kind of people what do you care about the most?

What difference do you dream that you could make for those people or that cause?

1. What is your mission statement (calling)? Take a few minutes to fill in the blanks in the sentence below by inserting your tops strengths, then the area of your passion based on what you know now, and then insert the kind of difference you most desire to make as a result.

List:

My Strengths/Gifts:

My Passions:

The Impact I Want to Make:

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT:

With God's help I plan to use OR I am trusting God to use my _____ (gifts/strengths) to serve _____ (my area of passion), in order to _____ (the impact or difference you want to make.)

2. Split into groups of two or three and share your mission statement, asking others for input. Is it clear what strengths you bring? Does it define who or what you cause you wish to serve? Is it clear the difference you want to make?

3. Based on the feedback you received from the group, how should your mission statement change?

The Afternoon of Life

Thoroughly unprepared, we take the step into the afternoon of life. Worse still, we take this step with the false presupposition that our truths and our ideals will serve us as hitherto. But we cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning, for what was great in the morning will be little at evening and what in the morning was true, at evening will have become a lie."

The afternoon of life is just as full of meaning as the morning; only, its meaning and purpose are

different.... C.G. Jung

SEE BULLETINS FOR CLOSING WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

CLOSING RITUAL – A RITUAL FOR ENTERING INTO THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

See Abigail Rian Evans, *Healing Liturgies for the Seasons of Life*, pp. 121 ff.

Use these pages to create a new ritual for the second half of life and close with this.

Hand out Suzann's essay on Bliss (or if time, let her read it)

Express thanks to the group for their participation, ideas and feedback. Evaluation Forms should be completed after the closing ritual.

A Meditation of Endings and Beginnings (from Session Two on the Seasons of Life)

I invite you to sit in a quiet place and close your eyes lightly, not tightly. Take a couple deep cleansing breaths and allow your body to relax into slow, even breathing.

Imagine yourself looking out a window, seeing the landscape change before your very eyes. One season is ending, blending into a new season. The colour of the sky is changing from an icy grey-blue to a warmer pink. The trees begin to look just a bit fuller --no sign of green yet, but you can sense branches beginning to welcome their own new growth. What do you notice?

Open yourself to your own new season. What endings are beginning to happen in your own life and what beginnings are dawning for you? What changes are you almost ready to welcome--not quite perhaps, but the almost imperceptible direction is in your heart and on your own branches?

Imagine yourself shedding heavy coats and gloves and hats. How does that feel? What else needs to be shed in order to live fully in the new season? What is melting? As you enter spring what remnants of the colder season do you need to leave behind? Is there a chance of flooding and how will you prepare?

How do you feel as you take these new steps? As you embark on a new beginning? Are you excited and eager? Scared? Uncertain? All of the above?

Now is a good time to take another deep breath. Relax and restore yourself to slow, even, in and out and in and out breathing. Remind yourself of all the seasons of life you have moved through. So many endings and beginnings, beginnings and endings. You know how to do this. You can do this one, too.

Spring will come, and then we will have summer and fall and yes, another winter. More chances to practice endings and beginnings. What is it you want to begin in this new season and what is asking to be ended?

Take a couple deep breaths, and when you are ready, open your eyes and return to this time and space. Take a few minutes to note, perhaps in a journal when you get home this evening or just by whispering to yourself, what you felt, noticed, or learned during this brief time of meditation. What will you now bring into your life?

Blessing

May all be well as you move from one season to another.
May you do so with awareness and intention.
May you honour your own steps.
May you find peace as you end and as you begin.

GROUP ETHICAL WILL (BASED ON GRAFITTI COMMENTS):

May 27th, 2014

To My Dear Family, Friends, Church, and Community,

I am writing to you, not because I expect to die soon, but because I now see myself going through a major transition in life, and this provides me with a good opportunity to clarify what I value and what I yet hope to achieve. I hope that what I write will have meaning for you, if not now, then someday when you are around my age. It is written with deep gratitude and profound love for all of you.

First, let me say that I still have lots of things I want to do in life: things with you and for my community, but also things I want to do just for the sake of a fun, fulfilling and enjoyable life.

I want to be a “Glam-ma” someday and to see my grandchildren and nieces and nephews every week.

I also want to be a pet owner and friend again someday. As Anatole France once said, “Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened”.

I want to travel, to learn more about other peoples and parts of the world. I hope to be able to go on a cruise every year. I want to exercise more and play golf – to break ‘100’ consistently or just be able to putt! I want to see the Portland Rose Festival.

I also want to do things to nourish my soul and feed my spirit. I want to learn how to do things that make for peace, that bring me and others in my community peace. I want to learn how to meditate and pray. Most of all, I want someday to walk a spiritual trail.

I want to get further education. I want to keep learning my whole life long. As Henry Ford once said, “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young”. Maybe I can even write a book to inspire others.

Mostly, I want to just make the most of every day I am given. I want to love life, with all its beauty and simplicity, whether this means taking more time to stop and smell the flowers or to find some pussy willows. If such things can help me to care better for the earth, then my love of nature will not just be a selfish exercise but will inspire a right attitude toward God’s good creation and lead others to care for God’s world.

While I still have lots of living and learning and loving to do, I am grateful for the years that have passed and the lessons life has taught me. I want share these with you now, in the hope that they may be of help to you on your journey through this wonderful life. Here are a few things I have learned:

As I reflect on those events that have been life-changing for me, I realize that all of them involve relationships of one kind or another: getting married, the birth of my children and/or nieces and nephews, the love of parents, dear friends, and cherished pets, as well as organizations like Rotary, Church, and the Sorority club I joined. There was also the excitement I found on getting my first job, moving to new places and meeting new people, as well as the tremendous joy and relief I experienced upon my loved one’s recovery from cancer, and the forgiveness I have received and given. What this tells me is that relationships are paramount: our relationship with God and with one another. Take time to nurture your relationships. You probably know that there are all kinds of reports that the internet is starting to rob us of in-the-flesh personal connections. You can have fun on the internet and also learn a lot, but don’t live and die by virtual fun. Remember that the most fun – and the most meaning – is face-to-face and touchable.

When I think of the accomplishments of which I am most proud, in addition to my family roles, I think that my openness to trying new things outside my comfort zone has helped to stretch my horizons most. Like the time I moved to new places, tried new things, went to university, took up running, or travelled around the world. There was the time I trained and served as a doula, helping women to bring healthy babies into the world and counselling them through the whole birthing experience. Helping them birthed something new in me too! I learned new things about myself. This happened both at home and in the workplace. I will always be thankful for the challenges and hurdles I overcame at work and the wonderful sense of accomplishment I felt in my career.

Never be afraid to try new things, to journey to new places, and especially never be afraid to meet new friends. Your life will be greatly enriched by doing so. If you don't try, you don't stretch, and you don't develop. And never be afraid of making mistakes. Albert Einstein once said, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." Mahatma Gandhi observed, "Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." Author Paulo Coelho writes, "When you find your path, you must not be afraid. You need to have sufficient courage to make mistakes. Disappointment, defeat, and despair are the tools God uses to show us the way." Famous basketball coach John Wooden said that he didn't want players on his team who never made mistakes. As he said: "If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes." So never be afraid of making mistakes! I continually learned more about myself through the mistakes I made and I trust you will too. Just don't let them overwhelm you or cause you to become defeatist. Instead, let them be your friends. Moreover, always remember what our own Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote: "Isn't it nice to think that tomorrow is a new day with no mistakes in it yet?" No matter how lost or disconsolate you may be at various points in your life, remember that tomorrow is a new day! As the scriptures remind us, "This is the day that the Lord hath made. Rejoice, and be glad in it!" (Psalm 118:24)

The most important values or lessons I have learned from family and friends are:

- People are important.
- Honesty and integrity are paramount.
- Happiness is a choice.
- Kindness is to be prized above all else.
- If something is important, then you need to give 100%.
- It is important to forgive others, and that includes yourself as well!
- Take responsibility for what you do and say.
- Persevere – perseverance usually pays off in the end.
- Always do your best.
- Be someone people can depend on.
- Practise unconditional love.
- You never stop being a parent...or an aunt or uncle...or a daughter or son....or a child of God....these are full time callings.
- Practise patience and respect in all things and to all people.
- It's good to have goals and dreams, and good to share them with others too.
- The internal power of 'one' - do for your child – and for others – what you could never do for yourself ("I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something I can do". – Edward Everett Hale, Author, Clergyman)
- "Roots are easier than wings", so establish firm roots from which you can grow and maybe even one day learn to fly!
- Have Fun! Learn how to play cribbage or golf or some other neat game or sport.

- Keep your word!
- Heroes are everywhere - even in unexpected places; so are angels. Keep your eyes and ears and hearts open to them!
- Happiness is something that comes from within you, but is always directed outward and shared with others.
- Be brave and follow your heart.

While I may not have always got it right (who has?), I believe that I have made a sincere effort to practise the following, which I regard as my strongest and most cherished traits or values:

- Caring about other people.
- Showing empathy for others.
- Extending kindness and comfort whenever possible.
- Resilience
- Being thoughtful, loyal, and trustworthy.
- Seeking to live out my calling as daughter, son, parent, uncle, aunt, mentor, Keeper of Memory, First Nations, Canadian citizen, and most of all as a servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God.
- Loving my family and cats unconditionally.
- Always trying to be a compassionate person and a good listener.
- Understanding of the feelings of others.
- Dependable.
- My loving nature.
- To always be a person that others can count on.

I pray that the above will have found their way from my heart to yours and that the practice of these virtues will become a central and natural part of your life journey. For as the Scottish author and poet George MacDonald once said, "If instead of a gem, or even a flower, we should cast the gift of a loving thought into the heart of a friend, that would be giving as the angels give". Remember too what the great American civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., once said: "Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love". Or as D. Elton Trueblood once observed, "A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit". The English poet William Wordsworth wrote, "That best portion of a good man's life; his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love". And the famous Greek fable writer Aesop said: "No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted".

And finally, my dear ones, from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 13:13 please remember: "For now there are faith, hope, and love. But of these three, the greatest is love".

Know that I love you with all my heart and pray constantly for your well-being. Know too that, at the end of the day, love is all that matters: love of God and family and friends, to be sure, but also love of the stranger. As the author of the Book of Hebrews writes, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". (Hebrews 13:2) And as American civil rights leader the Reverend Jesse Jackson has said: "Never look down on anybody unless you're helping them up".

To be sure, my dear ones, as Mother Theresa once wrote: "At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in. Hungry not only for bread -- but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing -- but naked for human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks -- but homeless because of rejection".

Herein lies our true vocation, our true calling: to love as Christ loves us. In loving thus, you will find genuine happiness and meaning. As the famous missionary doctor Albert Schweitzer once said to a graduating class: "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found a way to serve". You can't go wrong, dear ones, if you remember to search for your happiness and your calling in service to others, especially if you look for it in that place talked about by author and pastor Frederick Buechner: "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Now, as Buechner also writes, "Go where your best prayers take you", and know that my love goes with you.

Your loving partner, parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, sister, brother, child, and friend,

(Your Name)