

MCCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BEND AND NOT BREAK:
VOCATIONAL FLOURISHING IN THE MIDST OF BURNOUT TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

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To discover, embrace, gain expertise and then be commissioned to work in the vocational path to which you feel God has called you is a sacred undertaking and beautiful privilege. The passion, fervor and genuine love for the call that helped you arrive at this vocational path are unfortunately not the skills that will help you remain sustainable. Chaplains are asked to bear witness to the holy breadth of the human experience and, after time, this is blessing that can wear on the heart. God wants us to feel in complete fullness alongside others. We are called, as children of God, to live in joy and flourish in our work. This joy can be found while cultivating compassion toward the other. When we are able to *rejoice with those who rejoice*, and live into that joy, we are better able to authentically *weep with those who weep*. Resilience education for chaplains, to gain skills and tools for the purpose of resisting the effects of the cumulative emotional burdens to which we empathically bear witness, is important for the sake of their vocational sustainability and flourishing. Clinical Pastoral Education intern students are an ideal demographic to offer this education to as it can easily be added and then utilized within their planned unit curriculum. Their model for education is do-reflect-do and this fits well with the methodology for practical resilience skill integration. Practical resilience skills are available, portable, free, and simple to learn – but so far they have not been a part of any chaplain training curriculum. Noticing this, I offered four separate didactics in the first half of the CPE unit that help the students understand the importance of holding onto a grounded purpose, incorporate mindfulness practices for stress reduction and compassion building, and have intentional attunement to and nurturing of a supportive community. The second half of their CPE was a time for the students to utilize resilience skills while working as a chaplain. To evaluate the retention, integration, usefulness and relevancy of the educational sessions, I used questionnaires, scales, and interviews. This helped me to qualitatively assess the effectiveness of both the strategy employed as well as the content offered.

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“You have to have people who you’ve heard sing those songs in strange lands. You have to have people who have been able to make you laugh in the places where all you want to do is cry. You have to have conditions set up where those people who have learned how to ride the winds of chaos can say to you, ‘come on, let me show you how to do that.’”¹

First and foremost, I give thanks to God. I am overwhelmed by the bounty of friends, colleagues and mentors I have had along the way. I am deeply grateful for each person who has laughed with me, wept with me, challenged me and loved me while on this sometimes funny, always beautiful and deeply sacred journey in life and ministry. This project is rooted in my understanding that we fundamentally need one another – I would not have been able to think deeply, explore, or write about resilience without a supportive community. Thank you to the faculty of McCormick Theological Seminary – I have treasured the enriching conversations and guidance throughout the years. A special thank you to my advisor, Jenny—your gentle and critical expertise has helped me refine the expression of my thoughts. Thank you to my wise and empathic colleagues in the Department of Religion, Health, and Human Values: to Clayton and Mark, for your care, support, encouragement, counsel, and the ways you have valued my personal flourishing; to Mary for trusting me with your students; to George for stirring in me a curiosity for research; and to the summer 2017 intern chaplains, for your curiosity, passion and engagement. I have fantastic clinical colleagues throughout Rush University Medical Center who have offered their vulnerability, compassion and competence to the tireless work they do – a desire to see them flourish is a significant reason I began this project. I have had pastors, mentors, family and friends who have oriented and reoriented me to joy. I give thanks for Dick, Darlene, and Gregg – you have each learned to ride the winds of chaos and modeled what it looks like to have joyful hearts in ministry – thank you for showing me how to do that. I give thanks to my clergy coping cohort – each of you sing songs in strange lands and have been a buoy to me as I pursue this call. I give thanks for my family, especially my spouse, who has been steadfast with patience and love during this writing process. Kevin, you are a partner who makes me laugh when all I want to do is cry. And finally, I would like to give thanks for each story I have been privileged to bear witness to and walk alongside—they each live in my heart and inform who I am as a pastor and chaplain.

¹ Yale Center for Faith and Culture, “Theology of Joy: Willie James Jennings with Miroslav Volf,” *YouTube*, YouTube, September 19, 2014, February 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fKD4Msh3rE>.

Introduction

In the recent past, a very close friend and colleague completely left the chaplaincy world due to burnout. He was, very honestly, the best chaplain I have known. He is an energetic and deeply empathic caregiver who loved honing his craft. Staff and patients sought him out because of his approachable leadership and compassionate heart. I watched genuine shock and disbelief wash over people's faces as they learned he had burnt out. He would perform and excel in the hospital and then weep in the safety of our shared office because his heart felt weary. He never presented, in his work, as someone on the road to burnout. I think it surprised him as much as it did everyone else. The experience of watching my dear friend and colleague burnout heightened my sense that burnout could happen to anyone of us – and that a deep love of the vocation would not alone be enough to keep a care-giving career afloat.

Burnout looms large as a threat to the careers of those in the care-giving professions. I work at a large urban academic hospital, an intersection where the inter-professional workforce shares a common concern of vocational sustainability. As a chaplain who works alongside the medical care team I can see the reality of burnout all around. My medical colleagues talk about it freely, and staff turnover is a constant reminder of its reality. Clergy burnout is something that I have seen first hand, both in the parish and in specialized ministries.

I currently have the privilege to walk alongside those discerning professional ministry in the PC(USA) in Chicago, Illinois. I get to hear their fervor for the church, their zeal for justice work, their enthusiasm for equipping the saints – it is something that gives me hope for the future of the church. The shadow side is that this exuberance for professional ministry is often met with barriers and burdens that can leave them feeling drained, fatigued, weary and doubting their original call. No one walks into their chosen career, especially those in the care giving

professions who likely chose their career based on their central values, presuming that their metaphorical gas tank of vocational flourishing will empty itself anytime soon.

The year that my best friend and I were ordained, our first year after seminary, we decided to begin meeting together to talk about what it felt like to be serving in ministry. She was working in a large urban parish and I was at a large urban medical center. We did this because we had a sense that this was going to be hard work and we wanted to be intentional about carving out space to share our experiences with one another. Some days we would gush over our vocational lives, “Can you believe they pay me to do this?” Other days the fatigue would feel too strong and we would contemplate opening a bakery and leaving ministry behind. Clergy (parish and specialized) are often the people sought after to bear witness to both the beauty and brokenness of the human condition. Clergy are invited into the intimate moments of celebration and grief. From my own experience I can feel how the grief can seem like it outweighs the celebration. I am sometimes called when things go well, but I am always called when things go poorly.

When one gets beyond studenthood there are rarely built-in avenues to learn how to combat the impact of workplace suffering and how to handle the gift of empathy. Empathy, the capacity to feel part of what another is feeling, is central to the work of a chaplain. The momentous depth of human suffering encountered in the hospital means that even just one shift can leave an empathic chaplain feeling depleted. A well-trained chaplain or clergy person has the capacity to bear witness to someone’s grief, pain, anxiety and anger. To help someone not feel alone, and represent love, during someone’s most bleak moments is one of the most important aspects of ministry. This difficult and beautiful act of love has its costs for the caregiver. Burnout

among caregivers is well observed. This is not surprising once one has felt the impact of caring for another in the depths of their agony.

Theoretical Framework

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”¹

The work of a hospital chaplain is deeply meaningful and wildly intense. Chaplains are invited into the fragile and vulnerable spaces that we as a culture try so hard avoid. These exposed cracks in the veneer of our constructed outward persona are where some of our deepest sorrows reside. Grief and sorrow, like joy, are shared through the common language of embrace and love. Bleary eyed and tearful strangers have invited me into their holy moments and looked to me for guidance as they navigate the heartbreaking waters of final earthly goodbyes.

Ash Wednesday is always a poignant day in the hospital. More healthcare workers and patients than I ever expect ask for the imposition of ashes. Our common fragility is palpable. One particular Ash Wednesday I was up on the Labor and Delivery unit offering ashes to the staff when one of the nurses let me know she had a patient (and her spouse) who requested I come by for ashes. This woman and her husband only spoke Spanish. Christian ritual is so deeply integrated within our shared language of faith that we were able to find deep connection in our humanness. She was pregnant – full term—but her baby was found not to have heart tones. She was to deliver a stillborn baby. All of us were filled with tears, and at their request, I prayed, choked up, put my ashy thumb on their foreheads and told them each "remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Just after this she went through truly terrible labor. They then asked me to baptize their stillborn daughter. They named her "Joyce." I poured holy water and offered words from scripture (Mark 10: 13-16) and said, "Joyce, I baptize you in the name of the

¹ Rom 12:15. New Revised Standard Version Bible translation

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." All of us wept. We were a doctor, a nurse, a chaplain and a heartbroken family – all with ashes on our foreheads. We prayed. Normally the ritual of baptism is about and for the living and the imposition of ashes reminds us of our finitude and mortality. Yet in this moment, I imparted the ritual about living onto the dead and the one about our mortality onto the living. Both are about the hope we have in knowing that, with absolute assurance, in life and in death we belong to God.

I wept with this family and I wept with our doctors and nurses. Every chaplain has stories upon stories—with faces and feelings and sacred connections—that remain in their hearts just as this one does mine. The work of a chaplain necessitates we feel alongside others who are often in deep pain, and empathy requires we feel in a small portion some of what the other feels. This is beautifully sacred work, but over time it can be hard on the staying power of the heart and soul.

There is considerable evidence that burnout is a problem for both clergy and healthcare workers. Since the 1970's researchers have paid particular attention to burnout within human service professions. Burnout is classically understood and defined as having “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.”² Chaplains can be found at the nexus of the intensity of the healthcare setting and their inherent call to sit with others in the midst of suffering and loss. The risk for chaplain burnout is apparent. The knowledge that God wants us to flourish, coupled with the experience of weariness and uncertainty about whether we can continue in the call to which we once felt so sure is a terrible conundrum. To burn out doing what we once felt God calling us to is tragic. If chaplains can learn to build, hone and nurture resilience skills in the same way they do their craft, they can have higher long-term vocational sustainability. Training in resilience can offer a route for chaplains to grasp hold of a deep and grounded joy that then allows them to be present with sorrow.

² Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (Cambridge, MA: ISHK, 2003).2.

“So then let’s also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let’s throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up”³

This call from Hebrews is not an invitation to endure affliction; it is an appeal for staying power. Often Christians, including myself, see burden carrying as something close to spiritual fortitude. Yet maybe it is closer to spiritual pride. The mentality that silent burden-holding somehow proves strength is prevalent within our culture. This mentality may also be connected to the desire to not forget. Remembering every single moment and sorrowful burden is how we know we truly cared. The fallacy here is thinking that constant consciousness is the same as remembering. We can remember through our integration. I can hold someone’s story, not by recalling their trauma everyday, but by reflecting on how their experience expanded my capacity for empathy.

Our God did not call any one of us into isolated ministry. We are called to be in the mess and beauty of it all with others – with holy friends, mentors and community. Struggle is real. Races are hard. Our call is to see that we are not alone and we are very much a part of something greater than ourselves. The journey set before us will make us weary, even more so as we carry extra burden. We will need to shake loose extra baggage over and over and over again. We can keep doing this – keep getting back in the mess of it all – because a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us.

Resilience in ministry means that we must work on the skill of integrating new experiences without those very stories becoming weights around our necks. For this, we need community and we need continued renewal of our sense of purpose. When we have people who

³ Heb 12:1. Common English Bible Translation

we can trust with our story, and who care deeply about us, we can lean into them when we lose our sense of self. Because they know and love us, they can help us to weave both the celebration and the grief back into the tapestry of our narrative. Our affection for one another and for the divine propels us into our chosen vocation. Our affection for our divinely given call, and our hopes for its longevity, should compel us to pay special attention to its maintenance.

The ability to bounce back from adversity is not something we were granted through inheritance. It is a learned skill that can be expanded, deepened and fortified through practice. Through the lens of both science and spirituality, we can see that our fascinating brains have the capacity to expand through mindfulness practices. Practical resilience skills are available, portable, free, and simple to learn – but so far they have not been a part of any chaplain training curriculum.

Noticing this, I set out to offer a series of resilience didactics to intern chaplains at Rush University Medical Center. Resilience is fostered through seeking and cultivating community, intentional reflection and integration of one's purpose within their work, and the ability to access mindfulness practices to continue to cultivate compassion and peacefulness. Resilience is also fostered through practice. A major impediment to successful resilience training lies in the very first step of convincing student chaplains that this is important to their vocational sustainability. Clinical Pastoral Education offers a rare kind of studenthood where intern chaplains are practicing, reflecting and practicing again all within a covenantal learning community. This is an ideal setting to learn about and practice resilience.

As a secondary benefit, chaplains are well positioned, if they are able to learn resilience skills themselves, to informally teach these skills to their care-giving clinical colleagues. Burnout is a topic of particular interest and concern for both nurses and doctors as they experience the

demands and stresses of hospital life. On an institutional level, the management of the hospital is concerned with healthcare provider burnout due to the high cost of employee turnover. Chaplains consider care for staff to be a significant and important aspect of their role in the hospital. Right now chaplains are well trained to listen empathically to caregiver distress. They are not, however, trained to offer concrete help when listening to signs of burnout. If chaplains, early in their training, are given tools for their own resiliency, and then have personal value in the maintenance of their vocational satisfaction, then chaplains can informally help encourage culture shifts within their inter-professional teams.

Background

The hospital setting is a strange, raw, complex, diverse, difficult and wonderful place to serve in ministry. Rush University Medical Center, where I serve as a staff chaplain, is a large academic medical center in Chicago, Illinois. Rush's story begins on March 2nd 1837, two days before the city of Chicago was founded. It was the first healthcare institution in Chicago. Its founder, Dr. Daniel Brainard, named the school in honor of Dr. Benjamin Rush, the only physician with medical school training to sign the Declaration of Independence. The general hospital associated with the medical college was the first in Chicago.⁴

Hospital chaplaincy has a long history in Chicago and at Rush University Medical Center. Rush is among the many hospitals working to train chaplains through Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). CPE is interfaith professional education for ministry. It uses a do-reflect-do model to help prepare students for pastoral ministry. The accredited and robust CPE program at Rush University Medical Center is housed in the College of Health Sciences. There are a wide variety of vocational paths that either recommend or require at least one unit of CPE. Some

⁴ <https://www.rush.edu/about-us/about-rush-university-medical-center/history>

students go on to become parish clergy, some move into the non-profit agency world and then others continue their training to work toward becoming a board certified staff chaplain.

As a student or candidate preparing for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) many are required by their ecclesial process (the Commission on Preparation for Ministry) to have at least one unit of CPE. Not all ecclesial processes require this, but it is recommended by most mainline denominations. After completing a twelve-week CPE internship while in seminary, I went on, post M.Div gradation, to do a yearlong residency. I was then hired as a staff chaplain following the completion of my residency and was able to begin working toward and subsequently become board certified. I, and my fellow board certified chaplain colleagues, now maintain certification through required continuing education. At Rush, as a staff chaplain, I am involved in both the clinical setting in the medical center as well as in the academic setting with our CPE students. CPE groups, with their trained CPE supervisors, operate within the Department of Religion, Health and Human Values. My role with the students is one of clinical mentoring and adjunct teaching. It is important to distinguish my role from the role of a supervisor. A CPE supervisor has additional training and certification for pastoral formation in this context. It is the student's supervisor who sets the curriculum for the unit, sits in on and facilitates all group sessions, has weekly individual supervision with each student and then writes their official final evaluation upon graduation from the unit. My role, as a staff chaplain, is completely outside of their standard group functioning. Supervisors at Rush do not have any clinical responsibilities and so, while they create space for formation and reflection, they often rely on staff chaplains to offer guidance and training surrounding the practical details of chaplain education. If staff chaplains have expertise in a particular area they can be invited into a CPE group to offer specialized didactics.

The PC(USA) requires every candidate seeking ordination to have at least one unit of CPE to help in their formation for ministry. We see it as an opportunity to learn emotional intelligence, practical and pastoral theology, group dynamics, and self-reflection in a real world setting. CPE can be an invaluable opportunity to allow for an occasion to walk alongside heartbreak and tragedy. These pieces of the human condition are ever prevalent, and knowing how to gently and pastorally accompany people in the midst of them generally comes with life experience. CPE allows those for whom these experiences have not been a part of their personal life to bear witness to it in real encounters. It also allows those who have been shaped by personal tragedy or grief to explore how their experiences can inform their pastoral care.

Not surprisingly, this kind of intense experience, can stir up one's own grief. It can also present the student with the problem of what might be experienced as *feeling too much*. Good supervisors are adept at helping students navigate these overwhelming feelings and invite them to work toward a more integrated self. While some students express finding CPE too overwhelming to want to pursue it as a full time career, there are others who express how meaningful it was, and so they pursue professional chaplaincy by applying for residency. In my experience most students, no matter where they end up working, find their CPE internships valuable in their pastoral formation.

Comments from students who have expressed sentiments of professional chaplaincy being too overwhelming seem to point to a fear of burnout. Alongside documentation of medical caregiver burnout, there is a lot of evidence of clergy burnout. This was a topic often evoked during my time in seminary. While I never sought out formal statistics, anecdotal evidence of this phenomenon was abundant. Subconsciously, but with fervor, I held the belief that love and passion for a chosen vocation would be all I would need for a long, thriving and meaningful

career. This proves to be dangerous and tragically false. The unhelpful logic is that if I burned out, it would be because I did not love it enough. A healthier understanding would be that burnout is not a result of a lack of love or devotion, but in part a failing in the skill set needed to sustain a difficult but beautiful career in ministry.

There is a lack of intentional focus on training students entering care giving fields about how to be sustainable in their vocation. The rate of burnout could be a direct result of not having been taught skill sets required for vocational sustainability. It is also important to normalize the need to supplement our passion and love with this type of training. Burnout is not a result of lack of love and passion for one's career but is a result of the overwhelming burdens that accompany difficult ministry work. The disciplined and intentional way that I learned to do exegesis continues to serve my preaching career. If approached with the same rigor and then used throughout a career, resilience training could have significant practical importance for future ministers in their ability to have a long and healthy career.

The trend of caregiver burnout is not a well-kept secret and its prevalence does not surprise anyone within these vocations. A significant barrier to integrated vocational resilience training seems to be at least two fold. First, the knowledge of its existence does not seem to have stymied its affect. To intentionally give focus and energy to one's sustainability is completely voluntary. I suspect that there is an inversely proportional correlation between the strength with which one holds onto the belief that passion and love of vocation will be enough to keep one going and the level at which one prioritizes on-going vocational resilience practices. I suspect that many have a low priority for nurturing resilience skills because of a latent belief that they are something that we should just be inherently good at, and so when life becomes emotionally and logistically arduous, these very skills that could have helped us are not robust

enough due to neglect. To see resilience not as a one-time task to achieve knowledge about but as an on-going craft to hone is an important aspect for continued successful integration.

Another barrier is that we are people who work within systems. The institutional structures that surround us create the very real working conditions we occupy. There is only so much we can control in our work settings without consequences. There are some things in a system that are negotiable and there are others that are not – this all depends on the system one is in, how big it is, if one has power within it, and how flexible it is able to be.

Research and Literature Review

Theology

It is easy to find deep meaning in work as a chaplain. It is a humbling experience to be a stranger invited into the vulnerable space of another. With the wholeness of oneself, a chaplain enters the room of another and attempts to convey that they are not afraid of the grief and sorrow they may encounter. In communicating this with one's body language, voice, and eyes, the chaplain hopes the other may feel less alone. The pain that resides in the soul can feel invisible to others, and the chaplain's empathic response – allowing the other to feel seen – means that the chaplain feels some of these spiritual aches. Henri Nouwen says, “no one can help anyone without becoming involved, without entering with his whole person into the painful situation, without taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or even destroyed in the process.”⁵ Nouwen points to the idea that, when we feel some of what another feels, there are real life consequences to our own spirit. Nouwen believes that this is “real” martyrdom, and that, “the beginning and end of all Christian leadership is to give your life for others.”⁶ This type of teaching, however—

⁵ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York, NY: The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1990).72.

⁶ *Ibid.*

martyrdom as an extension of empathic care – is what leads to burnout. While we are called to feel alongside another in their joys and sorrows, it must not be at the cost of our own ultimate flourishing.

Martyrdom is not the only way we can approach the Christian call to come alongside others in their pain. Clinical Pastoral Education students and pastoral theology students spend a lot of time diving into heavy grief laden topics. This is vital in a grief-avoidant culture. We need more humans in this world who are not afraid to plumb the depths of sorrow with another. As students plunge into these waters they are taught to be self-reflective regarding their own grief histories. The more awareness one has of their own issues, the less likely they are to project them onto others. This is foundational to CPE. A common side effect of centering grief is the displacement of any intentional focus on its counterpart, joy. Theologian Mary Clark Moschella, claims that joy, alongside grief, should be part of the self-reflective work of the theological student as well. Knowing one's wounds and raw spots can be joined with an exploration into one's own "embodied wonder, healing, hope, and joy" for the sake of coming alongside others in the fullness of their experience.⁷

In the pastoral world, joy can get misinterpreted as a bully to sorrow – asking sorrow to get out of the way, avoidantly trying to be the loudest emotion and in turn hushing grief's desire to be heard and seen. In reality, we can often embody both. When parents lose a child, groans of almost unbearable agony are often expressed alongside complicated feelings that try to celebrate a life lost too soon. Partnering joy and sorrow, and allowing them to be in paradoxical relationship within us, can feel more authentic than clear delineation. Kahlil Gibran, a Lebanese-

⁷ Mary Clark Moschella, "Calling and Compassion: Elements of Joy in Lived Practices of Care," in *Joy and human flourishing: Essays on theology, culture and the good life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Philadelphia, PA, United States: Fortress Press, U.S., 2015) 97-110.

born writer and thinker, speaks to the juxtaposed partnering of these two emotions when he poetically says:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.
And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.
Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."
But I say unto you, they are inseparable.
Together they come, and when one sits, alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.⁸

Joy and sorrow are intimately intertwined. One seems to always point to the other in a meaningful way.

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes about this paradox at length. He links the seemingly opposed emotions of joy and sorrow with love. He says, "The more deeply love draws us into life, the more alive and, simultaneously, the more capable of sorrow we become."⁹ He points to Easter, reminding Christians that the deep pain of Jesus' death is intimately linked to the celebration of the resurrection.¹⁰ Good Friday and Easter are inextricably bound to one another. In the same way, Good Friday is felt so deeply because of the profound meaning Jesus' life had on the world. Moltmann points to our capacity for these emotions when he writes, "Only

⁸ Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, 91st ed. (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1995) 29-30

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, "Christianity: A Religion of Joy," in *Joy and human flourishing: Essays on theology, culture and the good life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Philadelphia, PA, United States: Fortress Press, U.S., 2015)14.

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Joy* (London: SCM Pres Ltd., 1973)50.

those who are capable of joy can feel pain at their own and other's suffering."¹¹ This is a central point for the pastoral caregiver. It is our capacity for joy that allows us to be near, and know, another's pain, as well as our own. Only those who know the joy of life, who affirm life in all its dimensions, who seek human flourishing can feel the pain that is associated with that love. In this way joy is not an obnoxious and dominating interrupter. It is in fact the very thing that allows the space for the recognition of its paradoxical partner. Moschella, making a similar point to Moltmann but with a makeweight emphasis, says, "It is not an easy joy that I have been after, but a deep joy that knows sorrow and yet leans toward the light."¹² Her directive for pastoral caregivers is to examine their own joy, not for the purpose of entering another's celebration, but in order to enter into the depths of pain without concern that the burden will drag one down permanently.¹³ This joy buoys us, not in micro moments that could look like grief-avoidance, but in the macro sense – vocational resilience. This joy allows us to experience deep sorrow with less fear. Affirming this kind of joy is not to see the world with rose-colored glasses, because "this joy is not naïve, but seeing, and committed to caring."¹⁴

German pastor-theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a man who willingly entered into social and political strife, wrote extensively while imprisoned by the Nazis. During the winter of 1944 he says, "I believe we honor God better by knowing everything we value in life God has given us, and loving and enjoying it to the full."¹⁵ God does not want us to emotionally perish; God wants us to flourish. Bonhoeffer's invitation to embrace the fullness of life does not come from

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

¹² Moschella, "Calling and Compassion." 111.

¹³ Ibid., 110.

¹⁴ Ibid., 101.

¹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer–Reader's Edition ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), Jan 24, 1944, 251.

the privileged space of a life without suffering. This ability to lean toward joy even while the world around us swirls with anguish is one that must be cultivated.

It is important to have models for us to look to as we contemplate how to live fully in the way that Bonhoeffer articulates. His life and struggles help ground this call in a realistic way. It is important for this conversation to be grounded in the real world or else it becomes nothing more than aspirational work. We live in a time where the world knows profound brokenness and strife. In its midst we have two moral-public figures, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who exemplify deep, paradoxical and apparent joy. Looking to these leaders helps give shape to what Moschella, Bonhoeffer, Moltmann, Gibran and Nouwen have pointed toward. These two spiritual leaders, and friends, met in Dharamsala on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday. They had planned to meet in South Africa when the Archbishop turned 80 (four years prior), but were unable to due to the governmental restrictions. Nevertheless, the two still met despite challenges like the Archbishop's re-diagnosis of cancer for the purpose of discussing joy and "sharing what two friends, from very different worlds, have witnessed and learned in [their] long lives."¹⁶ The account of their time together is one filled with laughter, tenderness, mutual affection, recognition of pain – both personal and global – and profound and abiding joy.¹⁷

It is truly a wonder that these two people, who have seen so much overwhelming pain in their lives, and in the world, would claim such audacious joy. Tutu speaks theologically, claiming God's desire for us, when he says, "God wants you to be like God. Filled with life and goodness and laughter – *and joy*." He continues,

¹⁶ The Dalai Lama, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, and Douglas Carlton Abrams, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* (United States: Avery Publishing Group, 2016).x.

¹⁷ Ibid.

“God, who is forever pouring out God’s whole being from all of eternity, wants you to flourish. God wants you to be filled with joy and excitement and ever longing to be able to find what is so beautiful in God’s creation: the compassion of so many, the caring and the sharing. And God says, Please, my child, help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what my child? As you do – hey, presto – you discover joy. Joy, which you had not sought, comes as a gift, as almost the reward for this non-self-regarding caring for others.”¹⁸

Tutu’s insight expands our discussion of Moschella and Moltmann and brings it to full circle. He claims God’s desire for us to flourish, in no uncertain terms, and then ties this joy to our call to offer compassion to a suffering world. He tells us that if we begin with compassion, joy will surprisingly be a byproduct. This emboldened joy then feeds our ability to sit next to suffering.

Joy does not get rid of suffering, but rather makes us more full. In our culture we are taught that we can feel one thing or another, but our lived experience is much messier than that. Our complex lives point to a different, richer reality. Bonhoeffer, while sitting in prison and listening to sirens signaling possible air raids, writes about our Christian capacity to feel many things at once. He says, “Everything, whether objective or subjective, disintegrates into fragments. Christianity, on the other hand, puts us into many different dimensions of life at the same time; in a way we accommodate God, and the whole world within us. We weep with those who weep at the same time we rejoice with those who rejoice.”¹⁹ This call from Romans 12:15 is central to the vocation of a pastoral caregiver.

Archbishop Tutu seems to be thinking of the call of Romans 12:15 to hold many things at once. He speaks of the inherent vulnerability when we understand this relationship between joy and sorrow, and says, “Discovering more joy does not, I am sorry to say, save us from the inevitability of hardship and heartbreak. In fact, we may cry more easily, but we will laugh more easily too. Perhaps we are just more alive. Yet as we discover more joy, we can face suffering in

¹⁸ Ibid., 298.

¹⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*. 396.

a way that enables rather than embitters. We have hardship without becoming hard. We have heartbreak without being broken.”²⁰ This is what I hope for in the resilience sought by the pastoral caregiver for vocational sustainability. This offers a textured, and not fatalistic, understanding of how one can offer empathic care over and over and over again.

What Tutu speaks of is not reckless joy but an intentional orientation toward joyfulness that deepens one’s capacity to feel and know sorrow. While we can be surprised by joy, we also have control over our attunement toward the emotion. Miroslav Volf emphasizes that the nature of the experience of joy lies in valuing any particular given circumstance as good. He says that we “have significant control over how we *construe* a situation and whether we are properly attentive to these unowed goods.”²¹

While His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu were offering their perspectives on joy, I appreciated the ongoing and honest exchanges they shared. Tutu, after detailing some of the harrowing story of how the Dalai Lama came to be in exile, summarized with the casual and relatable observation, “By rights, the Dalai Lama should be a sourpuss.”²² This rang authentic and real. I too wondered how these men could exude so much joy, given their lives of trial. Throughout their sharing, over and over again, they each spoke of a joyful orientation as a muscle to train – an orientation of intention. Volf writes about how we interpret a given situation, and that seems to be the first step for the Dalai Lama and Tutu. The next step, for them both in different ways, is to practice this posture.²³ When we cultivate this attunement, we can have deeper meaning in both our joys and sorrows.

²⁰ The Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams, *The Book of Joy*, 12.

²¹ Miroslav Volf, “The Crown of the Good Life: A Hypothesis,” in *Joy and Human Flourishing: Essays on Theology, Culture and the Good Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Philadelphia, PA, United States: Fortress Press, U.S., 2015) 132-133.

²² The Dalai Lama, Tutu, and Abrams, *The Book of Joy*, 39.

²³ Ibid.

Bonhoeffer, pointing toward a similar sentiment, says, “If a heart has the right disposition it must have room for both sorrow and joy.”²⁴ I believe that the disposition Bonhoeffer refers to is a capacity, and a capacity is cultivated through practice. Pain and suffering are realities of our lives and of this world. Joy is not a denial of this reality; it is an orientation that, when cultivated, can help us not only bear our own pain, but also deepen our compassion for others. I think that if we can pay attention to our joys, we will not only be less tempted to exert grief denial within our care giving, but we can also bolster our reservoir that allows us to repeatedly sit in darkness and depths.

Life giving, love affirming, bold joy does not happen upon us, it comes to us in how we make meaning—in our relationships, and with the world around us. Joy is deep and expansive. Moltmann nuances the definition of joy as opposed to “fun.” He says, “Joy is enduring and puts its mark on one’s attitude to living. Fun is short-term and serves amusement ... we are created for joy.”²⁵ He then pivots and paints joy as an enduring force that resists the consuming power of suffering and all that obfuscate its reality. His understanding of joy, as a motivating agent, compels us toward compassion.²⁶

Joy, having a deep and profound significance in our lives, has the ability to be powerful, meaningful, and transformative. Volf says, “In choosing between meaning and pleasure we *always* make the wrong choice. Pleasure without meaning is vapid; meaning without pleasure is crushing. In this way, each is nihilistic without the other. But we don’t need to choose between the two. The unity of meaning and pleasure, which we experience as joy, is given with the God

²⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers From Prison*, 44.

²⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, “Christianity: A Religion of Joy,” in *Joy and human flourishing: Essays on theology, culture and the good life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Philadelphia, PA, United States: Fortress Press, U.S., 2015) 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

who is love.”²⁷ God calls us to seek and identify the meaning within joy. Uncoupling these, in our life and in our vocation, is a recipe for burnout. Clergy follow their calls from God and choose meaningful vocations in parishes, hospitals, and agencies. When we lose joy it can be overwhelming and devastating. Joy, as an intentional orientation, cultivated over time, can be a sustaining force in our desire for meaningful vocational endurance.

Burnout

From a theological perspective, what we colloquially refer to as “burnout” can be understood as the loss of one’s joy. It is common parlance today to talk about seeing, and maybe even feeling, symptoms of burnout. While this has been a part of lived experiences for generations (and generations), the term itself was not coined or deeply studied until the 1970’s.

In 1974, psychologist Herbert Freudenberger began to popularize the use of the term “burn-out” and describe the feelings with which it was associated.²⁸ “He believed that it was a discrete factor, signified by physical and emotional indicators and linked with a predisposition to fail, to wear out, or to become exhausted through excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources.”²⁹ Freudenberger observed this in the people he worked alongside and self-identified with the very “feeling state” he coined.³⁰ He saw this as a circumstance that one should not feel ashamed by and one in which even well intentioned people often found themselves.³¹ He argued that burnout is a circumstance that would not improve by being ignored.³²

²⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion In A Globalized World* (United States: Yale University Press, 2016) 201.

²⁸ Herbert J. Freudenberger, “Staff Burn-out,” *Journal of Social Issues* 30, no. 1 (January 1974), doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1974.tb00706. x.

²⁹ Kelvin J. Randall, “Clergy Burnout: Two Different Measures,” *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 3 (January 3, 2013), doi:10.1007/s11089-012-0506-4.

³⁰ Freudenberger, *Staff Burn-out*, x.

³¹ Freudenberger, *Burn-out: The Organizational Menace*, 26-27.

³² Freudenberger, *Burn-Out: How to Beat the High Cost of Success*, 12.

In the 1980's, psychologist, Christian Maslach began her research on the same topic. She defines burnout as, "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment."³³ The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most well-known, widely used, multidimensional tool for assessing workplace burnout for people within the human services professions.³⁴ The MBI scores test-takers on a scale measured against a normative distribution from low to moderate to high degrees of experienced burnout.³⁵ Maslach makes it clear that there are layers of factors that, when compiled together, create circumstances for burnout. She generally understands them to be of three different categories: individual, interpersonal, and institutional.³⁶ Each category has a role to play in contributing to the conditions that make burnout likely. While we can practice and cultivate ways to cope with the latter two categories, the individual level is really the place where we, as individuals, have the most control.

Barry A. Farber offers nuance between Freudenberger and Maslach by identifying Freudenberger's approach as clinical, given that he was trained as a psychoanalyst, and Maslach's approach as empirical, given that she is a social psychologist by training.³⁷ Farber sees their two approaches as complimentary: Freudenberger focuses primarily on case studies and the individual response to stressful work place environments while Maslach pays more attention to the relationship between individual aspects and environmental realities.³⁸ He highlights that while there is general agreement among burnout researchers regarding some of

³³ Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (Cambridge, MA: ISHK, 2003), 2.

³⁴ Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson, and Michael P. L. Leiter, "Maslach Burnout Inventory," in *Evaluating stress: A book of resources 3*, ed. Carlos P. Zalaquett and Richard J. Wood (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 214.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

³⁶ Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*, 236.

³⁷ Barry A. Farber, "Introduction: A Critical Perspective on Burnout," in *Stress and Burnout in the Human Service Professions*, ed. Barry A. Farber (New York: Pergamon Press, 1983), 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the hallmarks of burnout (“attitudinal, emotional, and physical”), ascertaining an individual’s state of burnout is much more difficult because “burnout is a *process*, not an *event*.”³⁹

A lot of attention has been paid to clergy burnout, including *Pulpit & Pew*, “a multi-year research project on Protestant and Catholic pastoral leadership...at Duke University Divinity School with support from the Lilly Endowment, Inc.”⁴⁰ Their research specifically looks at clergy who have left the parish for various reasons. When they examined those who had left due to burnout, which comprised twelve percent,⁴¹ they concluded, “ministers are at risk for burnout due to the multiple roles they must fulfill and the pressures they feel from all sides. We might go so far as to say that ministry is a high-risk occupation in this respect. All church organizations need to recognize this problem and institute safeguards.”⁴²

As burnout research has evolved, so have the tools used to measure its presence. The MBI has been revised and shown to be able to prognosticate the likelihood of one leaving their job.⁴³ William Grosch from Albany Medical College and David Olsen from the Samaritan Counseling Center observed that “the sad reality is that for many, idealism, commitment, and compassion gave way to disillusionment and despair.”⁴⁴ Observing the need to have a tool for use by and for clergy, researchers Christopher Rutledge and Leslie Francis, modified and adapted the MBI in 2005. This Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI) found that a high satisfaction in

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰ Dean R Hoge and Jacqueline E Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, William B. Publishing Company, 2005), viii.

⁴¹ Ibid., 116.

⁴² Ibid., 129.

⁴³ Christopher F. J. Rutledge and Leslie Francis, “Burnout Among Male Anglican Parochial Clergy In England: Testing a Modified Form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory,” *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 15 (2005).

⁴⁴ William N. Grosch and David C. Olsen, “Clergy Burnout: An Integrative Approach,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 56, no. 5 (May 2000), doi:10.1002/(sici)1097-4679(200005)56:5<619::aid-jclp4>3.0.co;2-2.619.

ministry did not stave off significant emotional exhaustion.⁴⁵ Satisfaction must be raised while simultaneously lowering emotional exhaustion in order to “boost the work-related psychological health of clergy.”⁴⁶ Recognizing clergy strain, C.A. Lewis, et al (2007) said:

Clergy work-related poor psychological health, stress, and burnout pose an increasingly serious problem for the leaders of denominations throughout the world, as the particular circumstances related to spiritual and religious leadership in the community have a special and unique dynamic. The Christian church, like most religions, has the unenviable task of looking back to its roots, living in the present with the constant changes associated with a modern community, and looking forward with eschatological confidence and hope, all at the same time. Combined with the sense of urgency attached to the church’s mission, clergy and church leaders frequently become the victim of their own humanity and frailty.⁴⁷

Burnout can affect even our most gifted leaders, and the church must take seriously its effects for the sake of the whole.

The Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI) was used with Presbyterian Church (USA) clergy in 2006. 744 PC(USA) clergy men and women completed the inventory and the results show 7% “suffering from burnout ‘to a great extent’”, 25% “to some extent” and 40% “to a small extent.” The participants varied in age, role (in the parish), gender and marital status.⁴⁸ These numbers suggest that one third of clergy were experiencing considerable burnout. If the FBI can have some predictive measure for individuals leaving their profession, like the MBI does, this is very concerning data. This data, though, unlike the *Pulpit & Pew* findings, comes from clergy who are still practicing their vocation – they have not left, yet.

⁴⁵ Leslie Francis et al., “Happy but Exhausted? Work-Related Psychological Health Among Clergy,” *Pastoral Sciences* 24, no. 2 (2005), 116-117

⁴⁶ Kelvin J. Randall, “Clergy Burnout: Two Different Measures,” *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 3 (January 3, 2013), doi:10.1007/s11089-012-0506-4.339.

⁴⁷ Christopher Alan Lewis, Douglas W. Turton, and Leslie J. Francis, “Clergy Work-Related Psychological Health, Stress, and Burnout: An Introduction to This Special Issue of Mental Health, Religion and Culture,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10, no. 1 (January 2007), doi:10.1080/13674670601070541.2.

⁴⁸ Leslie J. Francis et al., “Work-Related Psychological Health Among Clergy Serving in The Presbyterian Church (USA): Testing the Idea of Balanced Affect,” *Review of Religious Research* 53 (2011), 13-19.

Not dissimilar from clergy, many people who choose a career in healthcare do so because they feel drawn to a vocational life that makes a difference in the lives of others. Compassion fatigue and high levels of stress are prevalent in the medical field and contribute to global physician burnout.⁴⁹ Burnout among doctors can lead to medical errors, turnover, and poorer health outcomes for patients.⁵⁰ There is a high emotional intensity that is inherent to the field and some have suggested that personal resources, systems issues, structural factors and moral distress have a significant role to play in physician and nurse burnout.⁵¹ Of note, a couple of studies have shown that, “although clinicians are aware that burnout is an occupational hazard, they may not realize themselves or may be reluctant to admit to themselves that they are experiencing burnout or may lack knowledge of what they could do to address burnout and resilience.”⁵² Results from research studies on burnout in medicine that show a high prevalence of reported burnout highlight the need for a plan to combat this detrimental trend.⁵³

Chaplains live their vocational lives at an intersection of burnout. As previously shown, burnout is problematic for clergy in parish settings and burnout is widely seen in the healthcare setting. This is not only something to pay attention to for the sake of the chaplain, but also points to the need and possibility that resiliency-trained chaplains might be able to informally offer resilience tools to the medical staff they work alongside.

⁴⁹ Shailesh Kumar, “Burnout and Doctors: Prevalence, Prevention and Intervention,” *Healthcare* 4, no. 37 (June 30, 2016), doi:10.3390/healthcare4030037, 1-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵¹ Anthony L. Back et al., “Building Resilience for Palliative Care Clinicians: An Approach to Burnout Prevention Based on Individual Skills and Workplace Factors,” *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 52, no. 2 (August 2016), doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2016.02.002.285,

Krista L. Harrison et al., “Addressing Palliative Care Clinician Burnout in Organizations: A Workforce Necessity, an Ethical Imperative,” *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* February 2017, doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2017.01.007,

C. H. Rushton et al., “Burnout and Resilience Among Nurses Practicing in High-Intensity Settings,” *American Journal of Critical Care* 24, no. 5 (August 31, 2015), doi:10.4037/ajcc2015291

⁵² Back et al., “Building Resilience for Palliative Care Clinicians.”

⁵³ Arif H. Kamal et al., “Prevalence and Predictors of Burnout Among Hospice and Palliative Care Clinicians in the U.S.,” *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 51, no. 4 (April 2016), doi:10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2015.10.020.694.

Chaplain burnout does not seem to be as widely studied as burnout in medicine and burnout among clergy in parishes. It seems to stand that clergy, who are already vulnerable to burnout, in the high stress setting of the health care system, would benefit from more attention paid to their circumstance. One study looking at Rabbis serving as chaplains did not report significant burnout, but noted “they, like other chaplains and clergy in general, are susceptible to Compassion Fatigue because of the very nature of their work.”⁵⁴ For a better picture of the landscape, a larger sample size over a wider geographical area that describes the kind of population (trauma, palliative, hospice, etc) chaplains work with is needed.

Resilience

Research has shown that burnout, which is a result of negative affects (emotional exhaustion and chronic stress), is certainly prevalent in clergy and healthcare professionals. It is shown to have real consequences in the workplace: increased turnover, decreased work performance, and negative attitude toward oneself and others.⁵⁵ For the sake of vocational sustainability and a more stable work environment, cultivating one’s own resilience is necessary.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back from adversity, can be seen in ecosystems, communities and individuals. Resilience can be understood as “the capacity of a system, enterprise, or a person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances.”⁵⁶ It is sometimes tacitly thought that resilience is something we either

⁵⁴ R. B. E. Taylor et al., “Compassion Fatigue and Burnout Among Rabbis Working as Chaplains,” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Advancing theory and professional practice through scholarly and reflective publications* 60, no. 1-2 (March 1, 2006), doi:10.1177/154230500606000105.

⁵⁵ Beth A. Steinberg, Maryanna Klatt, and Anne-Marie Duchemin, “Feasibility of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention for Surgical Intensive Care Unit Personnel,” *American Journal of Critical Care* 26, no. 1 (December 13, 2016), doi:10.4037/ajcc2017444.14,

Giselle K. Perez et al., “Promoting Resiliency Among Palliative Care Clinicians: Stressors, Coping Strategies, and Training Needs,” *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 18, no. 4 (April 2015), doi:10.1089/jpm.2014.0221.332-333.

⁵⁶ Andrew Zolli, Ann Marie, and Ann Marie Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 7.

have a capacity for or we do not – that our aptitude for resilience is not a changeable trait. Andrew Zolli and Ann Marie Healy, in their book *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, say, “new scientific research suggests that personal psychic resilience is more widespread, improvable, and teachable than previously thought. That’s because our resilience is rooted not only in our beliefs and values, character, experiences, values, and genes, but critically in our *habits of mind* – habits we can cultivate and change.”⁵⁷ Thomas Skovholt and Michelle Trotter-Mathison echo this in the third edition of the comprehensive textbook, *The Resilient Practitioner*. Their book helps those in helping professions understand that resilience is not a fixed attribute and that there are strategies for bolstering one’s own.⁵⁸

One particular strategy is mindfulness, a practice that invites us to have a nonjudgmental attunement with the immediate moment. “Whether choosing long-term meditation practice or attention-focusing techniques in moments of high stress, mindfulness serves to bolster an individual’s psychological resilience with a tool that’s portable, teachable, and free.”⁵⁹ With the relatively new understanding that resilience skills can be taught, mindfulness training is beginning to gain interest in the medical setting.⁶⁰ Recent research with Surgical Intensive Care Unit nurses looked at a mindfulness-based intervention for staff burnout (using the MBI to measure) and found that while “work-related stressful events in the SICU will not change, a change in reaction to the situation may help maintain wellness and prevent the deleterious effects of stress.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁸ Thomas M. Skovholt and Michelle J. Trotter-Mathison, *The Resilient Practitioner: Burnout and Compassion Fatigue Prevention and Self-Care Strategies for the Helping Professions* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 126.

⁵⁹ Andrew Zolli, Ann Marie, and Ann Marie Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 142-143.

⁶⁰ Back et al., “Building Resilience for Palliative Care Clinicians.”

⁶¹ Beth A. Steinberg, Maryanna Klatt, and Anne-Marie Duchemin, “Feasibility of a Mindfulness-Based Intervention for Surgical Intensive Care Unit Personnel,” *American Journal of Critical Care* 26, no. 1 (December 13, 2016), doi:10.4037/ajcc2017444.16.

Neuroscientist Richard Davidson found in his research in 2002 that there are “transformational powers of meditation on the brain.”⁶² This, known in the neuroscience world as neuroplasticity, was confirmed while studying Buddhist monks in India who were experts in mindfulness and meditation.⁶³ Davidson’s findings regarding the monks he studied were impressive, but possibly not too surprising due to the amount of experience these practitioners had with mindfulness. A particularly important piece of follow up research, led by Sara Lazar almost a decade later at Massachusetts General Hospital, found that beginners in mindfulness – those who had only participated in an 8-week meditation program – had experienced brain changes too, and relatively quickly.⁶⁴ They found “measurable changes in the regions of the brain associated with self-awareness, compassion... introspection... memory... anxiety and stress.”⁶⁵ This idea is fascinating to think about from a theological perspective, and I can imagine quite compelling from a medical viewpoint. Bonhoeffer, Volf, Tutu and the Dalai Lama all speak of the necessity to have intentional attunement toward joy. This is a scientific look at how repeated emotional attunement can change ones default posture and capacity over time. The data that shows that novice practitioners can reap real benefits allows an individual easy entry to a new exercise that could otherwise feel intimidating. For chaplains, prayer is often an integral part of their spiritual life or tradition and some have suggested that prayer can achieve some of the physiological changes seen from meditation.⁶⁶

Mindfulness is an aspect of self-compassion, where one can take a stance of a compassionate “other” toward the self. The idea is that we do not normally treat ourselves with

⁶² Zolli and Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, 136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 135-136

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 137-138

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 137-138

⁶⁶ Murray Levine, “Prayer as Coping: A Psychological Analysis,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 15, no. 2 (August 29, 2008), doi:10.1080/08854720903113424.89-90.

the same level of compassion we might offer someone else.⁶⁷ Kristin Neff and Chris Germer, from the University of Texas and Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance respectively, have extensively studied the practice of self-compassion. Recent research in the field suggests that self-compassion can “facilitate resilience by moderating people’s reactions to negative events.”⁶⁸ It is important to understand self-compassion, not as a mechanism to abolish negative emotions, but as a way to recognize that suffering is universal “and therefore fosters a connected mindset that is inclusive of others.”⁶⁹ In order to have self-compassion, one must be mindful of suffering.

A critically important aspect for sustainability and resilience is community. The *Pulpit & Pew* research project out of Duke University shows that pastors who left ministry due to emotional burnout experienced more isolation and loneliness than their peers.⁷⁰ This study highlights the fact that we need one another in this life journey. Bonhoeffer reminds us that Christian community is a gift from God and that the physical presence of other Christian is “a source of incomparable joy and strength.”⁷¹ Christian community for Bonhoeffer— as opposed to the modern idiomatic ‘Facebook Friends’ that he could never have imagined – are people who have spiritual love for one another.⁷² For Bonhoeffer, spiritual love, as opposed to self-centered love, serves others for the sake of Christ.

Communities of intentional care do not need to be huge, but they must be thick in trust. Bryan Stone and Claire Woldteich, in their book about urban ministry, talk about the need for

⁶⁷ Christopher K. Germer and Kristin D. Neff, “Self-Compassion in Clinical Practice,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 69, no. 8 (June 17, 2013), doi:10.1002/jclp.22021.856-857.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 857.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Dean R Hoge and Jacqueline E Wenger, *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, William B. Publishing Company, 2005), 129.

⁷¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible (Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works)*, ed. Geoffrey B Kelly et al., trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Fortress Publishers, 2005).29.

⁷² Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 38-39.

“holy friendships.”⁷³ These friendships are identified holy in the Christian context with the shared understanding that they are at the core of a spiritual life in Christ.⁷⁴ They say, “Communities of friendship form us into patterns of excellence through mutual affection and the bearing of burdens but also by providing us accountability for the exercise of the disciplines necessary for spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical renewal.”⁷⁵

Hebrews 12:1 lifts up important imagery of a great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us on our life journey. This accompaniment reminds us that we should not understand ourselves as needing to traverse life in isolation. When asked by Miroslav Volf at Yale in 2016, “How does one find strength...how does one forge the weapon of joy in the midst of suffering?”, Willie Jennings points toward what Stone and Woldteich understand as “holy friendships.” Jennings responds to Volf by saying, “Practically you have to have people who you’ve heard sing those songs in strange lands. You have to have people who have been able to make you laugh in the places where all you want to do is cry. You have to have conditions set up where those people who have learned how to ride the winds of chaos can say to you, ‘come on, let me show you how to do that.’”⁷⁶ We can navigate this complicated, beautiful, and difficult life with more buoyancy when we have access to the stories of people who have gone before us.

Andrew Zolli offers a similar understanding in a secular framework. He says, “Even the hardest individual can not go it alone –our resilience is rooted in that of the groups and communities in which we live.”⁷⁷ Health care givers sometimes come from a religious background and sometimes they do not. Chaplains, while always rooted in their own specific

⁷³ Bryan P Stone and Claire E Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City: Sustaining Urban Pastoral Excellence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, U.S., 2008), 26-37

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁷⁶ Yale Center for Faith and Culture, “Theology of Joy: Willie James Jennings with Miroslav Volf,” *YouTube*, YouTube, September 19, 2014, February 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fKD4Msh3rE>.

⁷⁷ Zolli and Healy, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, 143.

religious tradition, are engaging in interfaith work while offering support to their medical colleagues. In this setting, many providers have highlighted the need for social and emotional support as a vital aspect of their coping and “the language of resilience has the extraordinary value of being user-friendly in a diverse, multidisciplinary, and multicultural environment.”⁷⁸

All of these ideas about the theology of joy, the prevalence of burnout and stress, and the need for resilience must, eventually, be operative on the ground and rooted in a practical format. Rodger Nishioka, along with Dominique Robinson, do so in relation to resilience in youth groups.⁷⁹ The ideas they present are grounded, practical and for the most part are adaptable to other settings with adults. They lift up the importance of being able to articulate one’s purpose, being able to identify trusted mentors, display empathy with peers, see prayer as a coping mechanism, and have leadership that models self-awareness. They frame all of these things as ways to set new patterns so that in times of crisis one can lean into their familiar patterns of resiliency.⁸⁰

Objectives, Strategies, and Implementation

Purpose and Plan

The primary objective of this project was for student chaplains, at the end of their internship, to feel empowered and equipped to develop and nurture their personal resilience reservoir. The student group with whom I piloted this effort was the 2017 summer (June-August) intern chaplain group. This was a group of six students who varied in vocational trajectory,

⁷⁸ Perez et al., “Promoting Resiliency Among Palliative Care Clinicians.”; Steven Spidell, “Resilience and Professional Chaplaincy: A Paradigm Shift in Focus,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 20, no. 1 (January 2014), doi:10.1080/08854726.2014.869994.23.

⁷⁹ Rodger Nishioka and Dominique Robinson, “Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing: Youth Ministry Lunch & Lecture.” *Resilience and joy: Helping adolescents bounce back in the face of adversity*, February 4, 2016, posted January 20, 2017, <http://faith.yale.edu/news/resilience-and-joy-helping-adolescents-bounce-back-face-adversity>.

⁸⁰ I have been able to meet with Dr. Nishioka in person and was given permission to adapt ideas from his lecture for my setting.

denomination, gender, race, age, and faith background. They self-identified within the Evangelical Covenant, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Zen Buddhist, Roman Catholic, and Humanist/Confucianist traditions. All were new to chaplaincy.

While my primary objective was for these didactics to serve their resilience specifically as it pertains to their roles as chaplains, I had a hope that these skills learned would also be nurtured in service to the sustainability of their future works in ministry. I was aware that I could face the impediment of the student's likely skepticism that there was any need to attend to this at the start of their training and career. My challenge was to make a compelling and convincing case as to why developing personal resilience is worth their energy now.

My didactics were planned to guide the students through a progression of resilience foundation work: 1) Discovering its value. 2) Claiming any theological grounding from their particular tradition that speaks to this situation and connecting resilience to one's core purpose. 3) Having a better sense of the three major components important to resilience, which was fostered through intentional reflection and integration of one's purpose within their work, the ability to access mindfulness practices to continue to cultivate compassion and peacefulness, and in cultivating community.

I planned four separate sessions. The first one aimed to get us all on the same conversational page and the following three introduced them to three major components within resilience. With permission by Dr. Rodger Nishioka I adapted, for new chaplain students, activities and ideas he offered during a lecture at Yale Divinity School, about resilience in youth and young people.⁸¹ By the end of their internship, I wanted these student chaplains to know that (1) resilience is connected to core purpose, (2) resilience is a skill that has to be practiced;

⁸¹ Rodger Nishioka and Dominique Robinson, "Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing: Youth Ministry Lunch & Lecture.," *Resilience and joy: Helping adolescents bounce back in the face of adversity*, February 4, 2016, posted January 20, 2017, <http://faith.yale.edu/news/resilience-and-joy-helping-adolescents-bounce-back-face-adversity>.

mindfulness practices can train our brain and emotional responses for use during times of stress and, (3) that we need one another – always, always – for both rejoicing and for weeping. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who was imprisoned at Auschwitz, often evoked Friedrich Nietzsche’s idea that a person with a *why* could bear almost any *how*.⁸² When our *why* is partnered with the ability to lean into our intentional emotional agility and trust in our community to challenge and love us along the way, we will be much more likely to weather the emotional strains of a care giving career.

As I introduced the topic of resilience and set the stage for our time together, it was important for me to know some of what the students were bringing into the room and how much they had already known about the topic. This foundational session focused on resilience and burnout research in both the ecclesial and healthcare settings (see Appendix A). My hope was to ground us in the knowledge that burnout is real, clergy and clinicians are at high risk for burnout, and that self-reflective praxis is a route toward much needed vocational resilience.

The goal for sessions two through four was to offer concrete tools and frameworks to help develop and practice resilience. In session two we explored our theological and philosophical visions for vocation and purpose. We focused on the importance of intentionally investigating our personal rootedness to assess what informs our understanding of work and vocation. Together we explored the diverse faith resources that come from our own traditions – those that we find helpful, and those that we may not. In order to hold onto who we know ourselves to be in the midst of stress and chaos, we must first examine how we have arrived at the ideas and values that have given us shape. In this session each of us shared our own theological vision. After this time of intellectual exploration and group sharing I guided them

⁸² Viktor Emil Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning* (Simon and Schuster, 1985), 126.

through an exercise to identify, distill and then claim a personal core purpose statement. The aim of this session was to help students root themselves in their core purpose and connect it to our ability to bounce back from adversity (see Appendix B).

The third session was to introduce the practice of mindfulness and self-compassion. To begin, I offered some introductory research regarding mindfulness meditation, neuroplasticity, and its observed positive effects. In this conversation I reframed our relationship to our emotions. Emotions are often seen as having an involuntary causal relationship to our experiences. In this way, emotions can surprise us. Researchers who study mindfulness meditation think about emotions as something that we, with intentional practice, have control over. After this brief overview of background research the students were guided through mindfulness practices they could use themselves. An expert in mindfulness and self-compassion led this practical portion of the session. Students were given a variety of concrete tools and then invited to adapt them for their own use (see Appendix C).

Our final session together was focused on the need for community. I connected this to our theological and philosophical resources, as talked about in the first session, to relate to our experience of joy. I posit that joy can help buoy us in times of distress, and that community can help us locate and relocate this essential aspect. A significant contributing factor to burnout is feeling isolated. This session emphasized the interconnected nature inherent to our humanness and how community and mentoring can help us find our way when we feel overwhelmed. Hope is connected to community and holy friendships. We need people who have gone before us and can help us hold onto hope as we navigate the unknown. In this session I invited students to share important stories of community and then offered some stories from characters within the department that highlighted the importance of community (see Appendix D). This final session

ended with an invitation for each student to create a personal resilience plan, paying attention to include aspects from each of our sessions, to be utilized throughout the duration of their internship.

Transformative learning theory, an adult learning theory utilized by some Clinical Pastoral Education supervisors, guided my pedagogy. Transformative learning theory, which focuses on making meaning out of lived experience, speaks of *disorienting dilemmas*, identified as moments when our world and our expectations get upended.⁸³ Disorienting dilemmas are something that CPE students experience throughout the course of their internship.⁸⁴ Logan Jones, a CPE supervisor, in referencing CPE students' worldviews getting broken open says, "the easy theological world of the academy crashes on the rocks of grief and pain at the bedside."⁸⁵ Placing this training in the first half of their studenthood allows for space and time to use what they have learned, reflect, and evaluate its usefulness for future use. Resilience training, pedagogically and thematically, is well positioned to augment their educational experience as they navigate disorientating clinical encounters.

Implementation

There was a moment in my life when, to my surprise, I found myself empathizing with the adults in movies and shows rather than the teenagers – my empathic center had shifted and it felt like a huge developmental milestone. After this summer I have discovered a newfound deep appreciation for all teachers of people, specifically all of my professors of days past. The hope I had as an instructor regarding the preparedness of the students in each session caused some

⁸³ Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning Theory," in *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace, and higher education*, ed. Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 3-17.

⁸⁴ Logan C. Jones, "The Arc of Imagination in Transformative Learning Theory," *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* 36 (2016), 38.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

actual anxiety, since class participation is so very key to the dynamic of the learning experience. I am glad to report that this group of summer students engaged with the topic and one another, offered vulnerability, personal insights, and brought energy to our sessions. For this I am thankful and relieved.

Session 1

The first session held the least amount of energy. It was content heavy and the group was still getting to know one another and me. This session took place right after their two-week orientation, which is often an exhausting experience for students, but I really wanted to get all four sessions in before mid-unit. To begin, the students completed a pre-study questionnaire about burnout and resilience (see Appendix E), and then I facilitated a time of sharing. In general, I learned that vocational resilience skills were not being taught to them, all felt they were at risk for burnout, and most of them were not engaging practices to stave off the effects of emotional stress. I was hoping for this session to be a launch pad for the following three sessions, and in that sense it fulfilled its function.

Session 2

The second session was where I felt some momentum pick up. I prepared for this session with a keynote presentation. For this session I had to tweak my language just a bit as I noticed my original plan was exclusively theologically framed. I was intentional to always invite them to think theologically or philosophically. I wanted to pay attention to all of the traditions in the room and be inclusive with my language. At the end of the first session the students were given “homework.” They were simply asked to investigate their own tradition so that they might be able to share with one another 1) how their faith informs why they are participating in Clinical Pastoral Education to be a chaplain, 2) what theological/philosophical grounding helps sustains

them and gives them hope and energy, and 3) if there are any popular ideas perpetuated within their tradition that they find not helpful to their flourishing.

I think that it is so very important for each of us to know where the ideas we hold came from. What is it we cherish about our theological background? What lurks within our traditions that inform us in unhelpful ways? Are there ideas we have inherited that we want to distance ourselves from? Each student shared aspects of their theological or philosophical orientation toward work – what they found helpful and important, and what they found unhelpful or problematic. This was a robust time of sharing with one another.

While we spent most of our time focused on their sharing with one another, I joined in by sharing an overview of the basic differences between Calvin’s understanding of vocation and Volf’s theological shift to charisms.⁸⁶ I offered this as an example of a particular aspect of my own tradition (Presbyterianism) that I found less helpful and even problematic. I then shared my personal theological vision for work (specific to how I engage it within my current job as a clergy person and chaplain). My foundational belief that joy and sorrow are inseparable is a key aspect of my theological grounding that helps me distill my understanding of my core purpose, as I see it today. This lens of understanding is not particular to my self-identification as Presbyterian or Christian, although I find it fitting within it quite well. More broadly, joy and sorrow being intimately intertwined is a part of our human condition. My explanation, hope, and invitation to the students was for them to personally explore how their own theological and/or philosophical orientation does or does not incorporate this understanding. The students then

⁸⁶ Calvin understands vocation to be static and found within one’s unchangeable station in life while Volf offers a more nimble framework of charisms. Volf defines charisms as gifts from God that have the ability to change, grow and be used to honor God wherever a person may find themselves in life. For a more thorough discussion of Volf’s thoughts on charisms see his book *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*.

shared about ways they see these ideas intersect with their own tradition or theological understanding. It was nice to have such theological/philosophical difference in the room. There were moments where students were connecting and sharing how their tradition uses different vocabulary or frameworks to talk about similar concepts.

It was important for each student to have space to articulate their own philosophical and theological visions before I shared my ideas and vision. My hope is that resilience is built, in part, by building muscle memory so that we may better hold onto who we know ourselves to be – grounded people making meaning in this world. Being able to distill our purpose can help us hold tight to that which is core to our being in times of stress. When we lose our sense of balance, control and feel the fatigue of stress settle over our bodies, it is important to remember who we know ourselves to be. The exercise I invited the students to participate in was adapted from Smith Magazine's *6-word Memoirs* by a colleague who researches resilience for youth, Roger Nishioka. With his permission I adapted it yet again for adults in my context. I thought it was pedagogically important to have mentorship and modeled behavior weaved into these sessions when appropriate, especially because one of my later points regarding resilience is about community. As each student offered their 6-word core purpose statement, I interspersed our sharing with someone from the department's 6 words – as if they were with us. Some of them were their supervisors, mentors, and colleagues – one was mine. This was all offered in a simple keynote presentation. The students had beautiful statements that reflected their earlier sharing and theological/philosophical visions:

1. Witness to radical unconditional love
2. Benign neglect. Axiological surprise. Tender gravity.
3. When together – always pressed, never crushed.
4. Fearful child, awakens, to love warrior
5. Trust when possible (that) God is God
6. Called by God to serve others.

We ended our time together thinking through concrete ways to hold onto this core purpose when the stresses of being a chaplain felt overwhelming. My hope for them was to guide them in creating plans that they may actually utilize in their efforts to hold onto their sense of self as they relate to work. This session took 90 minutes. Since this was my first time offering something like this, I wasn't sure how long it would take – I had predicted closer to one hour initially. The variable I now see is the dynamic of the group itself. This was a talkative and inquisitive group, but I am sure there are also ways I could have been more conscience of time.

Session 3

Before this session began I invited the students to score themselves on a self-compassion scale (see Appendix F) for their own edification.⁸⁷ Since mindfulness and self-compassion are about self-awareness I thought it appropriate to give them a tool for better self-understanding. To begin, I offered a brief overview of some of the research regarding mindfulness and neuroplasticity. My main point in this overview was to point out that while the researched effects on experienced monks were amazing and impressive, that novice practitioners also demonstrated noticeable changes to their brain's plasticity. My hope was to find balance between showing its proven effectiveness and presenting the concept as accessible for everyone.

After my overview, my colleague Gary Wilson primarily led this session. He is a practicing Zen Buddhist and Mindfulness Training Instructor for our intensive veterans program, Road Home. Gary led us through an interactive lecture before teaching exercises and practices. Gary walked us through his working definitions of stress, stress response and resilience. He talked about mindfulness as an intervention where one is “paying attention on purpose in the

⁸⁷ <http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ShortSCS.pdf>

present moment without judgment.”⁸⁸ This intervention, he pointed out, offers us an opportunity to create a pause between a stimulus and a response. This, “wedge of awareness” between the two helps us to respond, with intentionality, instead of reacting.⁸⁹

Gary walked us through some mindfulness and self-compassion exercises. He then offered a number of tools that can be adapted to use daily, weekly or in the moment. Imbued in his offering of practical exercises was some of the science behind them. For example, the elongated breath out – taking a two count breath is followed by a six count breath out – engages the parasympathetic nervous system. This lowers blood pressure and offers a sense of calm. We also learned about self-compassion, which is a particular type of mindfulness that focuses on self-compassion over self-judgment. One of these exercises was simply putting our hand on our own heart. We were reminded that even if this feels awkward at first, our body responds to this warmth and can soothe distressing emotions. Gary’s approach was professional, gentle, non-judgmental, accessible, and engaging. He gave us some concrete tools to use as well. He sent us all a ten minute audio recording of a guided meditation, red dot stickers to place wherever we would like in order to bring our attention back to whatever meaning we assigned them, and a number of written resources: a three minute breathing exercise, a sitting meditation with awareness to our breath, a body scan meditation, and a soothing touch exercise. We closed our time by debriefing how we might adapt these practices for personal use throughout the following weeks, and beyond. We talked about prayer, walking a labyrinth, lighting a candle, ritual and more.

⁸⁸ Gary Wilson. *Session on mindfulness and self-compassion at Rush University Medical Center*. July, 2017.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Session 4

Our time together on this day primarily focused on stories, conversation and reflection. This session invited significant vulnerability and it was not until we began that I anxiously realized if they chose not to engage with the topic or one another, this would be a *very* short session. However, these students were able to talk honestly about those who are important to them, and even offered examples of their own holy friendships. One student shared that he often did not seek out or want mentors. He prefers to learn on his own and make his own mistakes. I very much appreciated his candor and authenticity. This allowed for some richness in the conversation. His peers were able to hear him, validate him, and even challenge him – just as he had done for them. Before we closed our time together, I gave them some time to complete a brief personal resilience plan. The prompts that I provided them with, as a form they could complete and keep, were 1) *Theological vision for vocation and purpose*: How will you center yourself on your core purpose in the midst of work related stress? 2) *Mindfulness and Self-Compassion*: What formal or informal practices will you utilize for stress reduction? 3) *Community*: How will you be intentional about engaging with community, friends and mentors?

I suggested that these plans were deeply personal and that I would not need to know any specifics about their individual plans. I thanked them for giving their time, energy, engagement and openness with me and with each other over the past four weeks. I let them know that just before their graduation I would be meeting with them again for a post-study questionnaire. I felt like we had bonded when a couple students lamented that our formal time together was over.

Evaluation and Learning

Chaplain internships are roughly a twelve-week program. Weeks one and two are consumed with orientation. We met for our resilience sessions on weeks 3, 4, 5, and 6. We met

again during week 12, the day before their graduation from the program, so that I could give the students an opportunity to provide me feedback. The primary way I received feedback was from a post-study evaluation and questionnaire (see Appendix G). The form included a Likert scale regarding their experience of the didactics and their learning on one side and had a section with prompts for them to hand write in responses on the other side. One student was sick on the day we met and so I emailed him the form for completion. I put a folder in my office mailbox and all forms waited in there without my review until the final evaluation arrived. This was my attempt at offering continued anonymity.

The distillation of the feedback from these forms is affirming to my ministry project plan and execution, but what I might be missing is a real sense of how to move forward. Every student indicated that they feel better equipped in some aspect of their resiliency skill set. The consensus was that this is something that is both important and should be offered to future intern/resident groups, but what I do not know how to incorporate is the disparate suggestions for areas they wished would have been covered. Some suggested this could be a series that lasts through the entire internship, others desired ongoing sharing with the group about the practices they were using, and another would have liked more concrete suggestions for how to incorporate these practices into their busy daily professional and personal life. When asked about aspects that were most helpful I learned that story – providing space for them to make connections and share their own, as well as hearing others in the department – is a powerful vehicle for new information. Their feedback also pointed me to the fact that modeling behavior was of utmost importance.

As we sat down for this evaluative final meeting, the students asked that we be able to talk about their experiences of the four sessions prior to completing the form. All of the students

present agreed that they would appreciate some time to debrief together, and with me. One student evoked nostalgia and congruence when they said, “so much of what we did during our sessions together was intimate and communal; it would just not feel right to only have an individual debriefing and evaluation.” This could have had as much to do with the group feeling the impending end of their internship than it did with our shared time together. All present claimed this as a desire and so I conceded to a group conversation.

The students offered a truly helpful piece of feedback for me that I would not have received, at least with the energy they presented with, if the forms were completed without a group conversation. They were very generous with their appreciation of our time together, and something that was both consistent and surprising to me was an incidental I had not planned for at all. They each emphatically talked about the importance of my orientation time with them. Before I met with these students for the purpose of this project, each of them had to go through our department’s two-week orientation. I am an instructor for some of these didactics. I orient them to Women and Children’s ministry and, as a part of this orientation, I take them to the morgue to view both a dead infant as well as a dead adult body. This is a very heavy day of orientation. We do this so that if any student is called on to participate in a late-viewing of a person who has died while on-call and alone in the hospital, their experience in the morgue will not be their first. This initial introduction is one that I can control and imbue with theological grounding. I am present to gently walk students through a difficult experience and offer a framework of understanding with which they can use to feel better equipped to facilitate a late viewing. I do this with at least five groups per year.

I was quite surprised to have this orientation didactic evoked during our evaluation conversation. They shared that my credibility as a presenter was established during that time.

One student said that it enhanced her ability to see the resilience sessions as something more than “holding hands and kumbaya.” They explained that my credibility came from what they experienced as my modeling of resilience. With unanticipated accuracy, they reminded me of what I had said to them before, during, and after our morgue visit. They all agreed that my leading them through a difficult shared emotional experience had a significant effect on how they received my resilience sessions. It was noted that the succession of sharing an emotionally difficult day together, going to the morgue, and then talking about how to combat the effects of this emotional stress grounded our conversations in their real experience. One student even suggested that maybe I had structurally planned this deliberate sequence. This was completely unintentional, and I shared that with them. It was scheduled this way out of departmental necessity and the positive effects it produced were unwitting.

This significant learning has made me wonder how differently this would be received from a group with whom I did not have a relational foundation. Modeling and authentic relationship seemed to play an important, if not vital, role in the content’s reception. I would like to think the content could stand on its own, but it is worth acknowledging as a possible limitation. The emphatic emphasis on this aspect has caused me to doubt my premise that this could easily be extrapolated out to other settings. I do feel encouraged, though, with the idea that individual chaplains could offer resiliency support to individual nurses and doctors. The foundation of relationship and modeling is inherent to interprofessional work. Unfortunately, in my experience, many organizations are utilizing a depersonalized mass inoculation model.

Recently, I was invited to offer a resiliency and burnout session to a group of medical residents. They are currently struggling with a difficult caseload and a number of poor outcomes. Without first cultivating a relationship with these doctors, I am worried some of these ideas

could fall flat. Right now I am seeing resiliency training as something that must be organically homegrown out of a relational context and does not lend itself to a training one can take on the road.

These students have now graduated from their CPE summer internship. Some of them have indicated that chaplaincy may be a career they will pursue by applying to a residency program. My hope is that this resiliency awareness, being evoked at this stage in their ministerial careers, will have impact on their lives wherever they decide to work. Truly helpful data would be to find out if they are still reflecting on this a year from now, or beyond.

Conclusion

Burnout abounds within both the healthcare and clergy landscape. This effort, with summer chaplain interns, was a pilot to assess the effectiveness of resiliency education at this nexus. The areas of success included initial reception of the material, perceived importance, and participation buy-in from the students. With no longitudinal data I cannot know for certain if these results will bear long-term fruit. As far as immediate utility, there is some evidence that continued intentionality regarding the development of one's resilience skills is important.

I begin this pilot effort with the inkling that the prevalence of burnout among healthcare clinicians could be stymied, or at least supportively resisted, with chaplain care to the staff. Chaplains, who must first learn to attend to their own resilience, are well positioned within the hospital to offer informal instruction and staff support. Chaplains must first nurture resilience for the sake of their own vocational sustainability. This practice, visibly imbued within a system that is at high risk for stress and burnout, can be good modeling for our clinical colleagues. With this pilot effort of chaplain interns, relationship and modeling were noted as precursors to enhanced reception.

In the hospital, chaplains are often looked to, by their medical colleagues, for a listening ear and guidance with how to process feelings of grief, stress and sorrow. In many instances we may be the only pastoral figure they know. Chaplain training includes components of grief theory and theology and because, over time, chaplains begin to feel more comfortable with these emotions experienced within themselves, they feel equipped to offer support and guidance to staff in these areas. Burnout is a problem across the healthcare landscape, and right now chaplains are not offered any education regarding resilience. I believe if they were, they would feel better equipped to offer informal instructional support to staff. It is important to remember that each of us remains bound by the systems – their expectations, constraints, flexibility and atmosphere – in which we find ourselves. Resilience skill training for chaplains could be the start of a culture change that normalizes the need to supplement our gifts and passions with intentional resilience maintenance, for the sake of our vocational flourishing.

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Appendix A

Session 1: Setting the stage

- I. What do you already know about Burnout
 - a. Have you known of anyone personally who has burned out?
 - b. Do you think you could ever be at risk for burnout?
- II. What do you know about resilience?
 - a. What have you learned? Where was this taught (seminary, friends, mentors)?
 - b. Do you find it important?
 - c. Do you currently have resilience skills you practice? Do they work?
- III. What the research (briefly) says about burnout
 - a. Clergy
 - b. Healthcare
 - c. Feedback mechanisms: the check engine light maintains the resilience of the cars engine. Resilient systems have something to let you know a threshold is nearing.⁹⁰ What are your check engine lights? Emotional and physiological.
 - d. Definition of burnout (Maslach) we will base conversation on
 - i. Does that sound familiar?
 - ii. Should anything be added to that definition?
 - e. What do you expect will be the most stressful part of your work as a chaplain? In your future ministry?
- IV. What the research (briefly) says about resilience: bounce back from adversity
 - a. It is a skill that can be learned, not a static characteristic we either have or we don't
 - b. Practice can expand resilience reservoir – laying down tracks that our stressed selves can lean into when needed.

⁹⁰ Zolli, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, 9.

Appendix B

Session 2: Theological/Philosophical Vision for Vocation and Purpose

The assignment students will have before this session begins is to investigate their own tradition. How does your faith inform why you are here (in CPE to be a chaplain)? What theological grounding do you have (faith resources, holy readings, mentors) that helps you come back on Monday – that sustains you – gives you hope and energy? They can interpret “tradition” any way they would like (Christian, Lutheran, Humanist, Buddhist, Zen, Catholic, etc). Are there any popular ideas perpetuated within your tradition that are not helpful in regards to flourishing?

I. Theological Vision

- a. Students share their faith resources from their own tradition with one another. They shared pieces that sustain them and pieces that they find less helpful. (Lutheran, Catholic, Humanist/Confucianist, Evangelical, Buddhist)
- b. Personal faith resources (helpful and not): Presbyterian/Protestant: Calvin (vocation) v. Volf (charism)⁹¹
- c. I briefly share a theological vision for others to access: Joy and Sorrow are inseparable (framed for intersectional assessability with an invitation for students to examine their own tradition and make connections). Space for students to share connections.
 - i. not a surface joy, but a deep joy that knows suffering and sorrow: Bonhoeffer⁹²
 - ii. joy and sorrow are inseparable: Khalil Gibran⁹³
 - iii. compassion for others leads to joy: Dalai Lama⁹⁴
 - iv. this joy allows us to be able to come alongside others grief and pain without fear: Archbishop Desmond Tutu⁹⁵

II. Purpose

- a. “The ability to bounce back, to keep one’s core purpose, is deeply related to joy. In joy, one is self-referential rather than solipsistic. AND resilience is resistant to a distortion and diminishment of joy.”⁹⁶
- b. You must be able to articulate your core purpose and then live into it
 - i. Must have eyes open to impediments – what do you see as impediments to resilience?
 - ii. “When you are in your core purpose, enacting it, practicing it, cultivating it, joy comes. That’s the result.”⁹⁷

⁹¹ Miroslav Volf, *Work In The Spirit* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

⁹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters And Papers From Prison* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

⁹³ Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923). 29-30.

⁹⁴ Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu and Douglas Abrams, *The Book Of Joy: Lasting Happiness In A Changing World* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2016).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Nishioka and Robinson, “Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing. February 4, 2016.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

- c. Six word memoirs⁹⁸ (Based on legendary Hemingway bar bet to write a whole novel in just 6 words “For sale. Baby Shoes- Never worn.”) – this twist was to tell the story of your life in 6 words
 - i. Celebrity (“Well, *I* thought it was funny.” –Stephan Colbert & “My diary is ready by everyone.” –Taylor Swift)
 - ii. Others (“The snooze button is my undoing.” –Teen) (“Don’t make me come down there.” – God [on church marquee]) (“look mean and be nice to everyone” -3rd grader)
 - d. What would your 6-word core purpose statement be?
 - i. Students write their statements
 - ii. Students share their statements
 - e. Share with them six word core purpose statements from their supervisor, the chairperson of the department, two resident chaplains (from different religious traditions) and me.
- III. A video about Jayden, a young person who is living in his purpose⁹⁹
- IV. What are ways you think it is practical to have intentional awareness of core purpose in the midst of work related stress?
- a. Journal
 - b. Prayer
 - c. other

⁹⁸ www.sixwordmemoirs.com (smith magazine)

⁹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MakesS18yk0>

Appendix C

Session 3: Mindfulness and Self-Compassion (a session with an expert)

Before this session the students were invited to complete a self-compassion inventory and score themselves. This was just for their own personal knowledge so that they had some self-awareness regarding their current status before our meeting.

- I. Emotions: we may conceive of emotions as things that function on their own accord. A causal relationship—an event happens and then we feel a certain way. Researchers who study mindfulness and attention think about them a little differently. Mindfulness meditation training can help us train ourselves to have more intentional control over our emotions.¹⁰⁰
 - a. Study on Monks¹⁰¹
 - b. Novice mindfulness practitioners¹⁰²
 - c. Brain plasticity¹⁰³
- II. Introduction to some mindfulness practices, learning how to practice them and then being guided thorough them together
 - a. A colleague Gary Wilson, who is a practicing Buddhist and formally trained in mindfulness practices, has agreed to offer a session with our students. Gary offers mindfulness sessions weekly for the general public in the hospital as well as in Rush’s comprehensive veterans program ‘Road Home.’
 - b. Conversation and debrief: do any of the mindfulness practices presented seem practical for personal use? Are there ways you could adapt some of these practices so that they could feel meaningful for you theologically/philosophically?

¹⁰⁰ Zolli, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, 132-133.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 138.

Appendix D

Session 4: Community.

- I. The need for community. We need each other. Not called to be lone rangers.
 - a. Willie Jennings talks about how to hold onto joy in the midst of suffering.¹⁰⁴
 - b. Miroslav Volf talks about joy as best experienced in community¹⁰⁵
 - c. Holy Friendships¹⁰⁶
 - i. Personal example
 - ii. Possibility of groups coming and going to serve a purpose: Like the chaplain intern covenant group to which they belong.
- II. An exercise in indentifying support.¹⁰⁷ It is important to be conscious of people you know you can turn to when in trouble – emotional or physical.
 - a. Think about the worst possible thing you can imagine yourself doing. *Don't share*
 - b. Now count the number of people in your life whom you know you can tell them you have done this worst possible thing and they would still love you.
- III. Look to those “who you've heard sing those songs in strange lands.”
 - a. Seek out mentors and ask them what they have bounced back from (procrastination, financial hardship, broken relationship, work burnout) – do you know these stories?
 - b. Know that there are people you admire who have faced adversity and survived it – take the teeth out of shame and normalize life's stresses. Share departmental stories where this kind of support/relationship has been integral to personal resilience.¹⁰⁸ Stories where someone who has sung a song in a strange land has helped someone else in the midst of their own adversity. These stories are all real people they know within the department.
 - i. A supervisor in training fails his committee to move forward in the process. The most well known researcher and supervisor in the profession shares with him his story of failing many times before eventually passing.
 - ii. A young adult chaplain and clergy person is going through a divorce and feeling unsure how to hold onto hopefulness for a happy future. A supervisor and spouse (who have both been through divorce before remarrying) are intentional about taking him out to dinner and letting him talk. Seeing how happy they are, after what they have been through, makes him believe that this divorce doesn't have to be the end of his story.

¹⁰⁴ Yale Center for Faith and Culture, “Theology of Joy: Willie James Jennings with Miroslav Volf,” *YouTube*, September 19, 2014, February 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fKD4Msh3rE>.

¹⁰⁵ Miroslav Volf, “The Crown of the Good Life: A Hypothesis,” in *Joy and human flourishing: Essays on theology, culture and the good life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Justin E. Crisp (Philadelphia, PA, United States: Fortress Press, U.S., 2015), 132.

¹⁰⁶ Stone and Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City*, 26-37.

¹⁰⁷ Nishioka and Robinson, “Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing. February 4, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ These are presented from written out scripts for clarity and brevity with the permission of every person involved – each story takes 2 minutes or less to share.

- iii. Me: Five months after being hired as a staff chaplain a tragedy that I was chaplain alongside was so traumatic that I wondered if I had picked the wrong vocation. I didn't know if I would come back to work. While taking some leave from work the chairperson of the department reaches out every day to offer support. He also relayed his spouse's support (whom I admire) and shared a similar story she experienced when she was my age and how difficult it was for her too.

IV. Debrief

- a. How can this be practically applied in your life?
- b. Any stories students would like to share
- c. Introverts versus Extroverts

V. Conclusion: going forward

- a. Give students prompts and ask them to develop a brief personal plan to use throughout the rest of their chaplain intern unit.
- b. We will check in at the end of the unit to see if their personal plans were utilized, helpful and have potential to be used outside of this chaplain internship.

Burnout and Resilience: pre-study questionnaire

Please briefly answer to the best of your ability

1. Have you known anyone personally or professionally who has burned out?

2. Do you think you could ever be at risk for burnout?

3. Have vocational resilience skills been taught to you (formally or informally)?

4. Do you currently practice any resilience skills (i.e. anything to stave off the effects of emotional stress)?
 - a. Where did you learn them?
 - b. Do they work?

5. Is personal burnout something you are concerned in your vocation? If not, what is your greatest concern?

Burnout and Resilience: post-study evaluation and questionnaire

I feel the didactics, offered by Paige, provided a helpful framework to understand the risk of burnout and the need to develop resiliency skills for the sake of my vocational sustainability.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I feel I have gained a greater sense of how my faith tradition speaks to my sense of vocation, purpose and work.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I feel better equipped to make ongoing self-assessments regarding my resilience reservoir.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I feel better equipped to utilize mindfulness practices.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

I have gained a greater understanding of how important community is to vocational sustainability.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Is there anything about resilience that you learned, found valuable, and hope to nurture going forward? If so, what?

Do you think that resilience is an important topic for chaplaincy?

Aspects that were most helpful (content or pedagogy) were:

Areas I wish had been covered:

Is this something you feel should be offered to future intern/resident groups? Why?

To Whom it May Concern:

Please feel free to use the Self-Compassion Scale – Short Form in your research (12 items instead of 26 items). The short scale has a near perfect correlation with the long scale when examining total scores. We do not recommend using the short form if you are interested in subscale scores, since they're less reliable with the short form. You can e-mail me with any questions you may have. The appropriate reference is listed below.

Best wishes,

Kristin Neff, Ph. D.

e-mail: kristin.neff@mail.utexas.edu

Reference:

Raes, F., Pommier, E., Neff, K. D., & Van Gucht, D. (2011). Construction and factorial validation of a short form of the Self-Compassion Scale. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*. 18, 250-255.

Coding Key:

Self-Kindness Items: 2, 6

Self-Judgment Items: 11, 12

Common Humanity Items: 5, 10

Isolation Items: 4, 8

Mindfulness Items: 3, 7

Over-identified Items: 1, 9

Subscale scores are computed by calculating the mean of subscale item responses. To compute a total self-compassion score, reverse score the negative subscale items - self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification (i.e., 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, 5 = 1) - then compute a total mean.

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

**Almost
never**

1

2

3

4

**Almost
always**

5

- _____ 1. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ 2. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 3. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 4. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 5. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 6. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 7. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 8. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure
- _____ 9. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- _____ 11. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 12. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.