heart-health for clergy:

spiritual practices for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times

Cal-Pac Clergy Convocation
2017
be careful when you fight the monsters, lest you become one.

friedrich nietzsche
we are surrounded by monsters.
we are surrounded by monsters. If we don’t fight them, we are complicit & cowardly (which makes us monstrous).

If we do fight them, we are in danger of becoming monstrous in other ways.
spiritual practices are our means of not becoming like what we fight, so that we are not overcome by evil, but instead overcome evil with good.
love

peace

kindness  spiritual practices help us guard our hearts and grow better (not bitter) through struggle

forgiveness

gentleness

empowerment

justice

joy

patience

goodness

faithfulness

self-control

joy
because in ministry, if your heart isn’t right, nothing is right.
and keeping your heart right isn’t easy.
heart-health for clergy:
4 spiritual practices
my assumptions:
1. i know less than i don’t know.
2. we need a convergence:
3. personal/social
4. confident/self-critical
5. head/heart
6. contemplative/activist

because …
It’s not just that the future of the church is at stake. The future of humanity is at stake … planet poverty peace people
… So your spiritual health and strength are precious resources.

“Guard your heart”

“Guard the gift”
heart-health for clergy:

1. self-examination
heart-health for clergy:

1. self-examination

why are you *downcast*, o my soul?
why are you *disquieted* within me?
heart-health for clergy:
2. soul-friendship
   spiritual direction
   “holy conferencing”
   non-utilitarian relationship
a query:
how is your heart?
how goes it with your soul?
a query:
how is your heart?
how goes it with your soul?

revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing.
a query:
how is your heart?
how goes it with your soul?

we listen with holy attention.
we mirror to one another the love, wisdom, and grace of God.
heart-health for clergy:
3. constant conscious contact with God
practicing God’s presence
something i have learned, as an arranger of words: better a few words from the heart - than many words disconnected from the heart.
o! (glory! hallelujah!) thanks. here.
o! (glory! hallelujah!) thanks.

please! help! (_______) sorry.

o! (glory! hallelujah!) thanks. here.
no!
why?
when?

please!
help!
sorry.

o! (glory! hallelujah!)
thanks.
here.
o! (glory! hallelujah!)

thanks.

here.

no!

when?

why?

o! (glory! hallelujah!)

here.

thanks.

please!

help!

sorry!

behold!

yes.

[...]

please!
no!
why?
when?
o! (glory! hallelujah!)
thanks.
here.

[...]
yes.
behold!

please!
help!
sorry.
o!
thanks.
here.
At Evening With a Child

Jessica Powers

We walk along a road
at the day's end, a little child and I,
and she points out a bird, a tree, a toad,
a stretch of colored sky.

She knows no single word
but "Ah" (with which all poems must commence,
at least in the heart's heart), and I am stirred
by her glad eloquence.

Her feet are yet unsure
of their new task; her language limited,
but her eyes see the earth in joy secure.

And it is time I said:

Let the proud walls come down!
Let the cold monarchy be taken over!
I give my keys to rust, and I disown
castles of stone for ambushed roads in clover.

All the vast kingdoms that I could attain
are less to me than that the dusk is mild
and that I walk along a country lane
at evening with a child.

Source: Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers edited by Regina Siegfried and Robert Morneau
heart-health for clergy:
4. becoming a friend to yourself
or
joining God in loving you.
bernard of clairvaux:
loving self for self’s sake
loving God for self’s sake
loving God for God’s sake
loving self for God’s sake
what/who recharges, delights, restores you?

what/who drains, discourages, depletes you?
what anesthetics tempt you toward addiction?
what 30% of your duties do you procrastinate on, causing yourself added anxiety?

what new approach can you take to that 30%?
just because you’re a pastor
doesn’t mean you’re not also …
a Christian
a human being
a creature in God’s creation
what would a good boss
or a good friend
or a good pastor
prescribe for you
or say to you
right now?
heart-health for clergy:

1. self-examination
2. soul friend
3. constant conscious contact with God
4. becoming a friend to yourself
A final word:
Richard Rohr says …
action AND contemplation

formation for mission
inner work for the outer work
we are surrounded by monsters.
heart-health for clergy:

spiritual practices for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times
let’s stay in touch ... slides will be available

brianmclaren.net

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heart-health for clergy:
spiritual practices for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times
heart-health for denominations:

organizational basics for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times
THE GREAT SPIRITUAL MIGRATION

HOW THE WORLD’S LARGEST RELIGION IS SEEKING A BETTER WAY TO BE CHRISTIAN

BRIAN D. MCLAREN

AUTHOR OF A NEW KIND OF CHRISTIAN TRILOGY AND A GENEROUS ORTHODOXY
A spiritual migration

from system of belief to way of life/
way of love
A theological migration from violent Supreme Being to nonviolent Holy Spirit/Spirit of Christ
A missional migration

from organized religion (for self-protection)
to religion organizing for the common good

(institutions and movements in romance, forming & deploying spiritual activists)
What’s missing today is a high-quality discourse on rethinking the design and evolution of the entire system from scratch.

(Otto Scharmer)
WE NEED A THEOLOGY OF

INSTITUTIONS, MOVEMENTS, AND COMMUNITIES
Communities

Families, individuals, and organizations linked to a common environment, collaborating for the common good.
Institutions:

Organizations which conserve the gains made by past social movements.
Social Movements

Organizations which make proposals or demands to current institutions to make progress towards new gains.
Both movements and institutions...

Organize for their purpose
Need one another
Are frustrated with one another
Benefit or harm communities
Without movements ...

Institutions stagnate ...

Without institutions ...

Movements evaporate ...
Some movements successfully inject their values into the institutions they challenge.

Other movements create their own institutions, or pass away.
Vital movements call people to passionate, sacrificial personal commitment.

Sustainable institutions create loyalty across generations through evocative rituals & traditions.
movements can be progressive, conservative, or regressive as can institutions, depending on which movements they let in the door.
Lasting change happens when movement leaders knock persistently on the doors of institutional leaders, and a critical few institutional leaders answer …

“Yes.”

(Or “Let’s negotiate.”)
From Greg Leffel

Faith Seeking Action: Mission and Social Movements
A vital movement is born when 3 things happen:

- 2 or more people agree what’s wrong
- They agree what should be done
- They agree to do it, counting the cost.
Leffel’s 6 Characteristics of Vibrant Social Movements
1. Opportunity Structure
2. Rhetorical framing
3. Protest (messaging) strategy
4. Mobilization strategy
5. Movement culture
6. Participant Biography
Jesus says the kingdom of God is like gardening (an organic movement) not warfare (institutional action): It spreads through seeds ... sown into systems to grow.

The seeds of the message.

The seeds of people who personally embody the message.

The seeds of communities who socially embody the message.
Jesus seizes the opportunity structure provided by conflicted elites (Pharisees/Sadducees; Herodians/Zealots) and struggling masses (Galilee/Judea)
He provides rhetorical framing on hillsides, in houses, on retreats, in public teach-ins, in debates, through parables, through rituals and practices. He repeats key themes - commonwealth of God, life to the full, life of the ages, liberation - rooted in dynamic tension with tradition.
His protest (messaging) strategy includes public demonstrations (healings & miracles), teach-ins (sermon on mount), civil disobedience (turning tables), guerilla theatre (exorcisms), festivals (feasts & feedings), naming evil (woes), naming heroes (blessings).
He develops a mobilization strategy based on 3, 12, 70, and multitudes. He entrusts freely with responsibility and expresses high confidence in his agents (greater things shall you do ...
He associates his movement culture with love, joy, justice, risk, hope, creativity, courage, service, willingness to suffer, nonviolence.
He provides his disciples challenge, rest, retreat, encouragement, recovery after failures. They testify that their participant biographies have been forever changed for the better.
What spiritual movement is trying to be born among us today?

What are its demands/proposals?

What role might we play in its emergence?
1. Congregations need to identify themselves.

- Regressive Churches [nostalgic]
- Eggshell Churches [anxious]
- Holding the Tension [cautious]
- Progressive/Missional Churches [bold]

Why?

Belonging, Amplification, Public Figures, Shared Encouragement & Resources, Mobilization
2. Begin afresh with younger generations

- The reason an awakening takes a generation or more to work itself out is that it must grow with the young; it must escape the enculturation of old ways. It is not worthwhile to ask who the prophet of this awakening is or to search for new ideological blueprints in the works of the learned. Revitalization is growing up around us in our children, who are both more innocent and more knowing than their parents and grandparents. It is their world that has yet to be reborn. - Wm. G. McLoughlin
Begin afresh with younger generations

- An important scientific innovation rarely makes its way by gradually winning over and converting its opponents; it rarely happens that Saul becomes Paul. What does happen is that its opponents gradually die out, and that the growing generation is familiarized with the ideas from the beginning, another instance of the fact that the future lies with the youth. - Max Planck
3. Recruit leaders differently, train them differently, and organize them differently.

- MDiv - $40 - 80K

The Cuban Methodist model ...

The deployment problem
Understanding America

The population of the United States is not distributed evenly. Instead, we tend to bunch up in communities, leaving the spaces in between more sparsely inhabited. Most Americans live in or near cities; today 53 percent live in the 20 largest cities. 75 percent of all Americans live in metropolitan areas.

This map shows population density. The relative height of each major city reflects its population in 1990.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Go West. Nevada is the fastest growing state, followed by Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah.

Wyoming has the lowest population density of all states in the lower 48 with an average of five people per square mile.

What happens in the empty spaces? Some of it is farming country. More than one quarter of America’s crop land is used to grow corn. One third of what is produced is exported to other countries.

Chicago, the country’s third largest city, has a population of about three million people. There are 21 states with populations smaller than this city.

Largest metropolitan area includes New York City and portions of New Jersey and Long Island with a total population of 20 million.

Population density is high in New York City, where there are 23,000 people per square mile.

Coastal areas are home to more than half the U.S. population.
“84% of Americans now live in or around urban areas. But I’m United Methodist, so I speak out of the context of what I know best. 74% of our capital resources (that’s our buildings) are where only 16% of the American population lives. The Methodist Church flourished in the 1800’s and early 1900’s in small towns and rural areas. But now we continue to send pastors to church buildings instead of populations. And if we’re really going to reach people, we’re going to have to radically rethink our paradigms of what it’s going to mean to be missional.” - Rev. Mike Slaughter
More here: http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/1227/interview-w-mike-slaughter
Working in our tribes

PCUSA

UCC

UMC

Episcopal

Christian Church DoC

ELCA

Historic Black, Ethnic/Immigrant, Progressive Roman Catholic, Progressive Evangelical, etc.
nostalgic

PCUSA

UCC

UMC

Disciples of Christ

ELCA

Historic Black, Ethnic/Immigrant, Progressive Roman Catholic, Progressive Evangelical, etc.

eggshell

holding tension

bold
A NOSTALGIC, REGRESSIVE MOVEMENT
Working across our tribes

PCUSA
UCC
UMC
Episcopal
Christian Church DoC
ELCA

Historic Black, Ethnic/Immigrant, Progressive Catholic, Progressive Evangelical

A VITAL SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT FOR JUST AND GENEROUS CHRISTIAN FAITH?
key question:

to whom are we making our demands?
4. Recast mission as spiritual activism.

- Recruiting activists
- Neighborhood/Community activism
- Political activism
- Economic activism (boycotts, buy-cotts, divest/invest)
- Professional activism
- Social entrepreneurship
Along this path, popular movements play an essential role, not only by making demands and lodging protests, but even more basically by being creative. You are social poets, creators of work, builders of housing, producers of food, above all for people left behind by the world market... The future of humanity does not rest solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize. It is in their hands, which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change. I am with you. - Pope Francis
5. Align, align, align.

- song
- liturgy
- preaching
- practices
- inner work/outer work
- multi-faith collaboration
Putting it all together ...

- Helping churches identify themselves.
- Beginning with kids and youth.
- Recruiting, training, organizing leaders in new ways.
- Recasting mission as spiritual activism.
- Celebrating liberation spirituality
heart-health for denominations:
organizational basics for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times
let’s stay in touch ...

slides will be available

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q + r
Holy One, whose love makes us one family. 
May your unspeakable name be revered. 
Now, here on earth, may your commonwealth come. 
On earth as in heaven may your dreams come true.

Give us today our bread for today. 
Forgive us our wrongs as we forgive. 
Lead us away from the perilous trial. 
Liberate us from the evil.
For the kingdom is yours and yours alone.
The power is yours and yours alone.
The glory is yours and yours alone.
Now and forever, amen.

Now, here on earth, may your commonwealth come.
On earth as in heaven may your dreams come true.
Alleluia.
Alleluia.
Amen.
heart-health for congregations:
congregational innovation for dangerous, challenging, precipitous, pivotal times
What congregations are leading the way?
What congregations are leading the way?

Why is this question so hard to answer?
innovation & imitation
When we look at growing churches ...

We have:

- Feeder/collector churches for migrants
- Churches for discontented transfer-ins
- Churches of choice for targeted consumers
- Churches improving without innovating.
We have:

- Innovations that are unsustainable financially
- Innovations that are unsustainable personally
- Innovations that are unreplicable due to exceptional talent
We don’t have many:

- Churches reaching secular people
- Churches reaching younger generations
- Churches “rethinking the whole system”
- Churches addressing deep theological issues
So ...

Learn from everyone. Withhold judgment.

Expect diversity - many ways.

Share best practices.

Improve what’s working.

Innovate boldly and fail quickly.

Innovate on the side.

Distrust magic bullets.
Catholic Student Movement

Faith Communities Movement

Spiritual Direction Cluster

Dinner Churches/Breakfast for Dinner
my best guess ...
my best intuition tells me 3 things ...

1. Creative and profound liturgies may help us break through.
my best intuition tells me 3 things ...

2. Discipleship, spiritual formation, personal transformation may happen best in non-Sunday formats: camps, retreats, online, field trips, etc.
my best intuition tells me 3 things ...

3. Before we can have a new “methodism” ... we need a new “messagism” - where we consciously rethink our message and align everything with it.
alignment

the current challenge of innovation
meaning

theology
gospel
spiritual
experience
celebration

ritual/practice - bonding to meaning

eucharistic liturgy
creeds
invocations
confessions of sin
announcements

readings
songs
prayers
litanies
invocations
sermon
instrumental music
benedictions
community
connected to celebrate/embody meaning

welcome

mutual care

pastoral care

fellowship

recreation
formation
more deeply embodying meaning
administration

supporting the meaning with logistics

volunteer care
management
communications
fundraising
budget
planning
job descriptions
governance
mission
the meaning bearing fruit
recruitment
justice
compassion
vocation
leadership

equipped to build communities who embody the meaning

building multi-faith alliances

mentoring/modeling

professional
eval/development

“talent scouts”

seminary/
training
heart-health for congregations:

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Alleluia.
Alleluia.
Amen.