KENOTIC LEADERSHIP: A MODEL FOR CLERGY

by
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Date: January 13, 2021

Approved:

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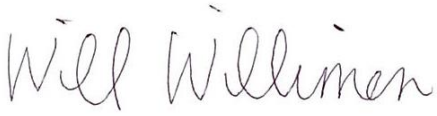

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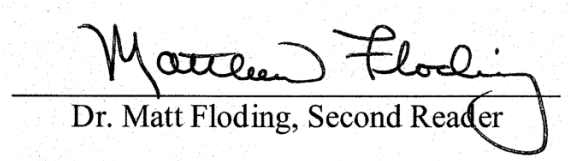

Dr. Matt Floding, Second Reader

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2021

ABSTRACT

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Leadership in the church today must be able to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and availability of resources in order to allow for the thriving of congregations. In order to serve as Christ served, church leaders must be able to empty themselves of old patterns and behaviors that keep them stuck and unable to guide their congregations into deeper relationship with God and active engagement within the community. Leaders must continually let go of what they once knew about the work of leadership, and be willing to embrace change that comes rapidly and challenges them, at times, to change course completely. This is how Jesus led. Jesus emptied himself of the things that were old models of leadership: tyranny, fear, power, and dictatorship and embraced the qualities of adaptability, authenticity, and flexibility which allowed him to minister and lead well in a variety of settings. This is, broadly, how I will define what I call, "kenotic leadership."

This thesis looks at the concept of kenosis, found in Philippians 2, as a model of values-based leadership that seeks to adapt to a changing world and a changing church through self-examination and release of those characteristics within the leader that stand in the way of authentic presence. Jesus, in choosing a kenosis, or emptying of self, demonstrates the essence of an adaptive form of leadership, leaving behind that which does not serve the present context. I will argue that Christ did not give up any part of his divinity because that divinity is essential to his identity and is his very essence. Using the work of Rowan Williams, I will demonstrate that Christ's divinity could not have been thrown off but remains an essential part of the human Jesus.

Finally, I will include a course in leadership that I have designed and taught to seminary students based upon the work of this thesis and my DMin program. Through the narrative sections following each week's lesson plan, I will demonstrate that seminary students respond well to an understanding of leadership that is based in humility and self-awareness and that their preparation for leadership in the church is currently insufficient.

Dedication

This work, and indeed my life, is dedicated to my sons Justin, Joshua, and Joseph who encouraged and supported me in this journey since I began seminary many years ago. My sons embraced a life of being "pastor's kids" with all the heartache and joy a life in ministry to the church brings. They have seen the best and worst of the church and of me, and, still they remain loving, gracious, generous young men who, to this day, remember that ichthus means "fish," in Greek.

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Acknowledgments

This work would not have happened without the support and encouragement of the faculty and staff of Duke Divinity School. I thank Judith Heyhoe for her tireless, patient work over three years to make me a better writer, Dr. Ellen Davis for re-igniting my love for scripture, Dr. Will Willimon for his humor and perspective when this journey seemed overwhelming, Dr. Ken Hood who believed I could do this and told me so, Dr. Matt Floding who offered friendship, advice, direction, and a sense of family during my times in Durham, and Dean Greg Jones who, as my professor, astonished me with his ability to speak brilliantly on leadership for three hours without notes, and as my advisor/reader mentored me with patience and kindness through the process of writing this thesis. Thank you, Dean Jones for being a model of excellent Christian leadership.

I want to acknowledge my friend and colleague Dr. Lydia Malone who walked with me, laughed with me, prayed for me, and stressed with me through this work. You pushed me and encouraged me to be better than I am. Your faith is something to which I aspire.

To the 21 in 21 Cohort, you made me feel part of something important and special. For your friendship, prayers, support, text messages, emails, Zoom gatherings, shared frustrations, shared joy, and all the experiences of the last three years, I am indescribably grateful.

Introduction

This thesis looks at the concept of kenosis, found in Philippians 2, as a model of values-based leadership that seeks to adapt to a changing world and a changing church through self-examination and release of those characteristics within the leader that stand in the way of authentic presence. Jesus, in submitting to a kenosis, or emptying of self, demonstrates the essence of adaptive leadership, leaving behind that which does not serve the present context. Being now in human form, Jesus adapts, though he does so not by leaving behind his divinity, but those pieces of his humanity that deny him the opportunity of the full expression God intended for human beings as they were initially created, before the fall.

Leadership in the church today must be able to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and availability of resources in order to allow for the thriving of congregations. In order to serve as Christ served, church leaders must be able to empty themselves of past patterns and behaviors that keep them stuck and unable to guide their congregations into deeper relationship with God and active engagement within the community. It is God who transforms and adaptive leadership requires a transformation of the one leading as well as the ones being led. Leaders must continually let go of what they once knew about leadership, and be willing to embrace change that comes rapidly and challenges them, at times, to change course completely. This is how Jesus led. Jesus emptied himself of the things that were old models of leadership: tyranny, fear, power, and dictatorship and embraced the qualities of adaptability, authenticity, and flexibility which allowed him to minister and lead well in a variety of settings. This is, broadly, how I will define, "kenotic leadership."

I will argue in this thesis that leadership as a process of kenosis can be defined as leadership that continually seeks to empty itself of characteristics such as: greed, pride, arrogance, insecurity, and all the worst of human traits, through practices of self-reflection and of making space to be present with God, so that it may reflect God's divinity through the human connection with Christ. This sort of leadership makes space for the voices of the marginalized as well, and incorporates the experience of the other into its work. Using Oscar Romero's understanding of kenosis, I will incorporate his theology regarding how the poor and marginalized are impacted by the concept of kenosis and how kenotic leadership honors the understanding of Christ's kenosis not as a leaving behind of divine authority, but of choosing authority in his human form which subverts the power and domination typically demonstrated by the human leaders of his time. Christ's authority is based in love and compassion, authority consistent with and appropriate to who God is in human form.

This sort of leadership is necessarily adaptive, it is aware of its context and able to adapt to new and changing circumstances and perspectives. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky state it well: "Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive."[1] Adaptive leadership, or any leadership that desires to serve its community in times of change and re-creation, requires a willingness to examine oneself and release those qualities which do not align with the leader's values. Defining one's values is key to understanding oneself and one's approach to leadership and ministry. Nearly all current leadership models rely on a transformational view of leadership—that is, a leader must look inward and reject those things he

[1] Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009),14.

finds that do not allow him full and authentic participation in the community he leads. Heifetz clarifies that many can lead if the goal of leadership is simply to gather a following; Hitler and Jim Jones were leaders by that definition. The leadership I am describing, and that which Heifetz and others who will be mentioned in this work describe, is leadership that is values-based and adaptive. Rather than a leader who influences a community to follow her vision, a values-based leader influences a community to face its problems and deal with them in ways that move the community to a better, healthier place. Rather than being based in power, this sort of leadership is based in growth. From a Christian perspective, this type of leadership desires to move the community forward toward the purpose to which God is calling them.

Most have all known or heard of pastors who view leadership from the perspective of power and developing a following. These pastors tend to focus on their achievements and positions. Rev. Jim Jones was an example of a leader who saw power and developing a following as his primary purpose for leadership. Jones and his inner circle ultimately orchestrated a mass murder-suicide of himself and his followers in his jungle commune at Jonestown, Guyana on November 18, 1978, demonstrating that it was simply developing a following and not the growth and health of the community that marked Jones' leadership. Before the suicides occurred, several members who wished to leave the commune were shot and killed as they boarded a plane. While this is an extreme example of a power-based leader, these leaders exist throughout the church today. They destroy people and organizations only in much more subtle ways, often without realizing the damage they are causing because they have not reflected at all on their motivations and values. A values-based leader must do the work of self-examination and root out those parts of herself that get in the way of her deepest held values and those things within her that keep her at a distance

from both her community and from God. If a leader does not do this work, she is simply leading in order to be followed, like Jim Jones.

In *Canoeing the Mountains*, Tod Bolsinger describes leadership in the church as necessarily adaptive, particularly in the 21st century when church leaders are facing a context that is unfamiliar and not at all what they were trained and prepared for. Additionally, adaptive leaders must know who they are so that they may define themselves apart from others but also remain connected to those with whom they may disagree within the organization. This is a key component of adaptive leadership described by both Brown and Herrington as well. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky define adaptive leadership as being change that specifically enables the capacity to thrive.[2] For them, new circumstances and contexts require new strategies and abilities as well as the leadership to mobilize them. While new strategies are required, it is also important to learn from the past and build on what has been successful rather than simply start afresh. The authors use the example of biological adaptations; the DNA of a species doesn't simply start over when adapting to new environmental conditions, the DNA changes over time to enable the species to thrive, but only a very small amount of the existing DNA is changed at any time. This illustrates two things: that adaptive change happens over time, and that a very small change in the DNA can amount to big changes in the overall species or organization. Adaptive leadership in the church challenges the pastor to help the congregation discern what is essential from their heritage that must be preserved and what is able to be expanded to meet the new challenges.[3] Together, congregation and pastor discern what will best allow the congregation as a whole to thrive.

[2] Ibid.,14-16.
[3] Ibid., 15.

Jim Herrington, Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor use the term, "effective," to describe a similar type of leadership. They write, "An effective leader—one who can galvanize individuals and groups, and who has the potential to help transform society—is a person who has *the capacity to know and do the right things*.[4] They propose a systems approach to leadership which also describes the need to discern what is valuable and what needs to change in a given system. This applies directly to the concept of adaptive leadership in that an adaptive challenge requires an understanding of the whole system and its capacity for change and then discerns the best way to move the system in the direction of transformational growth.

Brené Brown's concept of "daring leadership," describes yet another way of expressing leadership in times when adaptation is needed. For Brown, daring leadership requires the courage to be vulnerable enough to hear what the needs of the organization really are and how the leader herself may be what is hindering its progress toward health. It requires a willingness to, "rumble with vulnerability."[5] Rumbling with vulnerability means having a genuine conversation in which both parties are willing to be open, generous, curious, and own their parts in the problem. Similar to Herrington et.al., effective leadership for Brown requires self-awareness and the ability to understand how one's attitude or behavior is contributing to the lack of progress. If a pastor is to lead change of any kind, he has to understand the system within which he is leading, what is working from the past, how the history of the congregation has

[4] Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), XV.
[5] Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* (New York: Random House, 2018), 10.

brought it to where it is in the present, and how he fits into that system and may be contributing to the very things that require change.

Many seminary graduates do not recognize the need for an adaptive style of leadership and may not have even been introduced to this concept. As a result, they may leave seminary with unrealistic expectations of the work required of them in pastoral ministry. This ultimately leads to burn-out and disappointment.[6] These new leaders often don't understand their roles in terms of serving as Christ served: as a process of transformation for the sake of God's beloved church. When the leader engages the process of kenosis, she invites the congregation to do the same and together they are then able to discover their authentic selves and serve their communities with the greater compassion and understanding found through relationship with self, with others, and with God. Those leaders then become more able to reflect God to their people and to let go of selfish ambition as described in Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves." Later in James' epistle, James describes this sort of selfish ambition more thoroughly,

Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be

[6] Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1991). Maureen H. Miner, Martin Dowson, and Sam Sterland, "Ministry orientation and ministry outcomes: Evaluation of a new multidimensional model of clergy burnout and job satisfaction," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2010): 83, 167–188.

disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.[7]

This sort of selfish ambition keeps a leader from remaining tied to constructive values, or values that will benefit and grow the organization. This process of kenosis will produce, I believe, leadership that more closely meets the needs of today's congregations, is better prepared to negotiate the changing church contexts, and is more aligned with God's will than with human ambition.[8]

If we look at the history of theological education and preparation for clergy, we will see a lack of emphasis on leadership in general and leading through change, or adaptive leadership, specifically. Theological education was not initially designed or intended to produce leaders, it was designed to produce theologians and preachers--both necessary skills for a pastor but insufficient for today's context. In the next section I will give a brief history of theological education in mainline Protestant denominations as well as look briefly at the curricula of some seminaries today. There remains a gap in seminary preparation related to leadership. To that end, I will offer a curriculum that addresses the need for leadership education in seminaries or as separate workshops for existing clergy as part of this work. The curriculum was developed as part of this thesis and was taught over a semester at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. I include reflections on each week's lesson and the content of some of the class discussions to

[7] James 3:13-18 (NRSV).
[8] Craig C. Hill, *Servant of All: Status, Ambition, and the Way of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 98.

demonstrate not only the need for leadership education from my own and from the students' perspective, but also to demonstrate the clear lack of leadership training that these students have had. These are students who will one day lead a congregation, and without strong adaptive leadership skills, will find themselves where many pastors are today - leading declining congregations through unprecedented changes without the knowledge or skills with which to do it successfully. The pandemic we are currently experiencing has shown us the extent to which the church is unprepared for change. Many pastors are being creative and flexible and finding ways to make it work and many pastors have surprised themselves with their ability to flex and adapt to changing circumstances. But what happens after this? What happens when our leaders find themselves in church settings that did not previously exist? How do leaders continue to serve those who can only participate in the church remotely? How do leaders adapt not only to what is right now, but to what is coming next? Leaders can do it on the fly like they have had to do during this pandemic and hope for the best, or they can examine what has been learned, what existing contexts consist of, and what their values dictate that they must do. Then, leaders can move their congregations forward into a dramatically different future, one that has never existed before and one for which we have few maps, few models, and few guidebooks beyond the examples of those who have led through changing circumstances before us and, of course, scripture. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provides an excellent example of leading through tremendous change before the term, "adaptive leadership" was adopted. We can't do this, though, unless we have the skills and the desire to lead, in Brené Brown's term, "wholeheartedly," with whole selves grounded in self-awareness and grace.

In his book, *Oscar Romero's Theological Vision*, Edgardo Colón-Emeric quotes a poem spoken by Romero during a sermon on the sixth Sunday of Easter in 1978. The poem speaks to Romero's vision of Christ's kenosis, and how that kenosis benefits the poor and the marginalized. Leadership of any kind requires a sensitivity to the needs of anyone who is other than ourselves. For the poor, kenosis takes on a different tone than it does for Western, white, middle class people. To ask someone who has never had enough to "let go" of something in order to serve God is a different question than to ask me, a white, Western, middle class person, that same thing. For Romero, Christ is in the poor, Christ lives with the poor and his kenosis was for the poor. Those in different circumstances must be mindful of this and adapt their leadership with sensitivity.

Romero's poem, shared during a worship service in 1978, expresses beautifully his understanding of God as God of the poor:

> You are the God of the poor ones,
> The God human and humble,
> The God who sweats on the roadway,
> The God who is ruddy faced.
> This is why I speak to you,
> In the manner in which my people speak,
> Because you are God the laborer,
> Christ the worker.
> You walk hand in hand with my people;
> You fight in the field and the city;
> You stand in line at the work camp;
> So that they will pay your daily wage.
> You eat shaved ice in the park
> With Eusebio, Pancho, and Juan Jos.
> And you even complain about the syrup,
> When they do not add enough honey to it.
> I have seen you in the store

Set up in a stall,
I have seen you selling lottery tickets
Without being ashamed of that job.
I have seen you in the gas stations
Checking the tires of a truck
And even patrolling the roads
With leather gloves and overalls.[9]

Kenotic leadership seeks to serve all the people of God with courage and authenticity. It does the work of self-examination in order to discover the core values of the leader and the congregation and put them at the forefront as the guiding principles for leadership work. It is my hope that this project serves to demonstrate not only the need for this type of leadership, but also the way it serves God and the people God loves.

[9] Edgardo-Colón-Emeric, *Óscar Romero's Theological Vision: Liberation and the Transfiguration of the Poor* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 135-136.

Chapter One
Preparation for Ministry in Mainline Protestantism in North America

The standard of preparation for ministry brought to America by the Dutch Reformed Church and adapted to the American context in 1784 with the founding of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, is heavily academic--rigorous higher education being a strong value for Dutch clergy--and was the model for many of the developing Protestant denominations in the eighteenth century. This model was so popular that between 1810 and 1840 more than forty seminaries were established by American denominations using this same strategy.[1] William J.R. Taylor, in a document prepared for the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) on the "peculiar" history of the RCA, notes that the Reformed Church was, from the beginning, a church with a "zeal for sound doctrine and a learned ministry."[2] Only well-educated, eloquent pastors were sent to the churches, even those in rural areas, or, what was then called the "wilderness." Taylor writes, "It has been well said that, in one sense, the churches for a long period existed for the sake of its theology-for its preservation and propagation."[3]

In the formation of many early denominations in North America, training for the ministry of Word and Sacrament included a liberal arts education focused on theology. Some denominations included a period of apprenticeship with an experienced pastor. Those in the Dutch Reformed Church who could not attend a liberal arts college learned entirely from a pastor, privately,

[1] James W. Van Hoeven, *Piety and Patriotism: Bicentennial Studies of the Reformed Church in America, 1776-1976* (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive), 1976.
[2] William J. R. Taylor, *The peculiar history of the Reformed Church in America in relation to theological education* (Newark, NJ: 1876 [?]).
[3] Ibid., 187.

although this form of instruction all but disappeared in 1771 when the concept of a separate, professional school of theology distinct from parish life was established.[4]

The notion of a well-educated clergy, however, did not begin with the Reformed Church in America. In 391 A.D., Ambrose of Milan wrote, "I only desire to attain to that care and diligence in the sacred writings, which the Apostle has placed last among the duties of the saints; and this very thing I desire, so that, in the endeavour (sic) to teach, I may be able to learn."[5] Ambrose goes on to write that the duties of clergy are derived from what is virtuous and what is useful even though these may clash. While Ambrose is right in that the perceived duties of clergy may clash between what is "virtuous" and what is "useful," these terms were defined quite differently in Ambrose's time as well as in the time of the development of theological education and clergy preparation in North America than they are today. While the model developed and still used is a rigorous model that produces highly intelligent and well-trained theologians, it was, perhaps, more appropriate for previous centuries when a pastor's primary work was to preach and did not involve the need for a great deal of organizational leadership. I posit that Ambrose's understandings of the duties of clergy may have included theological study and prayer (virtuous) and preaching (useful) but likely did not include the duties expected of clergy today.

While pastors must still preach and teach, our current context demands so much more of a minister than past contexts did. Pastors today must preach and teach the gospel, of course, and

[4] Norman Kansfield, "Education," in *Piety and Patriotism: Bicentennial Studies of the Reformed Church in America, 1776-1976*, ed. James W. Van Hoeven (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), Kindle Edition.
[5] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Duties of the Clergy* (Ebook: Fig Classic Series on Early Christian Theology, 2012), Book 1.

they also must manage facilities, staff, and volunteers, as well as have the ability to recruit, oversee, and train those volunteers and staff. A pastor must plan and initiate outreach to increasingly changing communities with needs far beyond those that the church can provide alone, coordinate with other church and ministry leaders in the community to effectively serve the needs of that community, develop networks of resources to offer pastoral care to those in the congregation who struggle in areas the pastor is not trained to handle (addiction, abuse, etc.) and, generally, lead the congregation through rapidly changing circumstances in a rapidly changing world. Many pastors today must navigate their own benefits options, negotiate their own contracts or calls, and advocate for themselves if the church does not honor its commitments. The work required of a pastor today demands practical skills that traditional seminary training does not adequately provide (or provide at all). Additionally, a pastor can no longer lead a church's mission without a team of volunteers, and seminary training does not prepare clergy to develop the lay leadership from within the congregation that is necessary for a church to flourish. Traditional seminary training does little prepare the pastor for mobilizing others to do the work God is calling them to do, let alone to examine the past actions and relationships that determine, to a great extent, the church's current health. One of the most common issues pastors deal with today in churches is managing conflict; conflict between members, among staff, between members and staff, and that for the pastor himself is a daily occurrence, yet pastors in traditional seminaries are not trained at all to manage conflict. In my experience leading a synod[6], the technique I have most often seen used in conflict management in churches is avoidance. Because they are not well trained in the skills needed to lead well and deal with the concerns that come up

[6] The Regional Synod of New York is composed of 143 Reformed churches in the lower half of New York State. I served as the executive minister of the synod for six and a half years, working with all of the churches, pastors, and leadership teams. It is this experience which informs a good deal of my perspective.

in the modern church, pastors and congregations suffer, and they pass along the effects of that suffering and struggle to future generations.

In the Reformed Church in America today, formation for ministry includes students attending a four-year liberal arts college or university followed by attendance at a three-year seminary or divinity school where they are taught by professors, many of whom have never served a church as pastor. The seminary requires a practicum in the form of an internship with an experienced pastor who is approved by the seminary, before graduation, but the practice of leadership in the church context is not the focus of their internship training. Internships tend to focus on preaching skills, education, youth ministry, and pastoral care.[7] Students are taught to be good theologians and bible interpreters but similar to those in the eighteenth century, are only minimally trained for the work of leading a congregation. Craig Dykstra, former vice president for religion at the Lilly Endowment, described theological education this way, "A school is the pivotal institution for insuring that a tradition's practices are passed on from one generation to the next, and that practices are reflected upon, argued about, and reformed, revised, and extended in new ways in new times."[8] While seminaries are very good at teaching and passing on the traditions and practices of a given denomination, and may even encourage students to reflect upon and argue about those traditions and practices, they are far less likely to reform, revise or extend those traditions in new ways, as Dykstra says, at least in the seminary context. There is an important difference between "tradition," and "traditionalism," however. Jeroslav Pelikan writes,

[7] Interview with Placement Coordinator for Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI, June 2019.
[8] Norman J. Kansfield, "Teacher of the Church: The Office of Professor of Theology in the Reformed Church in America," in *Tools for Understanding; Essays in Honor of Donald J. Bruggink,* ed. James Hart Brumm (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 166.

"Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. And, I suppose I should add, it is traditionalism that gives tradition such a bad name."[9] Reform doesn't often happen inside the institution that is designed to pass down tradition, it happens through training people to think differently about their circumstances and to view traditions through the lens of context. We want to pass down tradition in the church so that our histories and our beliefs continue in future generations, but we have to avoid traditionalism that refuses to grow or adapt or keeps the church unable to fulfill the mission to which God is calling it today.

Well trained leaders understand their roles in the growth of the organization and do the work to mobilize the congregation to realize that growth. These skills are often hard-earned through painful experiences in local churches. These experiences can grow a pastor into a leader, or cause the pastor to leave the church completely.

A brief review of the Master of Divinity curricula from seminaries among the Formula of Agreement[10] partners today shows that the training for pastoral ministry still focuses primarily on academic learning. It is standard that students spend the greatest part of their seminary preparation attending classroom-taught courses in an institutional setting that is separate from the context of ministry. Courses such as Systematic Theology, Hebrew, Greek, Old and New Testament, and Homiletics take the vast majority of the student's time in seminary. While these

[9] Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition: 1983 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1984), 65.

[10] The Formula of Agreement exists between the Reformed Church in America, The United Church of Christ, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church, USA. The Formula provides for the orderly transfer of ministers, meaning that ministers trained in any of the four denominations may serve a church in another of the denominations without having to transfer their ordination credentials to the new denomination.

are necessary core classes that students need and given that the seminary only has three years in which to prepare its students, not much time is left for leadership training. A review of the electives in these seminaries did not offer much in the way of leadership training either. At New Brunswick Seminary, a student can choose from electives such as Christian Traditions in Context, or The Christian Experience and Witness. Princeton Seminary offers electives such as History of Religions or Christian Ethics. Western Theological Seminary (RCA), Chicago Theological Seminary (UCC), and Luther Seminary (ELCA) offer elective courses that have leadership components. Western Seminary offers Leading Christian Ministry that is described, in part, as "Students write a learning covenant with a ministry focus that will further explore and deepen their sense of calling and understanding of pastoral leadership."[11] While these electives address the topic of leadership, they don't seem to actually teach leadership skills. Writing a learning covenant focused on a sense of calling and understanding of pastoral leadership is not the same as practicing pastoral leadership and understanding the skills required to lead a congregation.

Without core competency in leadership, a student would have a difficult time deepening her understanding of pastoral leadership. Only Luther Seminary offers a course that is actually focused on the practice of leadership, called, "Church Organization and Leadership," which focuses on church organization, polity, and missional leadership. It explores theological and theoretical definitions of leadership, cultivating congregational identity and vision, gifts discernment in the body of Christ, leading teams, overseeing finances and facilities, leading

[11] Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI, westernsem.edu

change, addressing conflict, and creating a culture of leadership multiplication. Students engage in self-reflection on their own gifts and ongoing leadership development.[12]

The leadership course at Chicago Seminary is called, "Leadership and Ministry in Context," which seems to get at the issue of actual leadership but no description is offered publicly.[13] These are examples of seminaries that offer one or two electives in leadership education but none of them offer additional leadership training beyond an elective course or two and none of them include leadership in the standard curriculum. It is entirely possible, and likely probable, that new pastors are walking into churches every day with no leadership training at all. The result is that churches expect these pastors to lead and the pastors have no understanding of what leadership requires. Thus, most pastors, if they learn leadership, learn it "on the job," and we have seen the result of that model. Because there is no theological connection to this "on the job" leadership training, churches are in decline across the denominational spectrum, scandal is rampant, and many congregations have turned into social clubs. Statistics from the Urban Ministry Institute indicate that 90% of pastors studied report that their training was inadequate for ministry, 85% reported that their biggest problem is dealing with difficult people, and 90% indicated that ministry in the church was completely different from what they thought it would be.[14] These statistics point to seminary preparation that is lacking in practical leadership preparation.

[12] Luther Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, MN, luthersem.edu
[13] Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL, ctschicago.edu.
[14] Tumi.org: Equipping leaders, Empowering Movements, December 9, 2007.

A pastor I interviewed about her formation for ministry in the Reformed Church described her preparation for congregational leadership this way,

When I came out of seminary and received my first call, I was ready to preach on Sundays, love my congregation, and teach Sunday School. I was excited to share the love of Jesus Christ with these people who really trusted that I knew what I was doing. I knew nothing about budgets, managing volunteers, building effective teams, or actually leading in a specific direction. My idea of setting a goal was to increase our membership or Sunday school attendance but to plan and execute a vision or mission, or to motivate others to embrace a vision was something I had no idea about. It wasn't until a few years ago, after 15 years in pastoral ministry, that someone suggested I go to a leadership workshop. That workshop changed everything.[15]

Indeed, pastors are trained to preach and teach, to offer pastoral care to their congregations, and to be spiritual advisors very well, but they have not been trained in an aspect of ministry that is crucial to the church: leadership.

In reviewing the curricula of these institutions, it became clear that there was nothing offered that was titled, simply, "Leadership." Every course that included leadership as an element seemed to hide the "leadership" theme within a ministry-sounding title. "Missional Leadership" and "Leading Christian Ministry." While there is no doubt that clergy leadership takes place in a

[15] Rev. Anna Davis (name changed at interviewee's request), Pastor, Reformed Church in America, New Jersey, June, 2019.

Christian context and in a ministry setting, some aspects of leadership are universal. Concepts like understanding how a congregation knows it is successful in its ministries, or assessing the skills of a team in order to work well together toward a goal are essential in the context of an organization such as a church. [16]

Goals are rarely something we talk about in Christian ministry. Some clergy and lay leaders don't like talk of goals or success or leadership believing these subjects to belong to the business world and are thus inappropriate for church. However, if we look to scripture, we see that leadership and practices of leadership have been around for a very long time. Jesus appointed a group of twelve disciples with an inner circle of three (Peter, James, and John). Jesus spent most of his time with the three leaders who, in turn, instructed and guided the other nine. In the Pastoral Epistles, 1 -2 Timothy and Titus, Paul instructs Timothy and Titus how to appoint leaders and how leaders must behave in the community.[17] Further, in the Book of Acts, Paul addresses the leaders in Ephesus and tells the elders that the Holy Spirit has appointed them to be overseers, leaders of God's church. He describes their ministry as that of a shepherd pasturing sheep. (Acts 20:28). That image of shepherd runs through the New Testament and shows clearly that leadership is an essential part of Christian community. Shepherds do not simply sit with and love their sheep, they lead them in a particular direction where they will find nourishment, they correct course when something blocks their progress, they adapt to new circumstances like a rain storm. Shepherds cannot simply ignore a sheep that bites other sheep, he must deal with it for the

[16] A.G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin, *Playing to Win, How Strategy Really Works* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2013). In this book, Martin and Lafley discuss the importance of assessing skill sets in teams and working toward goals that can easily be applied to churches as well as business.
[17] Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), Kindle edition.

benefit of the herd. They cannot abandon their authority with sheep that become aggressive and simply avoid dealing with that sheep. The shepherd is charged with responsibility for the whole herd, even the difficult and disobedient sheep, and he must lead them, he must take them where they need to go. It is a reminder that those who lead in the context of church do so with love and care for those in their charge but they do have to lead. Shepherds were trained to lead their sheep but pastors have rarely been trained to lead their people.

During the first century, leadership in the church continued to develop. Some apostles exercised authority over the communities in their care: James in Jerusalem, Paul, Peter, and Aquila and Priscilla for example. Later, Gregory of Nazianzus emphasized the role of pastoral leadership, writing that leadership in the church is "providentially arranged by God" [18] so that some will be called specifically to serve as leaders for the sake of the rest of the community. Gregory of Nyssa defined a bishop as, "a leader, a superior, a teacher of piety, and a director of the hidden mysteries," (the Eucharist).[19] Given all the history that speaks directly to leadership and the need for leadership in the church, it seems strange that our seminaries, the places we trust to train our shepherds, do not offer much training in leadership, especially since Jesus was engaged in leadership throughout his ministry on earth. Additionally, the early church shepherded its congregations through massive amounts of change! These communities went from being either pagan or Jewish communities to being bound together in their belief in Christ as the Messiah. The change they had to accommodate included their very identities as well as their understanding of themselves as part of something new and relatively undefined. They were creating the church

[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

as it developed and the leadership required to do that successfully was certainly gifted in adaptive leadership. Additionally, leaders in the early church had to navigate these different communities and ethnic groups coming together to form a new community. Surely this required a great deal of skill in the inclusion people of different perspectives and backgrounds in the work of the new church, being able to make difficult decisions, and having the courage to be vulnerable and present with others who were struggling to understand this new thing they were doing. Leaders in the church today need to lead in very similar ways and can draw upon the examples of people like Paul, Timothy, and Gregory of Nazianzus as well as Jesus himself, to lead churches today facing different, but similar circumstances.

Misunderstanding about what constitutes leadership can get in the way of its development. L. Gregory Jones, Dean of Duke Divinity School, writes that Christian wisdom is nurtured over the course of time in institutions that act as bearers of tradition, laboratories for learning and incubators of leadership.[20] Many Protestant seminaries have done a very good job of bearing tradition and being laboratories for learning but developing leadership, however, is often lacking. Forbes offers a description of what leadership is not as a way to get at the core of what it is. According to an April blog:

Leadership has nothing to do with seniority or position within the hierarchy of an institution, leadership has nothing to do with titles, has nothing to do with personal attributes. Leadership is not management.

[20] Faith and Leadership blog, Duke Divinity School, April 29, 2013, https://faithandleadership.com/stanley-hauerwas-question-cannot-be-avoided

In the church, some tend to assume that the person with the title has the necessary skills to lead and also assume that those with charismatic personalities are qualified for leadership. Some assume that those who simply step up to lead will be good leaders but experience would tell us otherwise, especially in the case of clergy.

So, what is leadership? Some of the leading business thinkers define leadership this way:

> Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. - Warren Bennis
>
> Leaders are those who empower others. - Bill Gates
>
> Leadership is influence-nothing more, nothing less. - John Maxwell

While these definitions offer some insight into the role of a leader, they do not necessarily give insight into what leadership really entails. Forbes ultimately defines leadership as a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal.[21] Brené Brown offers a similar definition of leadership, "I define a leader as anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential."[22] In the church, leadership often looks like charismatic personalities or anxious people who over-function. Pastors are not necessarily taught how to empower others, how to set goals and lead a team toward them, and they often do not take ownership of their influence or the responsibility for developing the potential of others. Few, if any, of these

[21] Ibid.
[22] Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts* (New York: Random House, 2018), 5.

concepts are taught in seminaries, but these are all skills that can and must be learned- they are not personality traits or natural instincts.

Unfortunately, my denomination, the Reformed Church in America, is still practicing leadership in an ineffective way. For example, we are currently fighting over accepting a formal position on human sexuality and instead of working together to utilize everyone's strengths and work toward a goal, leaders in the churches and within the denominational offices are standing firm in their positions, refusing to hear another point of view, claiming their understanding as "truth," and generally behaving as people who have few leadership skills at all. Even the denominational leadership has abdicated responsibility for leading and instead is urging those in the fight to simply pray more. Asserting one position over and against anyone else's and proclaiming a "solution" that has nothing to do with the problem is the opposite of effective leadership. Had the ministers in this situation been given training in leadership skills, perhaps the denomination would not be on the verge of schism today. Instead, they might be talking to one another, strategizing together to find ways to meet the needs of the church, and empowering the leadership to courageously guide them in this work.

Leadership takes courage and courage is something pastors, and people in general, often lack, in my experience, not because they cannot or will not be brave but because they are taught very early on not to be brave. In our society, people are often dismissed or rejected for speaking or behaving bravely when their words or behavior challenge others to think or act differently. For a pastor to be brave in the church often means risking the loss of approval of those who sign his paycheck. It means saying unpopular things and putting in place ideas that will challenge the

congregation to change. This is work that requires courage but courage often will not occur in a setting that is not open to possibility or is not one in which it is safe to try something new even if that means failure. Pastors are taught to exegete scripture, write sermons, carry on tradition, and think theologically about the world. They are not taught how to assess risk, how to leverage the best in their people, how to create safe environments that encourage creativity, or, essentially, how to be courageous leaders.

Pastoral leadership is not the same thing as business leadership, however. Pastoral leadership has as its ultimate goals discipleship, mission, and spiritual formation. Barbara Anne Keely writes that spiritual formation is "the process by which a person becomes more acutely aware of God's presence in one's life, desires it as a way of life, and intentionally develops practices (or patterns) that will draw one closer to God."[23] To discern God's presence in the life of a leader is to self-reflect, to see those places in themselves that are not in line with the values they hold. To desire God's presence as a way of life requires time spent with God, time spent in quiet reflection, and time spent putting in place those ideals and practices that invite the presence of God into our daily lives and invite God to speak into the values we live by. The practices and patterns required for a pastor also include leadership but if they are not taught this, they often fail to lead their congregations effectively toward the goals they have set for themselves, if they have set goals at all.

[23] Barbara Anne Keely, "Spiritual Formation for Ordained Ministry: An Ecumenical Approach," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 6, no. 4 (September 11, 2003): 202-207.

Somehow, in the formation of theological education and preparation for ministry, the church has forgotten that God's provision is to be trusted. God has gifted leaders for the work of leadership yet the church has made a distinction between itself and the world of business. It's a false distinction, however, when it comes to leadership. Those who hold the office of minister must lead just as officers in a company must lead. The skills are similar- they are just applied differently in different contexts. Christopher Beeley references Augustine's discussion of God's provision of pastoral leadership for the church:

It is unthinkable that good shepherds could be lacking now. Far be it from us that they should be lacking – far be it from God's mercy not to produce them and establish them! Of course, if there are good sheep, there are also good shepherds, because good shepherds are made out of good sheep."[24]

Beeley goes on to say that weak leadership does not promote vital lay ministry; it compromises the health of the entire body by failing to provide the laity with the basic spiritual guidance they need in order to be effective leaders themselves. Beeley implies that good shepherds, or leaders, are not born good leaders, they are developed from the sheep, or people, at hand. This further implies that good sheep must be taught how to be good shepherds—good people must be taught how to be good leaders; they don't just arrive fully developed and ready to lead. If we don't develop good leaders, the whole church suffers. Additionally, we can't raise up new leaders if the current leaders don't model effective leadership, and the current leaders cannot model effective leadership if they have not been trained and empowered to do so.

[24] Beeley, *Leading God's People*, Kindle loc. 110.

In speaking of the growth and development of the church, L. Gregory Jones writes, "We have forgotten who we are. We have forgotten the story of God's love and redemption, and have too often lived as 'practical atheists' who have the form of faith, but little of the substance."[25] That substance of faith is the ability to put into practice what we know of God's Word. When the early Dutch Reformed leaders established a seminary, they forgot that our call is not just to exegete scripture and visit sickbeds, it is also to lead the churches into the future to which God is calling them. We have forgotten that we are given the incredible responsibility for the care, nurture, and development of those God places in our care, including providing the opportunity to grow in faith and service. We, as a whole and individually, have tended to prioritize our specific understandings of "truth," and spent a great deal of energy defending those perspectives, at the expense of authentic leadership that includes many voices and perspectives. We have argued and continue to argue over who gets to participate in God's community and who does not instead of focusing on leadership that can hold different perspectives together and find common ground as a community of faith, Theological education is intended to prepare ministers for the work of leading congregations but we have forgotten our purpose and have instead focused on preparing clergy to merely carry on our traditions. Clergy are called to carry on the traditions of their denominations, certainly, and clergy are also called to lead, to shepherd, to care for, to develop, to empower, and to serve their congregations. Too often, they are trained for one aspect of their work but not the others.

[25] L. Gregory Jones, *Christian Social Innovation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2016), 5.

The early saints taught us that the work of pastoral ministry is both incredibly important and incredibly demanding. It requires strong and capable leaders to guide the church into deeper unity and faithful ministry. The more we in the church empower our clergy to guide and lead us, the more effective will be our ministry and the ministry of the wider church. Christopher Beeley offers this conclusion: "At the end of the day and at the end of a lifetime of ministry, the only thing that matters is whether we have made the love of God and the spiritual growth of our people the top priority."[26] If we are to make the love of God and the spiritual growth of our people our priority, we must teach our clergy how to do this. Our clergy are trained in the necessary skills of bible study, theology, and preaching, skills every church and pastor values and needs, however, these are not sufficient skills for leadership in the church. We have to commit to training our clergy more completely, including training them how to be leaders who lead with compassion and the ability to love the other.

[26] Beeley, *Leading God's People,* Kindle loc. 199.

Chapter Two
Kenosis and Kenotic Leadership

A brief exegesis of Philippians 2:1-8

> "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-even death on a cross." Philippians 2:3-8 (NRSV)

Paul seeks to help the church at Philippi to learn to live and serve in their pagan context and challenges them to have "the same mind" with one another (ἀλλήλους), that was in Christ. In verses 3-5, he implores them to "do nothing" (μηδέν) out of selfish ambition (ἐριθείαν) or conceit (κενοδοζια) but in humility to place the concerns of others upon themselves (ἀλλά και τά ἑτέων ἑκαστοι)-but make the things of others of yourself. Put another way, make the needs of others personal, as if they were your own needs.

The call to make the things of others things of ourselves instructs us to intentionally move into the lives of others, to be among them and to do that by creating space within our hearts for others to live. Jeffrey Keuss calls this "front porch living." [1] This is a call to literally move into the lives of others and to create an expansive hospitality in our own lives. Keuss goes on to say that in the

[1] Jeffrey Keuss, *Freedom of the Self: Kenosis, Cultural Identity, and Mission at the Crossroads* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 19.

days of the front porch, people knew their neighbors, people talked and laughed together, they shared their grief with one another and genuinely lived in and cared for a community in an intimate way. Too often, the things we hold onto keep us from participating in this kind of authentic community, things like competitiveness and jealousy necessarily keep us at a distance from others. This distance isn't a physical distance but an emotional distance which is the kind of distance that can be most difficult to overcome.

Kenosis calls us to empty ourselves of selfish ambition, jealousy, and conceit so that we may love our neighbors, truly, as we were created to do and as we are commanded to do by Christ. Rowan Williams' theology includes the idea of a new human community, one marked by patience; a community still seeking its identity and sustained by the Holy Spirit.[2] This new community finds its center in the kenosis of Christ. Becoming something new, individually or corporately, is a slow process that requires patience as well as hard work. Christ's kenosis moves us to begin this work for the sake of the church.

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament defines kenosis: "To make empty," "to deprive of content or possession." The subject of ἐκένοσεν is not the incarnate Christ, but the pre-existent Lord. His essence remains though his form is changed.[3] The-self emptying that takes place in Christ is the emptying of love that is "exchanged between Father and Son,"[4] and becomes Christ's act of obedience in death on the cross. It is our alignment with Jesus' humanity, according to Williams, that makes possible our own kenosis or self-emptying in love.

[2] Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 57.
[3] *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 661.
[4] Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 105.

Williams further understands kenosis "...not as a divestment of the self to make way for a transcendent Other, but as a willingness to tarry with the negative, to undertake the painful work of negotiating difference."[5] Kenosis, for Williams, is the hard work of living together in community. Another dimension of kenosis is experiencing a relinquishment of those fallen human characteristics that keep us from experiencing genuine love for and care of those we serve; love and care that we are willing to take the necessary risks to demonstrate fully and courageously. While a holistic understanding of kenosis contains many dimensions, I will focus on these two for the purpose of this thesis.

The Kenotic Self

My understanding of kenosis assumes that identity, whether personal or corporate, is fluid, not fixed, and therefore is open to deepening change and redemption. The actual presence or being of others is also not fixed and static but is fluid or kenotic, which allows for the possibility of learning deeply from one another and being changed by witnessing the experience of and participating in life with another. If human beings are to live in authentic community with one another, they have to actively participate in the lives of others within the community and allow others to actively participate in their lives. It is in this reciprocal action that people grow in connection with one another and learn to accept difference in one another. It is the experience of being in relationship with another person that opens up the possibility of accepting difference and change as beneficial rather than threatening. The experiences of relationships with other people pave the way for genuine relationship with Christ who offers the change and redemption so desperately needed but which often, proves elusive on our own.

[5] Myers, *Christ the Stranger*, 55.

A person's relationship with Christ is necessarily different from relationships with other people because Christ is the second Person of the Trinity and human beings are human beings. There is much scholarly debate about the "humanness" of Christ and whether or not he was actually human or if he was divine and only appeared human, or any number of other combinations of divinity and humanity. For the purpose of this thesis, I will take the traditional, Reformed position that Christ, while on earth in human form, was both fully human and fully divine. I will also assume that Christ's divinity is essential and not something he could put off while he was in the form of a human being because he was, in essence, divine- being the second Person of the Trinity, co-existent with God the Father and God's Spirit from the beginning. Christ was in human form and experienced humanity fully while also experiencing divinity fully. He chose, while in human form, I believe, not to call upon his divine nature so as to change his experience of humanness into something it was not, but he was still connected to and one with the other Persons of the Trinity. Additionally, his divinity and his humanity remained distinct. Rowan Williams describes Thomas Aquinas' perspective on this aspect of the identity of Christ in *Christ the Heart of Creation*: "Aquinas keeps two things firmly in view here-the necessity of affirming that the sonship of the Word is eternally and intrinsically an aspect of divine life; and the essential importance of understanding that the Persons of the Godhead are one in action."[6] Williams challenges his readers to understand Christ's incarnation as something very different from an event in human terms; because God is divine, that essence of God's being cannot simply be united with another sort of being. That is to say that Jesus' divinity is not combined with or

[6] Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 14.

mixed-into his humanity, but is in addition to his humanity because while Jesus was human, his becoming human was a divine act.

Though Christ is a member of the infinite Trinity, the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ demonstrates a co-existence, if you will, of finite humanity with the infinite God. In human form, Jesus is not ceasing to be infinite, as Williams notes[7] (referencing the "Farrer paradigm"), but rather, he is merely revealing to finite humanity that very co-existence, or, as Williams describes it, "double personal agency."[8] The incarnation is not just God entering into human history even as it impacts human history in profound ways. "But," Williams writes, "the reconciliation of the world to God cannot be described as an episode in history among others, it is a change in what historical agents may hope for, think about and pray about."[9] As such, the incarnation of Christ is the union of divine and human action that can be seen in human history, in the body of the man, Jesus, who is God, acting in ways consistent with finite humanity, yet also consistent with the power of God. This event in history changes our relationship with God and makes God accessible to us in the form of Jesus. Jesus is not human OR divine, his identity is not mixed in with a human identity, Jesus is both human and divine at the same time.

An understanding of Christ's identity is key to understanding kenosis as I am defining it because clarity about what it was that Jesus let go in his self-emptying is a necessary component to that understanding. We can be clear about that if we are also clear about who he was. I have explained above that Christ did not empty himself of his divinity for that would mean that he had

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 4
[9] Ibid., 5.

cancelled out the very thing that made him the Christ. Because there is no redemption apart from God, Jesus could not have dismissed his divinity and also accomplished the purpose for which he was sent. For human beings, kenosis is less challenging to comprehend because we have only one nature. For humans, we let go, not of our humanity, of course, but of certain aspects of our humanity that keep us from being Christ-like in relationship with others. We do not completely do away with ourselves; kenosis cannot mean a "total self-cancellation before the sacredness of the Other,"[10] because if it did, it would mean that there is nothing that makes us, "us," and if we have no specific identity, there is no opportunity for mutual discovery or growth. We meet each other as individuals with an openness to one another so that this growth is possible when we are living as kenotic beings. If we as human beings were to try to erase our true humanity, we would also erase what makes us unique and, that, therefore, would make us immune to difference. This way of thinking about kenosis, without necessarily naming it as such, can be used as an excuse to avoid the hard work of self-differentiation while maintaining connectedness. It also allows some to dismiss the difference in others, that which makes them unique, and lets those who do so get away with not examining themselves or finding ways to adapt their thinking to accommodate the truth of the other.

Jeffrey Keuss believes people in the church are meant to flow into the very reality of Christ, who opens himself to create a space where we can find intimacy and reconciliation.[11] If Christians can be open to Christ and Christ is open to us, they can certainly be open to one another and be changed by one another. As people learn and grow in faith and knowledge their identities are

[10] Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 55.
[11] Jeffrey Keuss, *Freedom of the Self: Kenosis, Cultural Identity, and Mission at the Crossroads* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 17.

shaped and molded to look more like the reality in which they choose to live. If Christ is ultimately that reality, their growth will lead them toward Christ-likeness. Because there is a shared reality with those around us, an individual's growth will impact the growth of others and open the way for them to also become more Christ-like.

The Kenotic Turn

The "kenotic turn"[12] is a model for Christian identity formation that places Christology at the starting point of Christian faith by acknowledging that the primary concern for faith formation is to articulate a way of understanding the person of Christ that allowed his full humanity to be adequately expressed in light of his relinquishment of the divine claim. I believe the kenotic turn is a valid model for understanding Christian identity formation but it does not have to rely upon an understanding of kenosis as Christ's relinquishment of the "divine claim." Instead, it can be understood as a relinquishment of the very sinful human claims of pride, greed, and destructive power in order to be more perfectly human as God intended before the fall. As Christ released his human self from the grip of the worst of human traits, he allowed for his human identity to be shaped not by the perfect image of the divine, but instead by the image of God that exists in human beings.

To be human in a fallen world is to exist in the image of God with the faults of created humans in a sinful condition. Humans are given free will to choose how they will express their full humanity in many different ways. Christ expressed full humanity as it was intended originally, without sin but with the full range of human emotions and frailties. Williams might say that

[12] Ibid.

Jesus in human form does what no human can do because his very being is divine. Jesus can set aside his use of divine agency to intervene in human existence but did not give it up. He had access to his divinity because his very essence is divine. In his choice not to exercise divine power he experienced his humanity completely and perfectly. What Christ did not experience is fallen humanity, humanity in its current, sinful reality. By not experiencing fallen humanity, Christ was able to be perfectly human, as designed by God before sin profoundly impacted human existence.

Kenosis is not merely an attribute for Christ alone to exemplify but is the very form of being for the disciple of Jesus who is growing in sanctification. Because Jesus exists "radically and exhaustively for the other,"[13] disciples must daily empty themselves of those things that make us behave in sinful ways: pride, arrogance, and greed, so that we may experience, as closely as possible, the humanity that Christ embodied, a humanity that that puts others ahead of selfish ambition. While it is not possible for us to experience perfect humanity, the effort of releasing our grip on our sinful traits opens the possibility that we will grow and learn and be transformed by Christ and by others. Kenosis calls on Christians to see the fulfillment of life not in accumulation but in relinquishment. While as disciples we have gained the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, humility, etc., it is also in what we have forsaken, pride, covetousness, gluttony, etc., by which others recognize us. Williams describes this concept specifically,

> Thus, a human agency that is characterized consistently by availability, disponibilité, for the other, a human agency that is identified as representative of the human other without reservation or restriction, is an entirely intelligible translation into human narrative and

[13] Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation,* 11.

> finite action of the undefended act of a God who cannot lose or lessen what is proper to divine life.[14]

God has no interests to defend that are apart from our own because we are intimately joined with God through Christ's humanity. Because of this, our needs are not at odds with God, our desires are one with God's. Because we are joined with God through Christ, we participate in our own sanctification through the things we choose to do and not to do, through the ways in which we serve others, and in the things that we relinquish in order to grow in Christ-likeness. Our choice to release some characteristics of ourselves in order to serve more genuinely does not diminish God, but because we are joined to God in Christ, allows space for God to fill us with God's intent for our lives. Our desire to serve more authentically is also God's desire for us to serve more authentically.

Kenosis as related to those in society who are marginalized, such as the poor, must be defined more specifically, however. To say, "Let go of pride," to someone who is not afforded the opportunity to experience pride, or for whom pride is destroyed by daily humiliations, is not the same thing as releasing behavior that is based in a sinful pride, a pride that puts self above others or that imagines itself superior and more deserving. A sinful pride discounts the marginalized and that must be released in exchange for a humanity that embraces the marginalized and makes room, in its full, intended humanity, for their voices and full participation in the work and life of the church.

[14] Ibid.

Edgardo Colón-Emeric writes about the theology of Oscar Romero regarding the poor and Romero's understanding of kenosis. He writes that those who choose to prioritize the poor, as Christ did, must "…undergo a constant process of repentance and purification."[15] Romero understands that in order to truly embrace those on the margins, a kenosis that includes repentance and purification is necessary for those who live with privilege. Repentance should be an obvious piece of our understanding of kenosis, but in taking into account those on the margins, this repentance includes a repentance of taking for granted the advantages we have in our privileged lives and of all the ways we who are privileged have been trained to think and feel about the poor and the marginalized that are demeaning and dehumanizing. Purification comes in the form of baptism, yes, but also in practice. By intentionally cleansing ourselves of excess, greed, and all forms of hatred, Christ, I believe, offers purification of the spirit each time we take the elements of communion. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 5, verses 23-25, we are told to examine ourselves before we come to the altar to offer our sacrifice. If someone has something against us, we are to reconcile first, and then bring our offering. We do not approach God without first examining ourselves and our sinful behavior, asking forgiveness, and offering repentance. This is Matthew's version or understanding of kenosis though he does not call it such. If we, as Christians, have offended or hurt someone by misusing our privilege, or for not using it to help others, we are to purge it from ourselves and seek reconciliation before we try to offer our service to God. When we have done that and we offer our sacrifice, Christ offers the needed purification.

[15] Edgardo-Colón-Emeric, *Óscar Romero's Theological Vision : Liberation and the Transfiguration of the Poor*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 184.

Reconciliation in this context, however, is not just an apologetic halting of bad behavior. Reconciliation cannot take place without genuine renewal and adaptation, or a move from what has been done in the past to what we do today. Romero speaks of the danger of separating renewal from adaptation. "Renewal is a return to basic values, an inward look, an examination of conscience. Adaptation is an outward look to the present times, the needs and hopes of people today."[16] As Christians seek reconciliation in our process of kenosis, we also must change our view from what is past and look to the current context. Rather than dwelling on past behavior or problems, kenosis requires us to act in ways that meet the needs of the present. Not that we ignore or forget the wrongs of the past, but that we recognize that our behavior, whether good or bad, served a time that no longer exists and is not sufficient for the current moment. We seek reconciliation for the wrong we have done and the pain we have caused and we move on from the wrong and pain caused us, in order to live and serve in the present.

"The church demands holiness and is always in need of conversion. I will be before I act. I have examined the many things that ask for penitence, caution, and reform within me."[17] Essentially, here Romero describes my thoughts on kenosis as a personal process of transformation. We must be self-aware and seeking wholeness before moving to action, especially in leadership. Leaders must know who they are and why they are, what their values are and what their purpose is, before they act, especially on behalf of the church. Once we have examined ourselves, we repent, we seek reconciliation, and we leave the past behind in order to fully turn to the needs of today.

[16] Ibid., 186.
[17] Ibid., 186-87.

Finally, Colon-Emeric quotes Romero and summarizes this understanding of kenosis:

> Let us analyze our own feeble flesh, when it allows itself to be carried away by bitterness, hatred, rancor, we are honoring the sinful flesh, the flesh without Christ. This sinful flesh has cut itself off from the fountain of life; it is flesh without transcendence. At the same time, this flesh still hungers for sustenance, and it turns to false bread to sustain its emaciated existence. It develops a craving for the pseudoabsolutes (sic) of riches, power, and politics. In brief, the flesh without Christ is sick, and the only cure is the flesh of Christ. "Christ, the second Adam, came to redeem the flesh of sin, he paid for the flesh, for the sins of the flesh, and he cured the evil inclinations of humanity. Thus, the redeemed human is the flesh, the human grafted into Christ, who, despite feeling temptations and the inclinations of evil, feels also the saving power of God.[18]

There is a very certain path that Christ chose and that we all, as Christians, must choose if we are to pursue sanctification and discipleship. It is the one that theology calls kenosis, that is to say, undoing oneself, humbling oneself. We who are privileged, Western, white Christians need to always remember that, as Colon-Emeric writes, the poor are the first beneficiaries of Christ's kenosis. Our service and leadership must reflect this understanding, particularly as it applies to leadership in the church.

Kenotic Leadership

The essence of kenotic leadership is putting the needs of the whole (organization, staff, church, etc.) above the leader's own need for things like power, prestige, or privilege. It is making space for others to participate in, and even lead, the work themselves. It is letting go of harmful power so that life-giving power might be shared by all—so the whole organization benefits. Kenotic leadership begins with a process of self-examination that seeks to discover those traits, patterns

[18] Ibid., 124.

of thinking, and behaviors in ourselves that stand in the way of being authentically present with others. According to Williams, if Christ truly is the embodiment of a divine God, then he has no element of insecurity because he literally has nothing to defend.[19] Therefore, in kenotic leaders, traits like insecurity, need for approval, or distrust of others are inconsistent with our understanding of Christ and our desire to lead in ways that benefit the whole organization. Beyond that, these kinds of insecurities keep a leader from hearing another perspective without filtering it first through the distrust or insecurity. When what we hear is filtered in these ways, we begin to assign meaning that may have little to do with the original intent of the speaker and as a result may act in ways that do not encourage or empower growth.

Humans tend to discount others who trigger these insecurities or fears within ourselves so that we may not feel threatened or have to deal with our own discomfort. As leaders, when we discount others, we close ourselves and our communities off to the possibilities those people bring to the organization. When our patterns of thinking revolve around our own insecurities or past wounds, we may view every encounter in the light of those experiences rather than seeing things as they are in their current context. We may fear that someone's motivation is harmful simply because she uses words that remind us, consciously or not, of past pain. If we have not done the work of self-examination, these scenarios become a very real part of our behavior and we run the risk of shutting ourselves off from the input of others. When we shut ourselves off from the input of others, we are holding too tightly to our own perspectives and perceived power, which give us the illusion of control. Authentic leadership must be open to other perspectives and behaviors for the benefit of the wider community, and a leader who desires to share power in

[19] Williams, *Christ, the Heart of Creation,* 11.

order to strengthen the organization she serves must be able to exist in a context where mutuality is encouraged.

The kenotic leader spends time processing patterns of behavior in herself and in her organization that get in the way of being able to hear others' perspectives as equal in value to her own. Kenotic leaders must be intentional about examining and learning from past mistakes and releasing those patterns and behaviors that are harmful so that growth, and not insecurity, is the result. It is leadership that bravely looks inward at its own motivation before looking outward toward behavior, and it works to eliminate unhealthy patterns and behaviors so that the leader can lead with strength from a place of inner confidence, integrity, and strength. When a leader does not do this internal work, it becomes possible to lead instead from a place of insecurity or fear. Brené Brown writes, "Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings, or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior."[20] I believe that is true both for the leader and those who are led. We must attend to the fears of others before they turn into problematic behavior while also attending to our own fears to avoid the same. Self-examination is key at every level and the one who leads must model and encourage it in his context.

Brown goes on to say that a leader must learn to let go of that which keeps him emotionally protected and closed off to vulnerability, both his own and that of those he leads. This is a key component of kenotic leadership. Leaders who lead from a place of insecurity remain hidden and protected from the possibility of pain or rejection and also remain hidden from the very people

[20] Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 70.

they are trying to inspire or motivate. Brown calls us to "wholeheartedness,"[21] or having the capacity to love and be loved, to establish genuine connections with others, and to bring our whole selves into leadership roles. When leaders compartmentalize their emotions or dissociate from them completely, they often lose control of those emotions in times of stress. The emotions that go unexamined often drive decision making and behavior because we are occupied with avoiding those emotions and, thus, we miss the very large impact they have on the circumstances faced every day. Many leaders, and people in general, avoid the hard work of really dealing with their emotions. Some believe it makes them look weak to show emotion. Others may simply be afraid of what they might reveal about themselves that they would prefer to keep hidden. Still others are afraid of what they might learn about themselves that might be uncomfortable or unhealthy. Brown calls this closed-off leadership, "armored."[22]

Armored leadership is what drives perfectionism, numbing behavior, having to be "right," and exercising "power-over." Power-over often empowers those higher up in the organization to make decisions that benefit themselves but not the majority of the people in the organization.[23] Having power-over someone else give one the ability to determine that person's worth in the organization and what they will be able to accomplish. When someone is subject to power-over, the instinct is often to resist and rebel. When it comes to leadership, power-over is ineffective in most instances and certainly in the long run. If the goals of an organization are cooperation, creativity, and growth, leadership that seeks power-over will inevitably fail to reach its goals.

[21] Ibid., 72.
[22] Ibid., p. 78.
[23] Ibid., p. 96.

This is true also for individuals; if the goal is to see people do their best, most creative work in a cooperative manner, power-over leadership will not allow it.

In contrast to the notion of power-over, I prefer the term Sarah Coakley uses, "power-in-vulnerability," [24] to describe the sort of leadership I am suggesting. Power-in-vulnerability is important for an understanding of kenotic leadership. Power-in-vulnerability requires that leaders spend time in self-reflection to acquire a deeper understanding of and relationship with themselves. It suggests that when leaders are able to allow themselves to be vulnerable, they allow room for their own empowerment and the empowerment of those around them. There are many ways to seek self-reflection and understanding. For Coakley, the practices of wordless prayer and contemplation enable one to hold vulnerability and personal empowerment together—by creating the space in which non-coercive divine power manifests itself. Vulnerability is a key component of kenotic and all effective leadership. A leader who can be vulnerable enough to be truly present with others, to hear and understand perspectives that are different from one's own, and to set aside one's own agendas and preferences in favor of emotional "presence" will be perceived as genuine and trustworthy. When a leader is seen as trustworthy, it empowers others to express their own vulnerability and thereby develop trust with others. Vulnerable leadership allows God's presence to guide our choices and behaviors rather than armored leadership, which only allows for the thoughts and beliefs of the individual with power.

[24] Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 5.

Brené Brown believes that vulnerability is the ability to be with another person in an authentic way. Coakley's choice of the phrase, "non-coercive," in describing the manifestation of divine power in situations in which vulnerability is expressed, is important. A vulnerable leader is able to lead without coercion because she is not trying to win an argument, manipulate an outcome, or gain approval for an agenda. The vulnerable leader's goal will always be understanding and creating space in which others are empowered. Kenosis, the ability to let go of those traits that hold us back from authenticity, also requires vulnerability. Unless one can let go of agenda, need for power and approval, or insecurity, vulnerability is not possible. Without vulnerability, there is no courage and a leader without courage can accomplish little. People are generally inspired by those who willingly expose themselves to the possibility of criticism because they are compelled by their convictions and truth. Those people are vulnerable leaders. We need only look to Jesus to see a model of vulnerable leadership. Jesus inspired people to be the best versions of themselves, not to be replicas of himself. He exposed himself to criticism but held firmly to his convictions, demonstrating courage and vulnerability. Jesus was compelled by his convictions and by the truth of his existence and this made his leadership compelling. People wanted to follow him not because he was a great orator or held a great deal of power--in fact, during his time on earth he held no earthly power, but because he courageously held to his convictions despite the possibility of persecution and the threat of death and he did so with deep and visible vulnerability.

In order for a leader to have the space to lead with vulnerability, she must develop a team that makes supporting and moving the vision forward its top priority. In *Canoeing the Mountains*,[25] Tod Bolsinger describes the Lewis and Clark expedition to discover a water route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean as a model of vulnerable leadership. A key component of his model, and the ultimate success of that model, is building a team completely dedicated to the mission, and empowering that team to do what they set out to do. Lewis and Clark chose people skilled in many different areas necessary for the success of their mission and gave them the authority to do their work. As the leaders of the expedition, Lewis and Clark set the direction and tone of the mission, determined the final goal, and then encouraged their "Corps of Discovery" to be creative and take risks in the interest of achieving the goal. Without this team, Lewis and Clark would never have been able to reach the Pacific Ocean by themselves. Not only did they not have the experience or the physical power on their own to manage the extreme physical demands of the journey, they also would not have had the support and cooperation of a team as committed to the mission as they were. Having that strong team in place allowed Lewis and Clark to spend time planning and problem solving while others on the team did their parts (building canoes, setting up camps, creating maps, etc.).

Bolsinger goes on to say that the purpose of leadership in the church is to transform the congregation "so that they, collectively, can fulfill the mission they, corporately, have been given."[26] A leader who hopes for transformation in his congregation does not rely on formal authority or "power-over." A leader allows transformation to occur within a congregation by

[25] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Unchartered Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).
[26] Ibid., 40

creating a space where it is safe to question, where it is safe to take risks and be creative. A congregation cannot be safe and take risks if its leaders are not willing to be vulnerable with them, taking chances of their own, and being creative without the fear of failure overwhelming them and keeping them unable to grow and to risk. In empowering transformation within the congregation, the leader is creating a team that is committed to the mission God has given them and is willing to take risks and be wrong sometimes in order to learn and grow and achieve the great things God is calling them to achieve.

Lovett Weems says this a different way: "Build the team without whom the vision cannot become a reality."[27] Weems cites Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to illustrate his point:

> God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you' nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you.'[28]

As a body needs different parts that function differently in order to function as a whole, so also a leader needs a team of people with different gifts and skills in order to function well and achieve the goals God has set before it. It is tempting for a leader to recruit people to a team who are similar to herself in gifts and personality but that is often a mistake that can result in the team never reaching beyond what is comfortable. As challenging as it can be to work with people who are very different from ourselves, a leader who wants to accomplish something great within the congregation and in mission must be willing to let go of his preconceptions of who can do what and how the project "should" go, and embrace a team of varied personalities and gifts in order to

[27] Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Church Leadership,* rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 55.
[28] Ibid.

open up channels of creativity that may not have been there otherwise. Only a leader who is empowered by her own sense of mission and self-awareness will successfully lead a diverse team without becoming threatened or switch to an authoritarian, power-over stance when challenges inevitably arise. A kenotic leader will examine himself in those moments and determine what is provoking emotional responses that are not helpful to the mission and release, as best he can, those overarching fears or insecurities that are keeping him from authenticity in the moment; things like a need for control, fear of failure, or fear of being seen or known.

Leaders must also know when it is appropriate to be a follower. When another member of the team has greater experience or wisdom in a given area of the mission, the leader must be able to step aside and empower that team member to lead. This is a challenging move for leaders who function without vulnerability and need to maintain control in order to avoid feeling threatened. Leaders who must control everything and cannot also follow when necessary are rarely respected or effective, according to Weems. Max Depree calls the kind of flexible leadership that empowers others to lead, "roving leadership."[29] Roving leadership is possible only when the mission is the priority and goal for everyone. When the mission is the goal, who is in charge at any given time is unimportant because the mission is the true leader. When the mission, rather than egos, is served, all participants play a leadership role. Kenotic leaders recognize that the mission is larger than they are and more important in the greater context. They are able to let go of their need to control and their ideas of perfection in the service of the mission.

[29] Ibid., 57

Sometimes the concept of vulnerability is confused with other things. Sometimes things like oversharing or a lack of boundaries are mistaken for vulnerability and vice versa. While vulnerability requires an opening of ourselves to the possibility of being hurt in the service of God's mission, there is, however, a difference between vulnerability and oversharing. Oversharing puts intimate details of one's life into a public setting unnecessarily. Often oversharing demonstrates a lack of appropriate boundaries and the presence of hidden insecurities. Oversharing can be used to manipulate others as well, while vulnerability is a way of being authentically present with someone else. Oversharing puts the focus on the one who is sharing and vulnerability puts the focus on the other by creating a safe space where others are empowered to be authentic. Kenotic leadership depends on a posture of healthy vulnerability. Just as Jesus demonstrated vulnerability in many circumstances, most notably in his willingness to be murdered on a cross, a kenotic leader also demonstrates the choice to let go of personal preference and being the focus of attention for the benefit of others and the mission.

Kenotic leadership, having done the work of internal examination, avoids holding too tightly to what human society claims to be power: titles, position, privilege, wealth. This type of leadership requires a commitment to a regular and intentional practice of "letting go" and responding to God. This pattern is practiced in both communion and baptism, but in silent prayer that waits for God's response, it becomes internalized over time and brings about transformation in the leader.[30] According to Coakley, one can only be properly "empowered" if one ceases to set the agenda, if space is made for God to be God and we are intentional about listening. As mentioned earlier, Coakley suggests a way to develop the ability to make space for and be present with God

[30] Coakley, *Powers and Submissions,* 34.

through contemplative and silent prayer. Contemplative silent prayer can take different forms: repeating a phrase over and over to keep distractions away or being completely silent. The way it is practiced is not the point, the point is that being still in the presence of God is practiced at all. Engaging in regular and repeated practice of being in the presence of God involves great personal commitment and risk. This act of taking time apart simply to listen to God is a self-effacement and a space making—a yielding to divine power that is profoundly transformative and empowering. It is a willful participation in the pattern of cross and resurrection, a deeper rooting and grafting into the body of Christ. It is an emptying of the heart to receive what God has to give. This type of presence is powerful beyond measure and, at the same time, humble. A leader who practices vulnerability with God will be able to also practice vulnerability with God's people.

Further, a kenotic leader does the hard work of learning vulnerability through emotional growth by continually seeking help through therapy, peer review, accountability groups, and self-reflection. A kenotic leader is honest with herself and with others and she learns from her mistakes because they are part of the inner growth work. A kenotic leader intentionally casts off those traits and behaviors that keep him from being fully present and authentic in his leadership, traits like:

The need to be right,
The need for validation from others
Insecurities about one's ability or worth
Fear of failure
Inability to hear criticism and learn from it
Arrogance
The need to be liked

Manipulating others to fulfill one or more personal needs (affirmation, etc.)
Passive aggressive behavior (resentment, envy)

Kenotic leaders continually seek to grow and learn both in their field and in their understanding of themselves. Growth and learning enable them to cast off those behaviors and patterns that get in the way of the authentic leadership that will enable others, and the whole organization, to grow. Patterns such as rigidity, lack of creativity, and disdain for new perspectives often occur when leaders do not adopt a posture of learning and humility, understanding the need for continual growth and personal development in order to relieve themselves of rigidity and certainty in their perspectives. Rigid and resentful leaders do not create safe environments where creativity is empowered and appreciated. Without creativity people end up stagnant and stale wondering why the church is empty and why they feel exhausted and resentful.

Kenosis in the Individual

Jeffery Keuss writes, "To embrace the path of the kenotic self is to embrace the fact that one is always on a journey to becoming, always navigating the world between moments of seemingly random encounters and divinely inspired epiphanies."[1]

Kenosis in an organization or in an individual means more than just laying down a few of one's worst traits, however, when it comes to leadership. In order to truly get to something new, something that has not been known before, one has to really set fire to all that has already been so that it is no more, and then risk becoming something completely new, something that has never been seen before or even dreamed of before. That is not to say those seeking to practice kenosis forget all that has come before and shaped them into who they are; that is not possible nor is it desirable. It is to say that they must stop trying to tweak this or that way of doing things, to stop adding to or subtracting from that which is already not working, and instead let it all go and allow what God has planned to grow unhindered by past expectations or results. In doing this, in allowing the past successes and failures to be set aside, one learns something completely new. One learns something God has created within rather than something the world has shaped into being. God calls God's followers to a future unencumbered by the sins of the past, God has made all things new. Why wouldn't God also be able to make each of God's people or each of God's churches new as well?

[1] Jeffrey F. Keuss, *Freedom of the Self: Kenosis, Cultural Identity, and Mission at the Crossroads* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 38.

Kenosis also plays a large role in reconciliation. When one is at odds with someone else, that person has allowed past experience or expectation or disappointment to determine the current relationship. Choosing a kenotic life, allows choosing to release the things of the past and allow God to create something wholly new. True forgiveness and reconciliation require a dismissal of past rejections or failures. It requires a letting go of past hurts in favor of the new thing God will do in the relationship. Human beings can embody reconciliation through this kenotic choice. The irony of a kenotic life is that one must listen to those voices that have shaped us into who we have become so that we may recognize them and allow them to also shape our letting go so that we can become new.

Thinking about kenosis and letting go of painful disappointments is one thing and actually living in such a way is another. What are the habits of a kenotic life? What are the habits of kenotic leadership? The Epistle of James tells us that we are what we value and also what we do.[2] When we look at our own identities, do we see traditionalism that is static and unwilling to adapt? Or do we see a kenotic self that seeks growth and is willing to be open to healthy adaptation? A static identity seeks certainty while a kenotic identity understands that certainty does not necessarily allow room for other perspectives or for growth and new understanding. The key things that define an identity arevalues, morals, and ethics. Values are the things to which human beings assign worth. Values provide motivation for ethics and morals. Morals are what human beings consider "right" and "wrong," and morals point toward what a person values. Ethics are the laws or codes by which people behave. Ethics are shaped by values and often are the

[2] James 2:14-26 (NRSV).

determining factor of morals. What is valued most, how a sense of right and wrong steers one toward or away from his values, and what role is played in supporting actions that serve justice all work together to form human identities, especially those identities that define themselves as Christians. To begin a process of self-examination that seeks to release some or all of the long-held beliefs about who and what a person is, is the essence of a kenotic life. A life that seeks certainty will often face disappointment and discouragement while a life that seeks kenosis will find growth, creativity, and grace.

Ultimately, the kenotic self is formed not actually for itself but for mission. The kenotic leader is called into the world through and with the missio Dei.[3] If the purpose of theology, according to Darrell Guder,[4] is to equip the church for its calling, and that calling is missional, how those who serve the church are taught should shape them to be faith-filled, creative, mission-focused leaders. How church leaders interpret scripture is shaped by their cultural, familial, educational, and social contexts. In a Western context, individuality, reasoning, and objective "truths" tend to determine how scripture is interpreted: Jesus is my savior, historical references "prove" Jesus' existence, there are logical and clear explanations of the meanings of parables, etc. What if the context were a kenotic context in which people were able to let go of the assumptions that things are what "I" say they are? What does scripture look like through the lens of kenosis? In that context, Jesus becomes simply, "savior," beyond possession and explanation. Through that lens the parables become living stories that speak in different ways in different circumstances, relating at once to me as an individual and to the world as a whole. In a kenotic context, I don't

[3] Keuss, *Freedom of the Self,* 38.
[4] Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 12.

need proof, I release my need to be right and allow God to give me what I need, to humble me and show me that I don't possess "truth" by myself but it is held in the body of Christ and moves with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three
A Course in Leadership for the Preparation of Church Leaders
Taught at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, NJ, Fall 2020.

In preparation for this thesis, I was invited to develop, design (in an online platform, using Sakai software), and teach a class on leadership to seminary students pursuing an MDiv, and continuing education students pursuing a certificate in Church Leadership. This chapter will explain the course requirements, go through the syllabus week-by-week offering my reflections of the material and the responses by the students, and will end with a brief reflection of the course overall, including how it relates to kenotic leadership. This chapter includes screen shots of the lessons for each week because it was prepared and presented in an online format rather than as a printed syllabus. All the material is the same as in a printed syllabus, although items specific to New Brunswick Theological Seminary and unnecessary to explain the course, such as Seminary behavioral guidelines, have been left out for the purposes of this thesis.

The content of each week is briefly described in my commentary and was used as the starting point for class discussions. The format used for the class was PowerPoint, but for the purpose of this paper and for ease of reading, I have used a narrative format instead.

Comments offered by students have been edited to remove anything that might identify the student, his or her church, or his or her affiliation (unless crucial to the point being made and with the student's permission). Some adaptations to student responses or posts, such as punctuation and grammar, have been made to ensure proper formatting in this final format.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS COURSE ARE:

For Certificate and M.Div. students:

- Think critically and theologically, gaining basic literacy within the distinctives of the Christian faith and tradition through biblical studies, theological and historical studies, and ministry studies.
- Identify, locate, organize, critically analyze, compare and utilize diverse sources of information for present and life-long learning.
- Engage their own and other communities, traditions, structures, and cultures. They put theological studies into practice in diverse vocational applications of ministry, seeking to understand the work of God. They prepare for leadership and service responsive to varied social contexts.
- Demonstrate personal development and spiritual formation, deepening their understanding and practice of faith. This involves reflection and promotes application of theological education for spiritual and social transformation.
- Analyze dynamics of power and privilege as these intersect the self, institutions (including the church), and society. They formulate appropriate responses to injustices and violence across race, class, gender, and other oppressive structures. They foster social engagement, ecumenical dialogue and interfaith cooperation in pursuit of peace and justice.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Objectives:

1. Students will reflect critically on the effectiveness of past and current leadership models and be able to offer observations, reflections, and suggestions for more effective outcomes.
2. Students will understand adaptive leadership as a practice requiring self-examination and be equipped to engage self-reflection in their own leadership.
3. Students will understand the difference between leadership and management and be able to discern where each is needed in their specific contexts.
4. Outcomes:
5. At least 90% of students in this class, upon completion, will be able to identify and name their own leadership motivations and explain how their motivations are both helping and hindering their ability to lead well.
6. At least 90 % of students, upon completion of this class, will be able to distinguish and name whether challenges are adaptive in nature or are technical in nature and explain the tools they have developed to work through the specific challenges.
7. At least 90% of students, upon completion of this class, will successfully distinguish leadership tasks from management tasks by being able to name whether a task is leadership or management based, and will be able to explain the different ways to approach each as well as why it is important to note the difference.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

John W. Wimberly, Jr., *The Business of the Church: The Uncomfortable Truth That Faithful Ministry Requires Effective Management* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010). ISBN: 978-1-56699-404-0

Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts* (New York: Random House, 2018). ISBN: 978-0-399-5925-46

Lovett H. Weems, *Church Leadership*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010). ISBN: 978-1-467-0302-7

Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). ISBN: 0-674-51858-6

Recommended materials (optional):

Susan Thurman, *The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need* (Avon, MA: Simon and Schuster, 2003). ISBN: 978-1580628556

Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015). ISBN: 978-0-8308-4126-4

You may purchase the course textbooks at a local bookstore and/or utilize a book distributor such as www.amazon.com; www.bn.com; http://www.cokesbury.com; or www.bibliofind.com. Books may be purchased in physical or electronic form, but if in electronic form make sure it includes the physical page numbers. Since online purchases can take a week or longer, make sure to order the textbooks as soon as possible. Most required material may be found in our library and some of it also can be downloaded from various academic websites. Any additional materials (e.g., articles, etc.) may be found on Sakai.

FULLY ONLINE COURSE

This course is conducted entirely online, which means you do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. You will participate in the course using New Brunswick Theological Seminary's Learning Management Systems (LMS) Sakai.

In Sakai, you will access online lessons, course materials, and resources. At designated times throughout the semester, students will participate in a blend of self-paced and group-paced activities using Sakai and alternative Internet-based technologies. Activities will consist of discussion forums, email, small group discussions, and synchronous class sessions.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Announcements will be posted in Sakai on a regular basis. They will appear when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through Sakai messages. Please make certain to check them regularly as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns. Note: professors will only communicate information concerning the course using the NBTS mail system. When submitting messages, please do the following:

- Put a subject in the subject box that describes the email content with your name, week and message subject. For example: YOURNAMEWK2ASSIGNMENT.
- Students should always include their first and last name at the end of all e-mail messages. This will enable the professor to quickly identify the student and course, facilitating a timely response.
- I will respond to emails within 24 hours (often less).
- Send email only to and from your NBTS email account and not your personal email. Also, do not send emails to my personal account, please submit all emails through the messaging (email) feature in Sakai.
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the QUESTION FORUM so that other students, who may have similar questions, will benefit.
- Submit assignments in Sakai using the "assignments tab." Do not use submit by email or SAKAI messages.
- Make certain to check your messages frequently.

QUESTIONS - In online courses/hybrid courses it is normal to have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the QUESTION FORUM which you can access by clicking the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

Weekly Assignments - Each week you will need to complete the following: (50% of final grade)

- Complete the weekly readings listed in the syllabus.
- Post in the weekly Discussion Forum by Wednesday at 8:00pm EST
- Respond to classmates' posts (as described in the weekly assignment) in the Discussion Forum by Friday at 8:00pm EST

Writing Assignments – (50% of final grade)

High quality, academic work is expected in written assignments. This includes: proper footnotes and citations, correct spelling and grammar usage, and proofreading. Please use the writing center-it is there to help!

- Leadership analysis (2,000-2,500 words) Due Sunday, October 18, 2020. 10:00 PM
- Write a "case study" in leadership from your own experience. It can be a situation in which you were the leader or where you observed other leader(s). Describe the events,

conversations, and responses of both leaders and those being led and the outcome of the situation. Then respond to the following questions:

- How did the leader(s) assess the situation in order to determine a response? What values did the leader exhibit and how could you tell? Was the response a courageous response? Why or why not?
- Was the leadership effective in getting the desired outcome? Why or why not?
- Were there any obstacles to effective leadership? What were they and how did they get in the way?
- Be sure to reference class readings, discussions, and lectures in your paper and reflect on your learning as it relates to your case study.

- Essay (2500 words) Due Wednesday December 16, 2020. 10:00PM

Write an essay reflecting on your leadership journey in the church or your ministry setting. This essay should reflect critically on your own journey and the ways in which you have experienced leadership as a process of self-reflection and kenosis. Your essay may include sources beyond the course materials but should demonstrate an understanding of and engagement with the readings, lectures, and discussions in the course.

Each week, students will have an assigned reading from one of the course texts and/or an additional article, chapter, or video provided in Sakai. Students will post a brief reflection of the reading (100-150 words) in the discussion forum for that week by Wednesday evening and will reply to 2 other students' posts by Friday evening (see assignments above). Responses should engage the original post by elaborating on the points made, expressing a different perspective on the material, or otherwise expanding the conversation. Responses will demonstrate appropriate engagement and not simply encouragement, agreement, or disagreement. Original posts should engage with the reading for the week in a way that demonstrates the student's understanding of the material and ability to apply the material in a concrete way. Students are expected to read the posts of fellow students in order to be prepared for the synchronous session discussion. Additional information about each week can be found under the button in the course navigation links.

INCLUSIVE AND EMANCIPATORY LANGUAGE

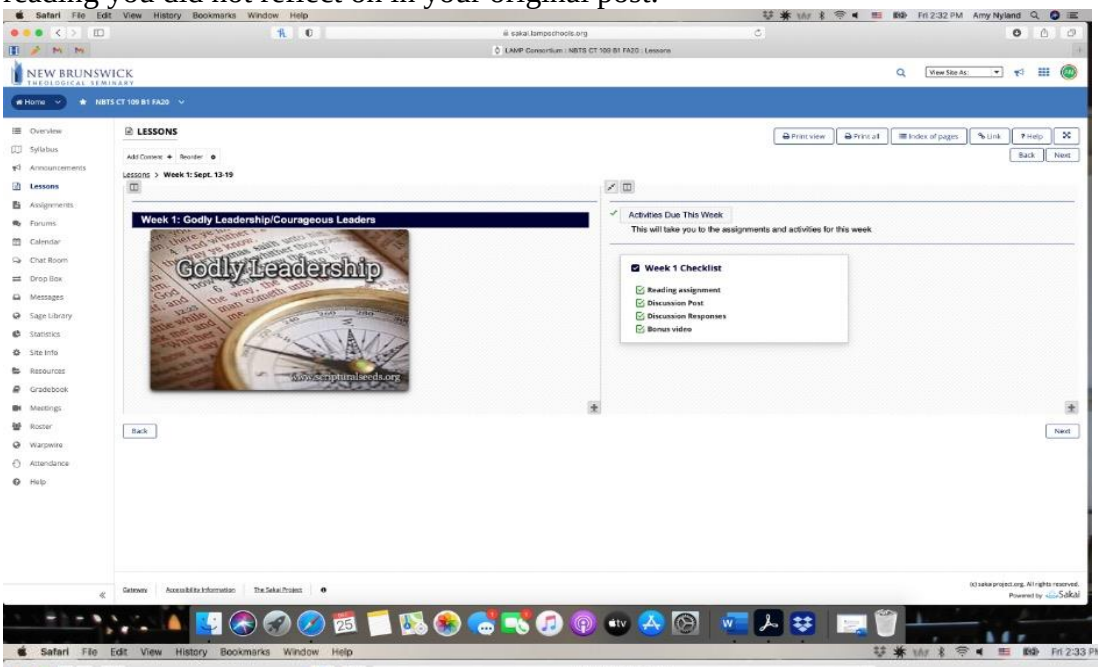
NBTS is committed to an inclusive theological agenda. The use of inclusive language is a requirement for all written work and encouraged in all other written or oral communications. Students are urged to develop greater sensitivity in their written work to issues of inclusion in all forms, but especially regarding humankind. Terms such as "mankind" or "sons of God" are not inclusive of women. Instead, students could say humanity and children of God. Students will be urged in classes to consider more inclusive ways of speaking about God as well.

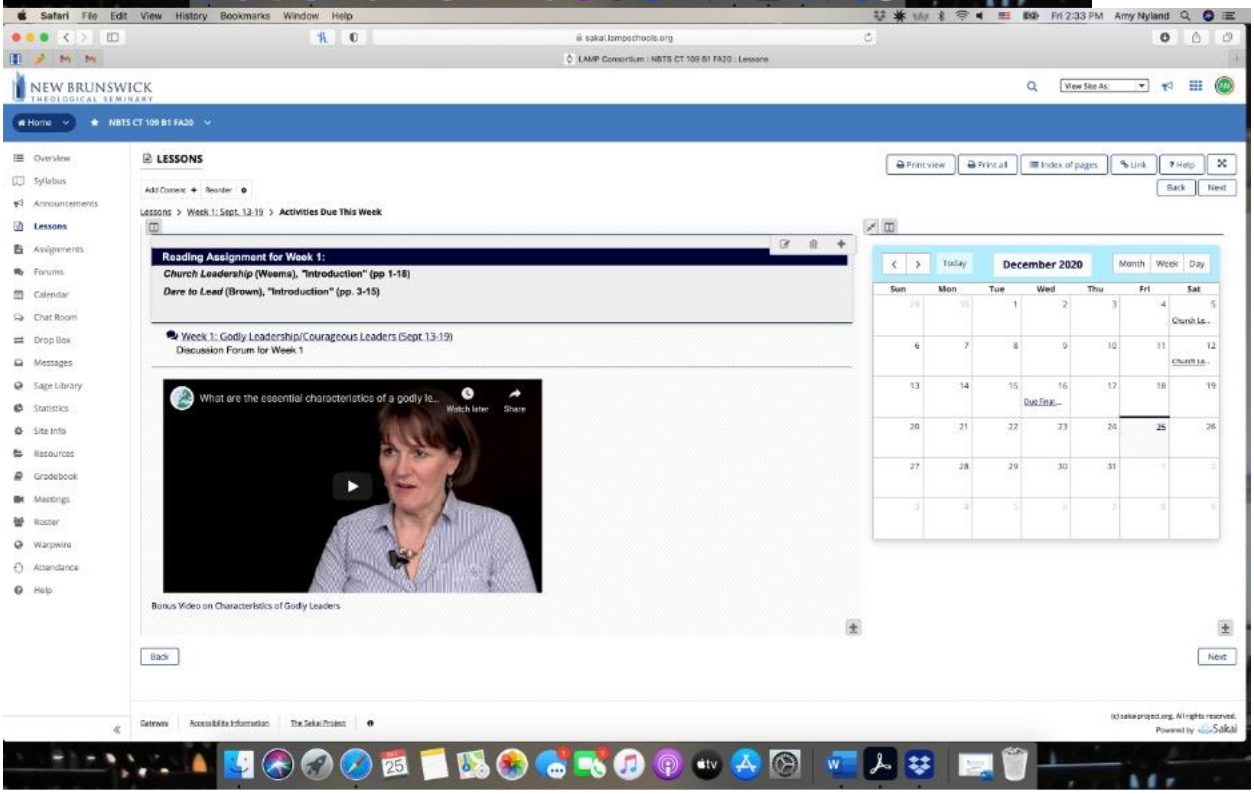
COURSE SCHEDULE

September 12 is our first class session. We will meet in synchronous session to review the syllabus and assignments for the semester and to meet one another. Please read through the syllabus prior to the 12th and come prepared with any questions you have regarding assignments or anything related to the course.

REQUIRED: Prior to our first class, post an introduction in Forums, Introductions, of yourself, your ministry, and your experience and perspective on leadership in the church.

Week One: (Sept 13-19) Godly Leadership/Courageous Leadership
Reading assignment: Church Leadership (Weems), Introduction (pp. 1-18)
Dare to Lead (Brown), Introduction (pp. 3-15)
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on one of the readings (100-150 words) and post a substantial response to two (2) classmates' posts, one of which should be a response to the reading you did not reflect on in your original post.





In Week One, the class began with a discussion of the introductions to both *Dare to Lead* (Brown) and *Church Leadership* (Weems). Both of these books introduce the concept of courage as a leadership quality and skill that can be learned with practice. Brown describes a leader as, "Anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential."[1] This concept emphasizes that what makes a leader is not just the characteristics of the leader himself, but also the responses of and growth in the people she leads.

Weems describes leadership as helping people get from where they are to a new place and helping God's people discern their callings to meet changed circumstances, new realities, and emerging needs. He disputes the notion that leadership is about personal authority or charisma, and instead promotes the idea that appropriate leadership always empowers others. Christian leadership in the context of the church, according to Weems, always focuses on God's vision and not personal agenda.

The class discussed the calling of Christian leadership as mentioned in Weems' work. Weems describes leadership as a calling this way,

> that change to which God is calling us. Leadership is the discovery and articulation of a shared vision—a vision for the church and a world far different from the current reality.

[1] Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations, Whole Hearts* (New York: Random House, 2018), 4.

> Faithful leadership understands the church not as an institution with needs to be met, but rather as an embodiment and instrument of God's aims revealed in Jesus Christ.[2]

He goes on to talk about leadership as responsibility rather than privilege. An important concept related to this responsibility is the notion of a shared vision and shared motivation of the people involved. Without followers, there is no leader. It is the leader's responsibility to involve others in the development of vision so that all will be motivated to move the vision forward. The leader cannot do this alone, nor can the leader pronounce a vision and expect others to just get on board. A leader who relies on position and authority may soon find herself with no one to lead.

The class went on to discuss the difference between "management" and "leadership." Management "does things right," while leadership "does the right things," a quote Weems uses from a 1986 book by Nans and Bennus titled, *Leaders*. [3] Both are needed, but management is not the same thing as leadership. Leadership requires both vision and values as the driving forces. Management maintains things as they are. From my own experience with churches seeking new leadership,[4] they often like the idea of a leader who will challenge them and take them into new places, but then resist that pastor's leadership when it begins to be uncomfortable and challenge their current way of being. Leading is challenging and will certainly come up against resistance, because leadership requires vulnerability and courage in both the leader and those who are led.

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[2] Lovett H. Weems, *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, Integrity, Revised edition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 2.
[3] Ibid., 12-13.
[4] I served for seven years as Executive Minister for the Regional Synod of New York, and part of my work involved helping churches and search committees discern what they wanted in their next pastor. Most would say they wanted change or new vision for the church but when a pastor arrived who had the skills and qualities necessary to lead change and began moving in that direction, the church, including (and often led by) the leadership who called the pastor, would resist to such an extent that either the pastor would give in and simply maintain the church or leave.

Brown's chapter on courage brought about a great deal of discussion among the students. We began with the quote, "You can't get to courage without vulnerability."[5] The concept of vulnerability in leadership provided fruitful discussion. There was a great sense among many of the students that vulnerability implied weakness and to show vulnerability meant that one was not capable of being a leader because congregations expect their pastors to be "strong." We explored their meaning of "strong," and it was, essentially, unable to be distressed, having all the answers, and having confidence to lead whether or not the leader actually felt confident.

This cultural view of leadership as "strong," or not connected to emotion, is one held by many congregations because congregations are made up of people who live and work in the culture apart from church. What people see in the workplace often is translated into their expectations of leadership within the church. When in one's place of business unemotional, authoritarian leadership is valued, it makes sense that that person might expect similar leadership from her pastor. Conversely, however, it is also the case that some congregations recoil from leadership by pastors that embraces cultural leadership methods preferring to believe the church isn't really an institution but just a gathering of like-minded believers or friends. In those settings, leadership looks more like "social director" and anything that hints at organizational work moving in a direction toward a goal is dismissed as too worldly. In *Resurrecting Excellence,* L. Gregory Jones and Kevin Armstrong recognize that the task of leading in Christian communities is challenging and no one will be gifted in all aspects required, yet they acknowledge the need for excellence in leadership in the church just as society expects excellence in leadership in other

[5] Brown, *Dare to Lead,* 2.

communities.[6] In my experience working with many churches, excellence is not particularly valued when it comes to leadership. Instead, church members prefer their pastors to be their friends, to be "nice," or "fun." These identifiers reveal a misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian leader. Of course, a leader can be both nice and competent, both fun and focused.[7] A leader in a congregation that misunderstands Christian leadership in this way should understand that a congregation that claims to want a friend more than it wants a leader is one that either doesn't understand what a leader is or is one that does not desire to do the hard work of transformation.

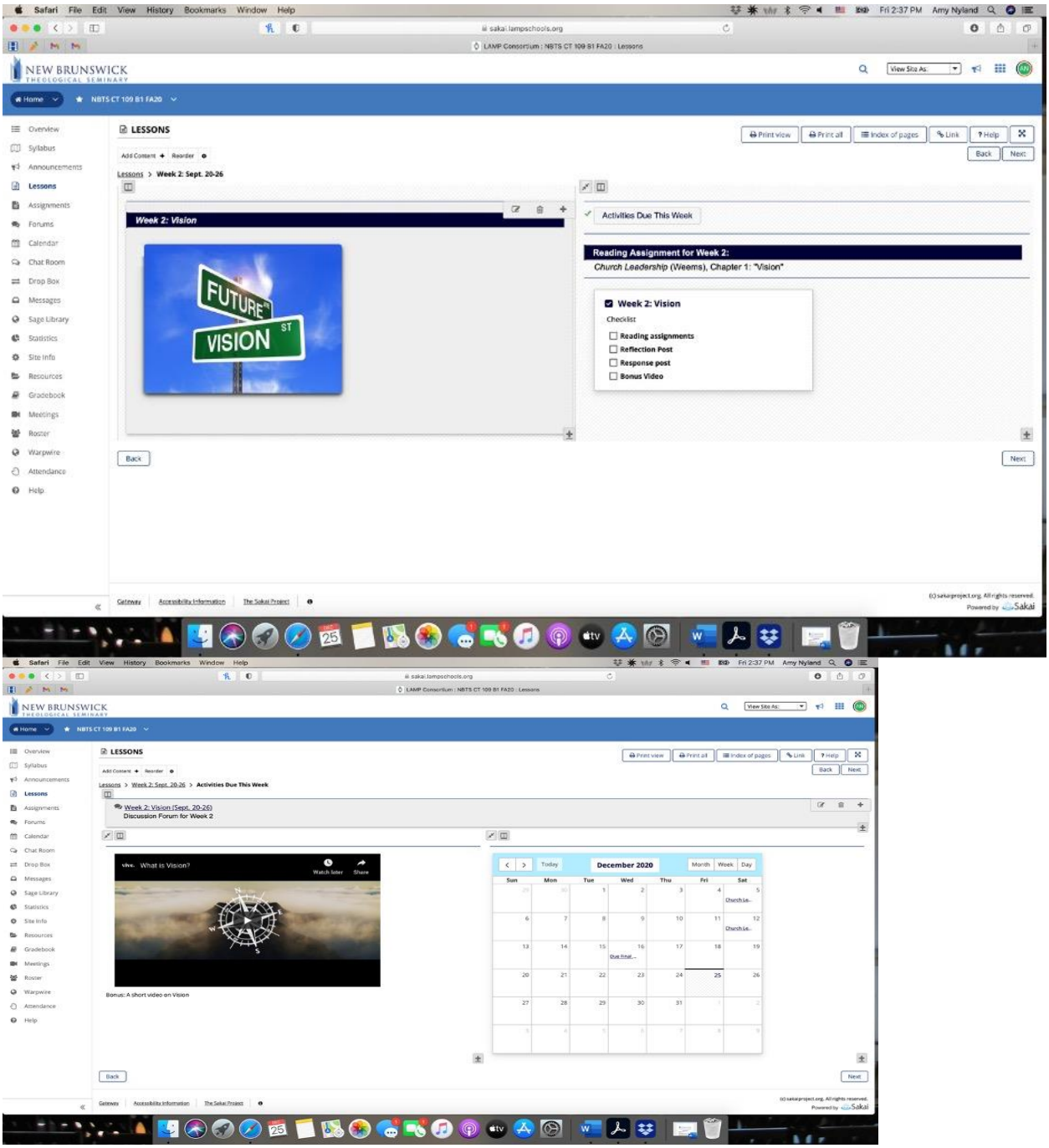
The class discussed shame from Brown's perspective, and how shame keeps us from vulnerability. The students were able to come up with many examples and experiences of shame that formed their perceptions of what it means to be leaders in the church. Brown points to some specific things that get in the way of courageous leadership: [8]

> Avoiding tough conversations
> Too much time managing problematic behaviors
> Diminishing trust/lack of connection and empathy
> People not taking risks or sharing bold ideas
> We get defined by setbacks and failures
> Shame and blame instead of accountability and learning
> Opting out of vital conversations
> Quick fixes
> Perfectionism and fear

[6] L. Gregory Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), Kindle loc. 1769.
[7] It would be interesting to do a study regarding how much this perception has changed (or not) since women entered pastoral ministry in greater numbers and whether the perception of authoritative leadership has changed.
[8] Ibid., 7-9.

The class discussed how these things impact their willingness to be vulnerable and courageous. One of the discussions centered on courage as a behavior and not an emotion and that to be courageous and to be afraid are not mutually exclusive. Finally, we closed the class session with a brief conversation about courage as contagious; when we are vulnerable it gives those around us permission to also be vulnerable and when we act with courage, it gives others permission to be courageous.

Week Two: (Sept 20-26) Vision
Reading assignment: Church Leadership (Weems), Chapter 1, “Vision.”
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the reading that addresses your perception of vision in church leadership. (100-150 words). Post a substantial response to two (2) classmates’ posts.



In Week Two's class, we discussed Weems' chapter on "Vision."[9]

Where there is no vision, the people perish. (Prov. 29:18)

Weems clarifies that a vision must be clear, shared, and compelling, that the people must be passionate about it, agree and commit to it, and it must motivate people to action. These attributes of "vision" are consistent across the field of leadership, including Heifetz, Brown, Jones, Bolsinger, and Herrington, among others. According to Weems, a vision gives the people something to hope for and represents the belief that we can be more than what we are right now. In the church, this is especially important if we are truly committed to following Christ. Jesus was not content to allow people to remain in their unhealthy or unseeing circumstances and did what he could to show them a vision that God was calling them to and why it would make a difference in their lives and in the lives around them.

Pat Lencioni, in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*,[10] and Tod Bolsinger, in *Canoeing the Mountains*,[11] discuss the importance of vision in the overall practice of leadership. Once a vision is established, everything that happens in the church, from the budget to the voicemail message, must align with the vision. Throughout the year, many people will have great ideas for ministry opportunities and when there is a clear, compelling vision, that means that those opportunities that do not align with the vision will have to be declined. This can be a challenge for leaders who do not understand the importance of vision or whose need for approval or validation exceeds their desire to lead their team in heathy ways. In this circumstance, the leader(s) must sometimes

[9] Weems, *Church Leadership*, 21-53.
[10] Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).
[11] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

call upon their courage to say "No," and also their vulnerability to share why the vision is meaningful and important for all and remind them several times throughout the year. If there is great and continual resistance to the vision, it may not be clear or compelling or shared and should probably be revisited. A vision must be discerned and not declared and must include many voices in the discernment beyond the pastor's voice.

During class discussion, students shared scenarios in which feedback related to the church's work toward vision and mission was offered. Many described situations in which feedback was welcomed and encouraged and others where it was not. What distinguished those settings was the level of trust developed among team members prior to the discussions. One woman indicated that in her setting, when trust had not been established ahead of time, there tended to be what she described as "passive aggressive" feedback, meaning they would give praise to the leader without regard to whether or not her work advanced the vision or mission. In her view, this false praise was aimed at diminishing the work of others who had focused on the vision while earning points with the leader even though the leader's behavior was not praise worthy.

Discussion also included the difference between focusing on things that were urgent or immediate rather than staying connected to the vision when determining what would and would not be done. Many in the class agreed that urgency often dictated the church's direction and financial choices. One man described trying to convince the leadership of his church to purchase new Sunday school materials because they were using materials that were ten years old. The church claimed education as one of its highest values but declined his request saying that there was no money for that and he could continue to use what he had. Soon after his request was

denied, the praise team leader requested a new keyboard because the current one was out of date and new ones could produce many more varied sounds. Without hesitation, a new keyboard was purchased. The class discussed this kind of scenario happening frequently in their churches and how to better communicate alignment with values to their teams.

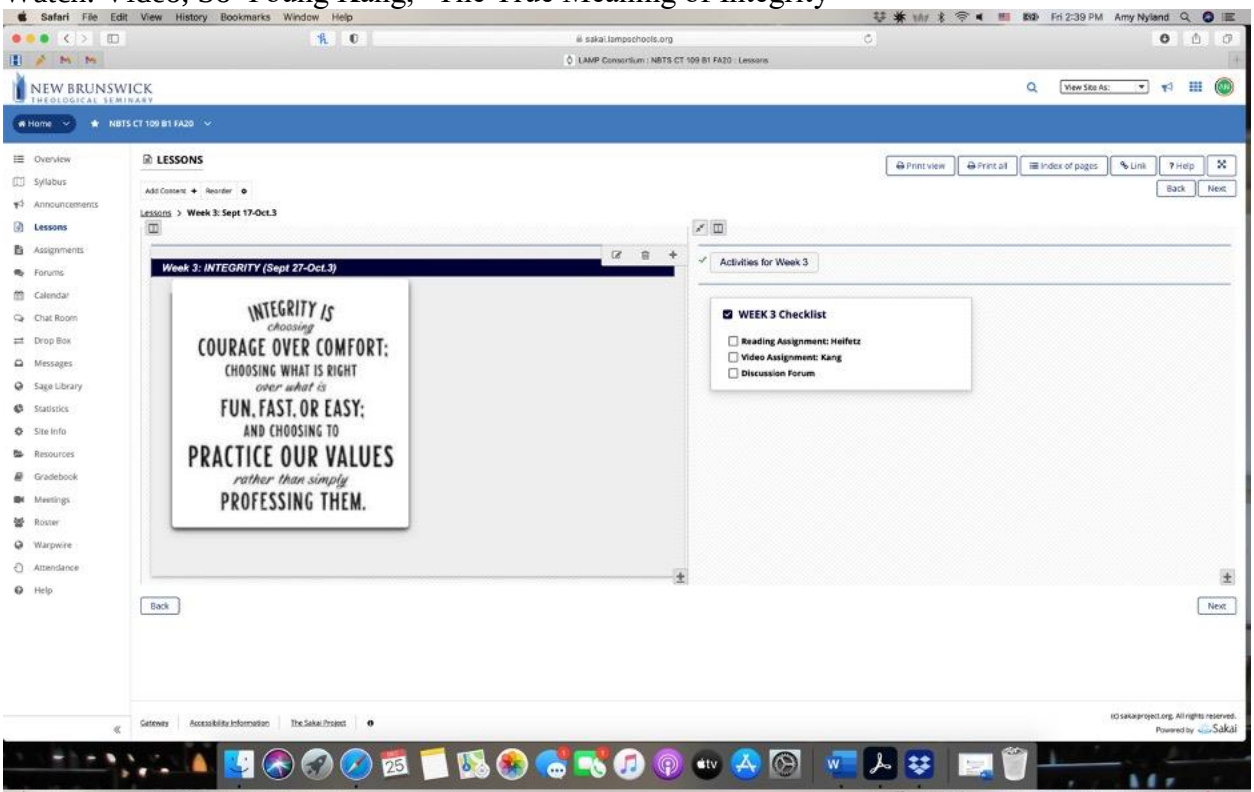
Vision and mission are not the same thing. Vision is what/where God is calling us to go in the future. It is usually lofty, values driven, has a high standard, and drives the formation of goals for the church. Mission is what we exist to do and what God is calling the church to be. It is putting the church's core values into action. The Christian church has a universal mission to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Individual churches may express their participation in the greater mission of the church through service to the community, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, or assisting refugees.

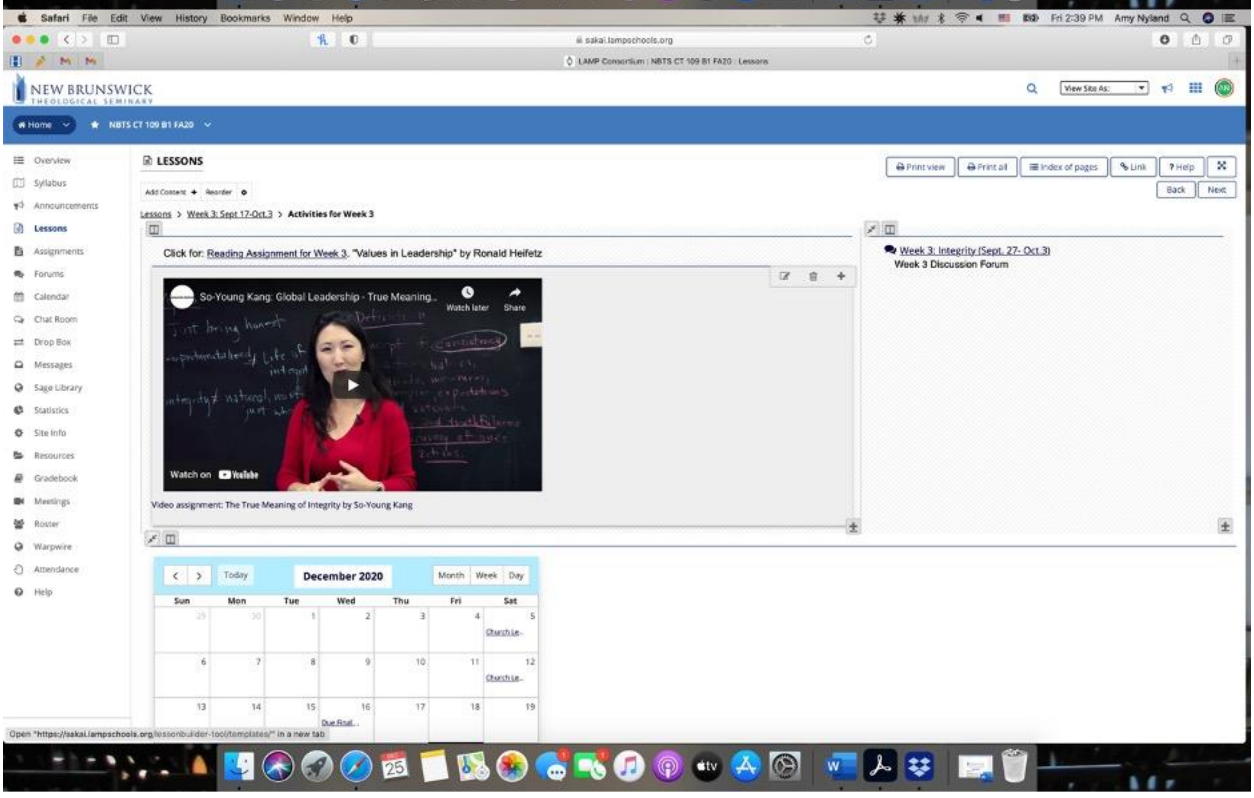
Identity is another concept that is important as churches discern their vision. The church's identity describes who we are as a church community. Identity defines the church's boundaries and those things that are not negotiable, like preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in a Christian church. The identity of a church stays fixed for a long time even as the vision may change. Many churches do not know their identities even though they have them. The identity of a church may not necessarily be what they intended. I shared the example of a church I served many years ago that would say its identity was, "The church that serves the community." In fact, as I surveyed the community around the church, I discovered that it was known as, "The church that didn't pay its bills." The church had hired contractors over the years to do maintenance and repairs on the building but never paid the bills for the work when they arrived. While the church had one idea

of who it was, the community had another, and the community's views were the ones that revealed that the values the church claimed were not the values it lived out.

Finally, a church needs to understand its history in order to see what has shaped its vision and values into what they are today. What happened in a church community in decades past influences who that church is in the present. The church mentioned above had a long history of claiming poverty and, for a long time after World War II, they were without a pastor because they could not afford one. That sense of poverty drove their need to hold onto money at the expense of their reputation in the community. When they were able to take an honest look at their current financial circumstances, and dismiss the treasurer who continually told them there was no money available, they saw that they had sufficient funds to pursue their ministries as well as pay for the service people they hired.

Week Three: (Sept 27-Oct 3) Integrity
Reading assignment: “Values in Leadership,” (Heifetz) – in Sakai
Watch: Video, So-Young Kang, “The True Meaning of Integrity”





Week Three focused on integrity from the perspective of Heifetz in *Leadership Without Easy Answers*.[12]

Heifetz describes two ways of imagining leadership. One way is to view a leader as the one with a vision whose responsibility it is to get the people to accept and follow that vision, and when problems within the community arise, they look to the leader to solve them. From this perspective, it is the leader who succeeds or fails and the community has no responsibility for its own growth or demise. This is the primary view of leadership within many churches and is proving to be unsuccessful in holding many Christian communities together. Mainline Protestant churches have been in decline since the 1960's. According to The Pew Research Center, religious affiliation continues to decline today. In 2018 and 2019, 65% of American adults consider themselves "Christian" when asked about their religious affiliation. This is down 12% over the last decade.[13] While the number of people claiming Christianity helps us to see decline in a tangible way, the crucial aspect of this decline is the decline of health within communities of faith and an overall loss of faithful witness on the part of the church. While the study doesn't tell us how many of these claiming Christianity actually attend worship regularly or participate in their church communities, the perception of being or not being Christian speaks to an understanding of being part of something and holding the beliefs and ideals of the Christian faith. In an era of "love Jesus but not the church,"[14] a growing majority of Christians are leaving the church over things like political discord but hold onto their orthodox beliefs.

[12] Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Boston: Harvard, 1994), chap. 1.
[13] The Pew Research Center, *Religion and Public Life*, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An Update on America's Changing Religious Landscape," October 17, 2009, pewforum.com.
[14] Barna Research, Faith and Christianity, "Meet Those Who Love Jesus but not the Church," March 30, 2017. Barna.com.

Many people stil attend churches with large memberships and robust Sunday morning worship services but the real question is whether or not these communities exist *as communities* or exist only as performative events that bring in large audiences. I see the decline in claiming Christianity less an indication of how many show up to a Sunday performance and more an indicator of how many people experience Christianity a community. A church with an authoritarian leader who declares the vision and expects the community to look to her for answers is not building community it is building a following dependent upon that leader. Part of this decline in faithful community, I believe, is due to an understanding of leadership in the church as authority and position driven that does not communicate the "community" that people who come to a church are seeking. A community that bears no responsibility for the success or failure of the organization is not empowered to lead or participate in meaningful ways. Instead, it is dependent upon one authoritative, charismatic leader who, ultimately, cannot sustain an entire organization alone, and who, intentionally or unintentionally, drives out anyone who challenges his leadership with new or different ideas.

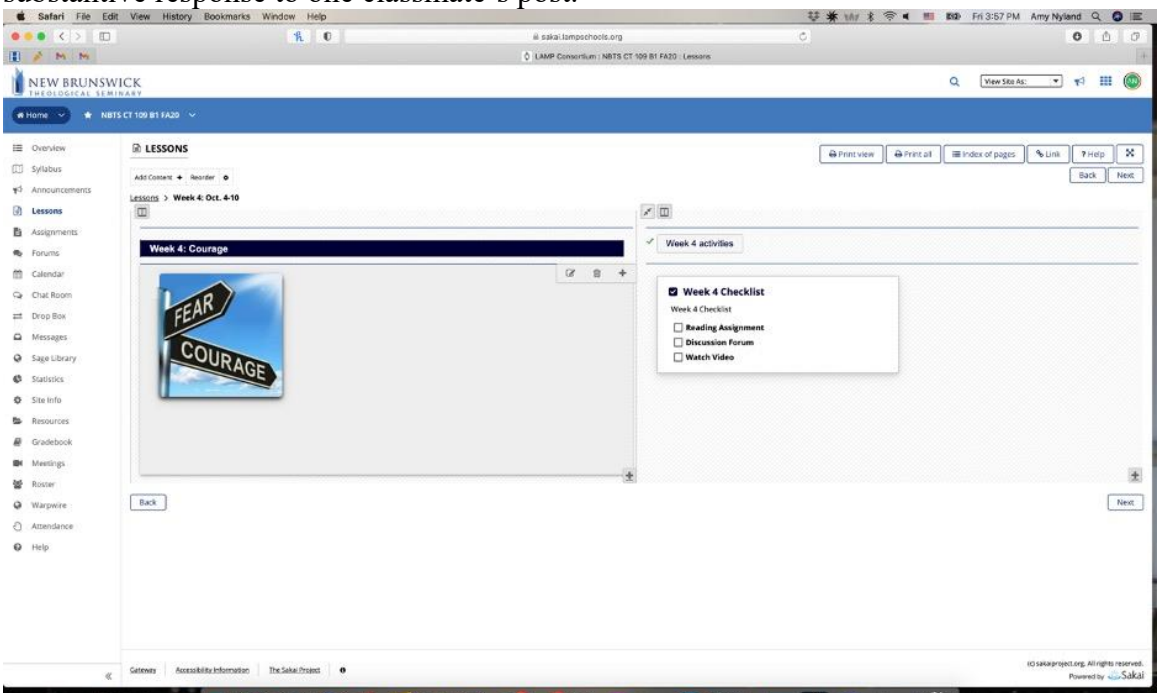
The second way to imagine leadership is that a leader is the one who influences the community to face its problems. In this sense, the leader mobilizes the people to face problems and the community makes progress on its problems because the leader challenges them to do so. If things go wrong, it is the fault of both the leader and the community. While this way of leading requires listening to others and sometimes compromising, it also encourages and empowers all in the community to participate in leadership.

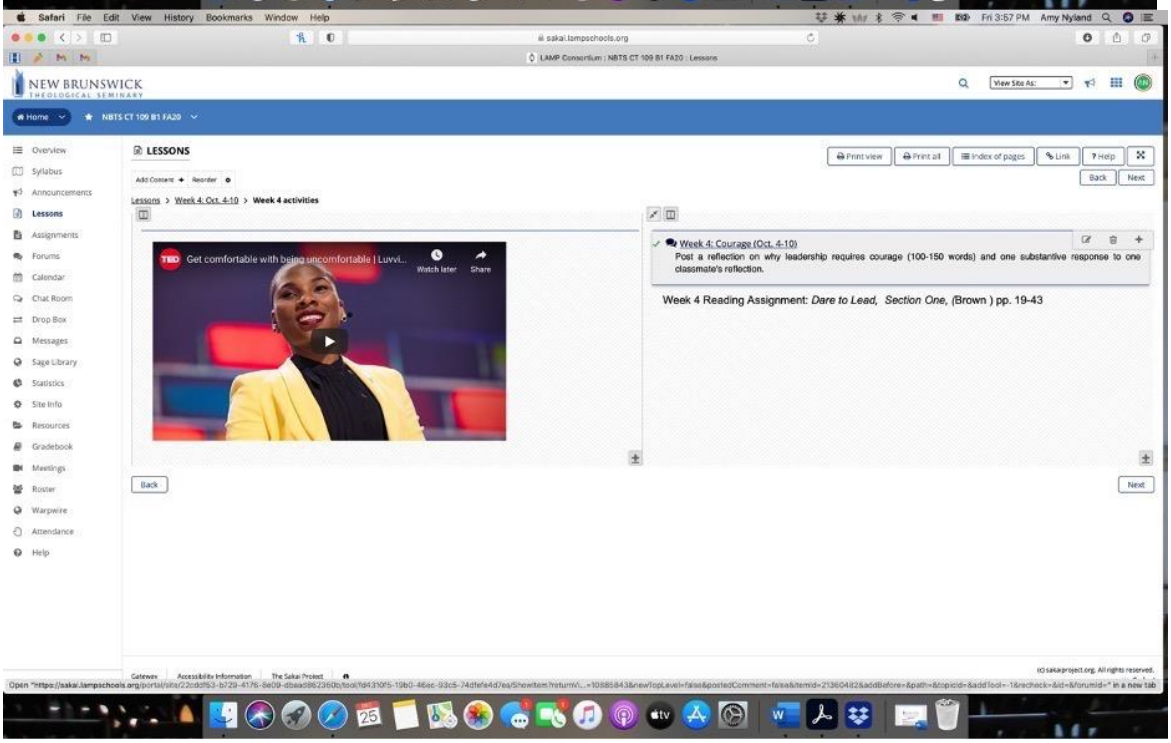
In the class discussion, these two ways of looking at leadership struck a lot of chords with the students. Many had experienced pastors and leaders who modeled an authoritative way of leading, and they indicated that they had not truly felt a part of what drove the church or even that they were significant to the community in any way. Some in the class were those kinds of pastors and they expressed the pressure of feeling pressured by the congregation to lead in this way. They talked about the unrealistic expectations of a church that wants this sort of leader and the enormous stress that pastor endures. Many students were excited to know that pastors can lead in different ways and wondered about how to help churches understand that authoritative leadership is less helpful to their mission than a more inclusive leadership where everyone has responsibility for the success of the church.

Heifetz defines leadership not as a position but as an activity.[15] When leadership is seen as an activity or practice, anyone in any position can be a leader. Leadership, however, is not value-free. Value-free leadership can simply focus on achieving the goals of the organization. If this is leadership, then Hitler was a great leader, according to Heifetz, because Hitler accomplished the goals of the Nazi organization. That sort of value-free leadership does not allow for facing the problems within the organization and, thus, relies solely upon the leader's influence and authority. Leadership that is based on the values of the organization mobilizes the community to work on what is wrong and challenges themselves to be better. Several students discussed wanting to participate in leadership but did not feel skilled or empowered to do so. We talked a good deal about the need to define the church's values so that any leader will have guidance and that defined and understood positive values help everyone in the church find a way to serve.

[15] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 20.

Week Four: (Oct 4-10) Courage
Reading Assignment: Dare to Lead, Section One (Brown) (pp 19-43).
Watch: “Get Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable” by Luvvie Ajai
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on why leadership requires courage (100-150 words) and a substantive response to one classmate’s post.





Vulnerability, according to Brown, is "The emotion that we experience during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure."[16] Vulnerability is having the courage to show up when you can't control the outcome. Brown discusses getting clear on whose opinions matter to us and uses the image of a gladiator in the arena, and those observing from, "the cheap seats." The cheap seats are those who sit on the edges, point fingers, and criticize without taking an active role in the work. Those in the arena are those taking chances and doing the work even though they are afraid. Those who sit in the cheap seats and criticize should have no say in how we view our success or failure. If one is not in the arena doing the work, according to Brown, one does not get an opinion.

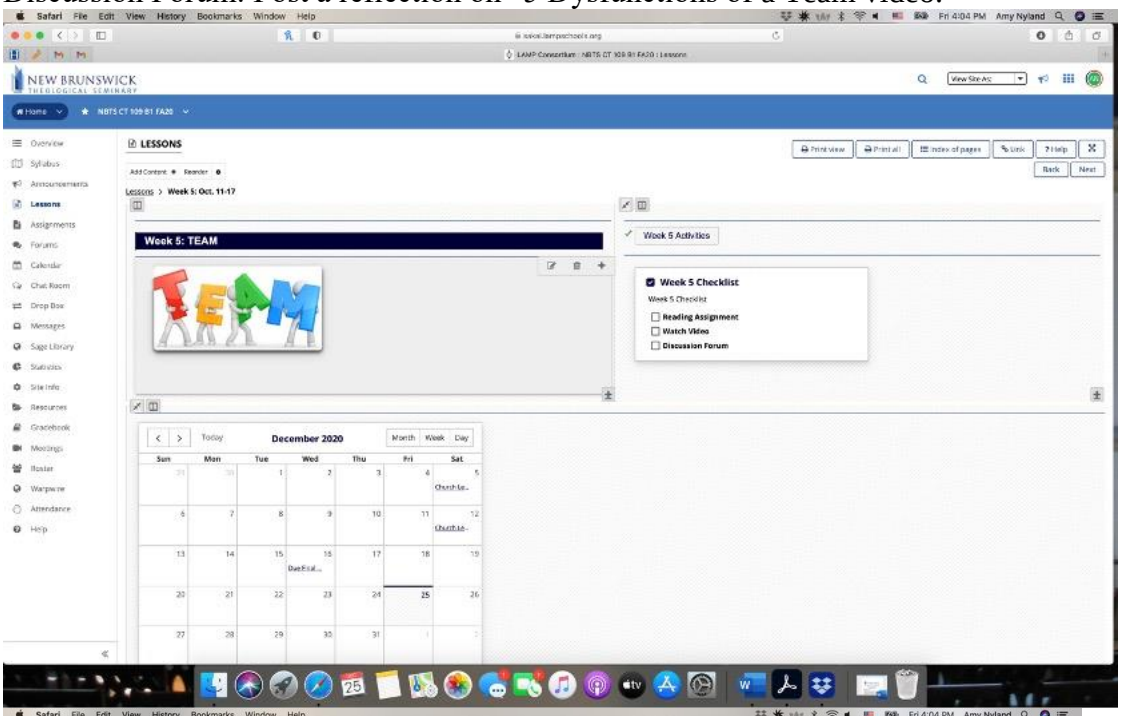
We discussed Brown's "Six Myths of Vulnerability," and how these myths have and continue to influence our willingness to "get in the arena," or take risks in leadership. The myths that vulnerability is weakness, that I can do it alone, and that you can engineer the discomfort out of a situation were the ones the students related to the most. We discussed all the ways churches and pastors avoid discomfort by not having hard conversations, even when they are necessary, by not contradicting anyone, by making no big changes (and never growing), and by choosing comfort over leadership. The topic of a lack of volunteers for any given project in the church came up in this discussion and many students commented that if no one volunteers it could be because there is no clear vision. Others suggested that vulnerability was discouraged in those churches or that failure meant humiliation or shame. If the leader won't be vulnerable, she communicates to the whole community that it is not safe to be vulnerable. It is up to the leader to create a safe

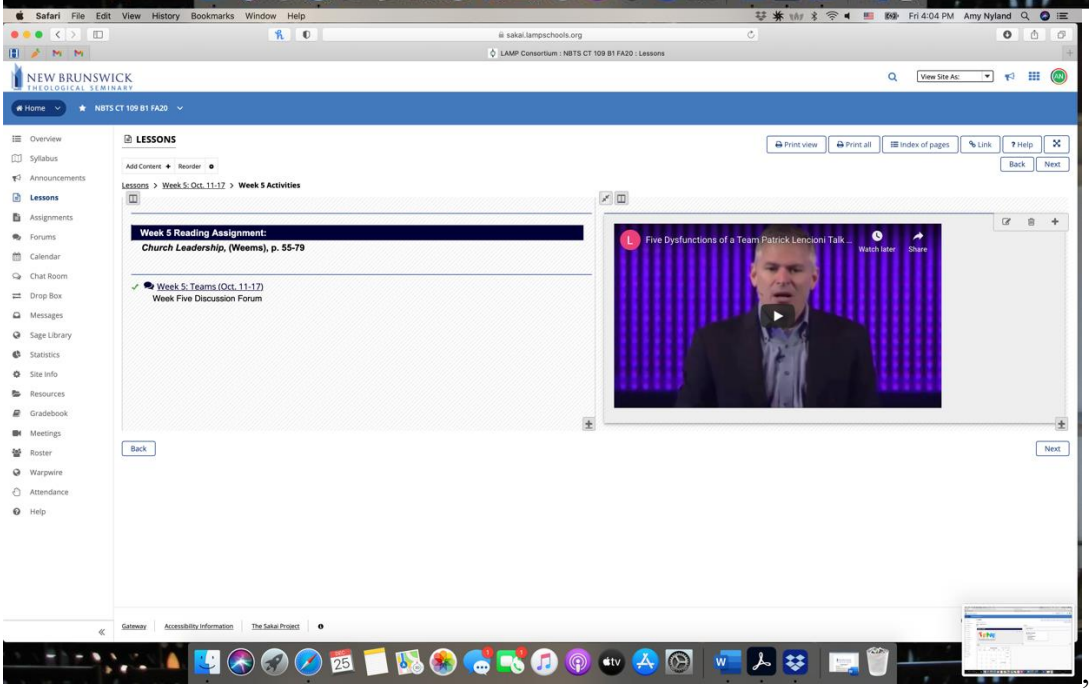
[16] Brown, *Dare to Lead,* 19.

environment where trust is built and maintained, and where failure and risk are not punished, but are seen, instead, as necessary for growth.

The class really responded to this topic of vulnerability in powerful ways. One man emailed me after the class and told me that in his community, vulnerability in pastors was seen as weakness and he was going to recommend Brown's book to begin to change that perception among his leadership teams. Some of the African-American students discussed being in churches where pastors were very authoritative and vulnerability at any level was not viewed in a positive light. They expressed feeling the need to "put on a show" at church that everything is fine or people would say that their faith wasn't strong enough. Expressing vulnerability in these settings meant a diminishment of authority. We discussed vulnerability not as weakness or "oversharing" but, instead, as making space for honesty and curiosity.

Week Five: (Oct 11-17) Teams
Reading Assignment: Church Leadership (Weems) (pp 55-79)
Watch: “5 Dysfunctions of a Team” with Patrick Lencioni
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5EQW026alY&list=PLYeMV_FeS5rUjXsAU-hCSLxYCZfsdowO7&index=6
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on “5 Dysfunctions of a Team video.





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This class session focused both on Weems' chapter and on Lencioni's video on "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team." We discussed that leadership is not limited to the designated "leader," that it is not up to the designated leader to solely define the vision, and that leaders do not lead alone. In the church, God has given the community the wisdom necessary for leadership and the community must share in the work of leadership.

We can view leadership positions in the church as missional, as instruments by which Christ transforms the people of God and equips them for ministry in the world. As leaders in the church, how are we representing Christ in our community of faith so that the members are equipped for ministry? This was a new way of looking at leadership for some and the discussion centered around God's purposes for leadership in the Bible being those of responsibility for and to the greater community (Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Jesus). Biblical leaders were called by God to empower and equip the people to do the work God called them to do. The class coined the phrase, "Empowered leaders empower leaders!"

This class, and many classes I have taught in less formal settings, responded to the Lencioni video with enthusiasm. The notion of trust as a necessary part of a team's functioning seemed obvious but had not been taught to most of them before. For me, this is one of the most important sessions of the class because many of us have not been taught to distinguish between "predictive trust" and "vulnerability-based trust." Often times, teams are derailed because they counted on familiarity to be enough, but when asking team members to take risks, vulnerability-based trust is required. Vulnerability-based trust must be developed over time by the team members committing to openness and genuine feedback as well as the leader modeling vulnerability.

During this discussion, many “lights” went on for students and those who had experienced teams that had vulnerability-based trust expressed very different experiences and outcomes than those who had not participated in that sort of team.

The class talked a lot about developing vulnerability-based trust in a context where that is a completely new idea. We discussed the need to spend a good deal of time on education and practicing this concept as well as giving themselves as leaders space and permission to “go first.” How does a leader in a context that is not ready to practice vulnerability prepare herself to share vulnerably? What happens when he is rejected for sharing vulnerably? How does a leader recover and continue on rather than become discouraged and give up? The class became very animated in this conversation and seemed excited by the prospect of this kind of leadership and overall context.

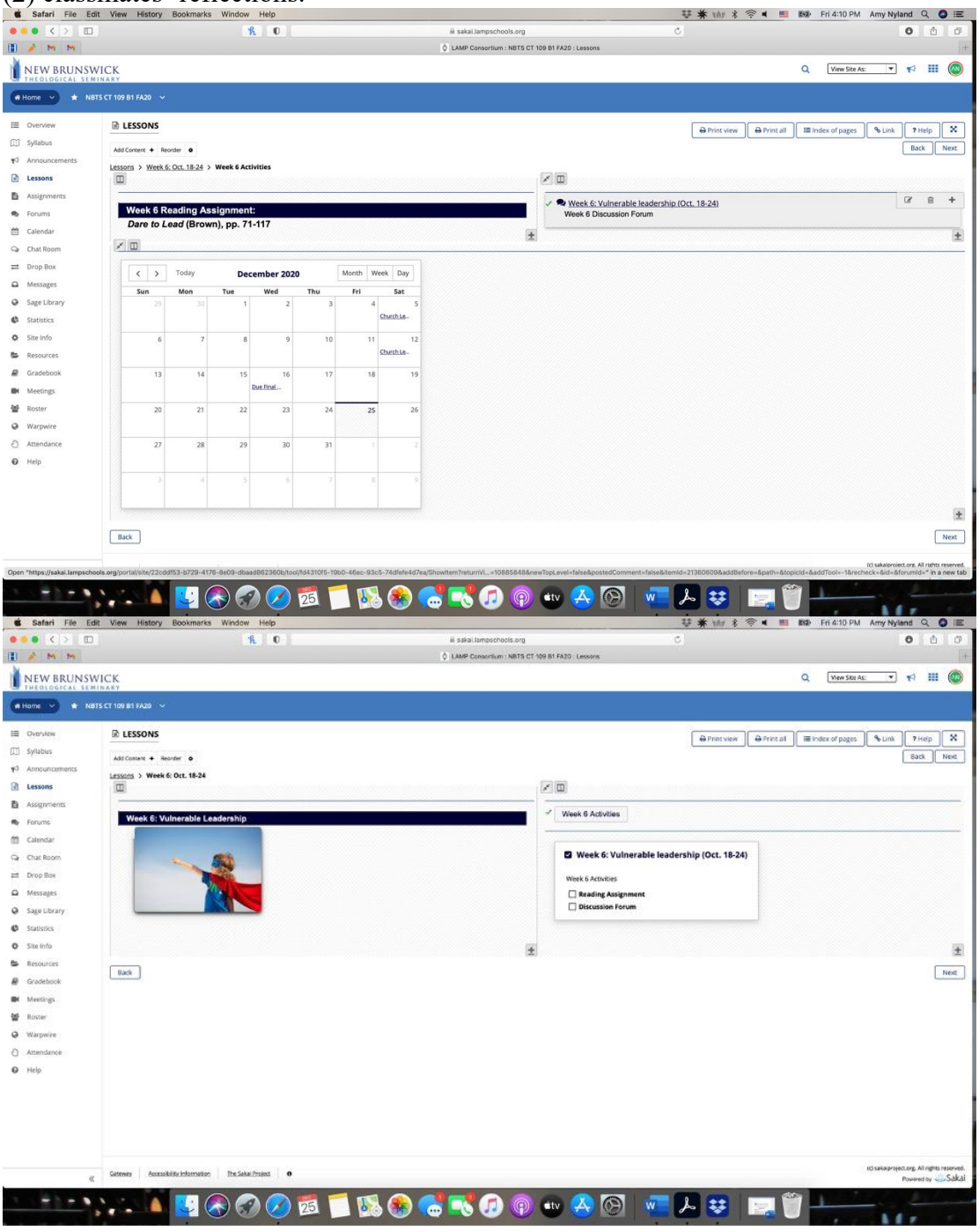
As I began to move the class toward an understanding of kenotic leadership, this session was fundamental because kenotic leadership requires trust in God’s provision, trust in our own capacity to lead, and trust in one another. If we cannot let go of those things that keep us at a distance from one another (e.g., pride, arrogance, and fear), then how do we get to a place of genuine humanity as expressed fully in Jesus Christ?

Lencioni also talks about conflict, a topic most churches would rather avoid. Lencioni describes conflict as “Two people trying to solve a problem.” This idea was received well by the class who, in general, described their experience of conflict as a negative thing. Many said they preferred to avoid conflict and were challenged by classmates asking how problems were solved

in their settings. We came to realize that all of us, to some degree, are afraid of or avoid conflict, whether intentionally or unintentionally. We avoid conflict in favor of "peace," or, "harmony," at the expense of progress. Some students described this false peace as idolatry because some in the church (and in the world) would rather ignore what God is calling them to do than enter into conflict. How does this impact leadership? If we are afraid to disagree with someone else, how do we solve problems while also expressing our points of view authentically? Is everyone being heard or are some being stifled by others' fear? I shared with the class that in my context that is very much the case. The congregation I serve has a long history of "getting along," and having little conflict. They also have done very little beyond maintain what was already in place for the last ten years. We discussed possible solutions and ways to introduce the concept of conflict as necessary for growth. Some students aptly observed that many in the congregation might express their fear by disengaging. What do we do with that? How do we educate our congregations about conflict in healthy ways and encourage them to engage honestly without fear? The class came to the conclusion that the first step is for the leader to engage conflict in healthy ways and demonstrate the ability to engage conflict without fear.

Week Six: (Oct 18-24) Vulnerable Leadership
Reading Assignment: Dare to Lead (Brown) Section Three (pp 71-117)

Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the reading (100-150 words) and post responses to two (2) classmates' reflections.



In Week Six we went further into vulnerability and tied it to leadership through Brown's work in Section Three of *Dare to Lead*. Brown's understanding of "Wholeheartedness" is what vulnerable leadership is based upon. This includes: Living with an unarmored heart, engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness, and cultivating courage, compassion, and connection to wake up in the morning and think, "No matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough." [17] This sense of being "enough" is the foundation of approaching anything, including leadership, with vulnerability. When we can understand that we are enough and don't feel we have to continually prove our worthiness, we can then be more comfortable with vulnerability.

Brown describes several things that have to be worked on internally to be able to lead with vulnerability. One must look within and examine one's own motivations, fears, hurts, and understanding of worthiness. Brown writes, "An examined heart is free and vulnerable enough to love and be loved. And equally free to be hurt."[18] Vulnerability allows the possibility of both love and pain and it is the fear of pain that often keeps us from being vulnerable.

Integration, or putting down the armor and bringing all of ourselves (our history, roles, disappointments, successes, etc.) to our leadership is key to leading with vulnerability. Our armor is that which keeps us distant from others and closed off to vulnerability. Armor is often developed, according to Brown, in response to events in our lives that caused us shame and/or pain. When we can own our stories, they have less power over us, and it is when we can't own our stories that our stories begin to define us and control us and keep us disconnected from

[17] Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 72.
[18] Ibid.

others. A lack of integration, that is, owning our stories and integrating them into our current lives, leads to burn-out and feeling disconnected. It also leads us to build cultures in our churches/organizations that require armor. It is up to us as leaders to create cultures where wholeheartedness is safe and welcome.

In discussing Brown's work, the class mentioned their understandings, based on Brown's work, of modern church culture. Our current culture in the church teaches that vulnerability is a liability. Instead, we reward perfectionism, compartmentalizing our lives, stoicism, overwork, busy-ness, and keeping everyone comfortable. These are forms of armor and lead to the following:

No courage
No trust
No innovation
No accountability
No self-care
Disconnection from emotion

We went on to discuss our roles in the church with regard to vulnerable leadership. I asked the question, "Why are we in leadership roles?" Some responses were:

To encourage innovation, creativity, and growth in the church
To support others in their work and goals
To help the church get to where it needs to be or to get the church to where God is leading.

We are NOT here to:

Fit in
Keep everyone comfortable
Maintain the status quo
Manage other people's emotions
Do the work others need to do for themselves

During the discussion, it came up often that keeping everyone comfortable and maintaining the status quo were usually what leaders in the church tended to fall back on. When people are comfortable, they don't grow but they also don't complain or criticize as much. The class determined that it is easier to allow the congregation to hold onto their comfort than it is to challenge them to do the work of growth. The one who often pays the price for growth is the one who pushes for it, the pastor. Some think it is not worth it. Others discussed not thinking about how much energy they spend managing other people's emotions in the church and in their own lives. It is hard to let people feel their emotions without rushing in to ease their pain or make them comfortable again because we are uncomfortable with their pain. When we do that, however, we make ourselves the "fixer," and set up a culture that depends on the positional leader for its well-being. Several in the class noted how all of this is tied together, meaning that one aspect of leadership cannot be considered without examining all the other aspects. It is not merely the decision to be out in front but to commit to the work of self-reflection, building internal strength to develop the capacity to be vulnerable, and challenging others to do this work for themselves while building a safe and encouraging environment. One student exclaimed, "Man! This is a lot more work than I thought!"

Brown's concept of "Lockdown," where a leader closes off, also brought about a great deal of discussion. When do we go into "Lockdown?"

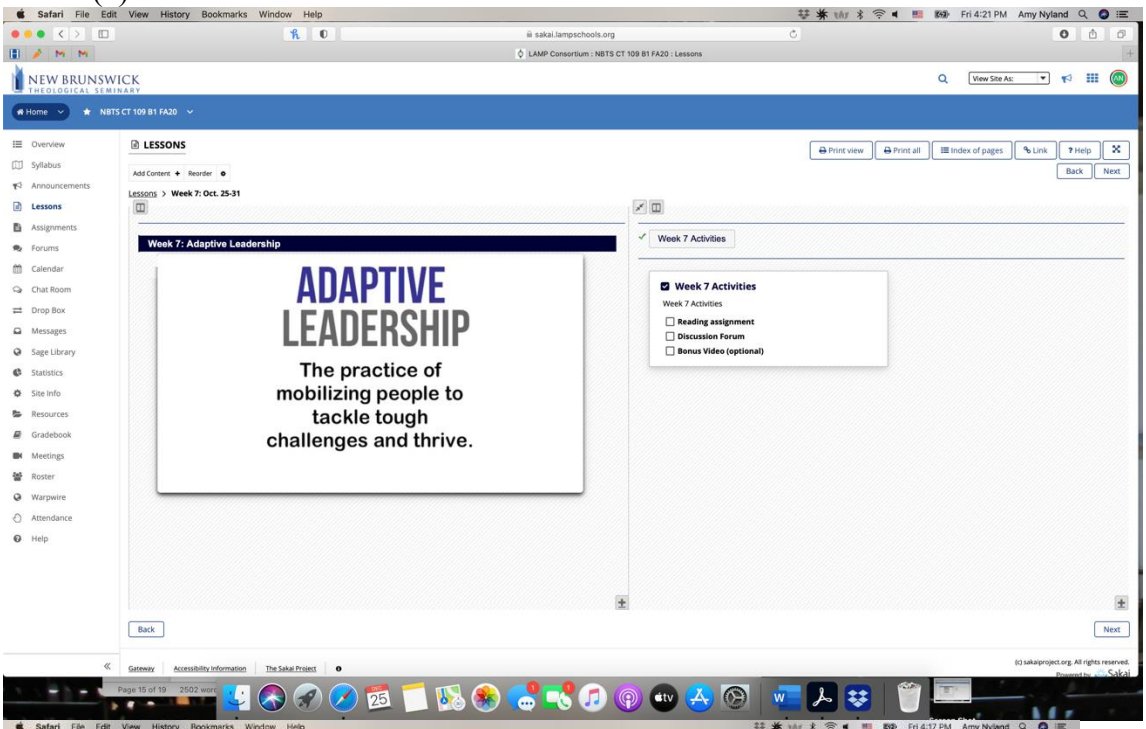
> When we worry about what others think of us
> When we behave according to "what we've always done" without examining why we've done it that way
> We fear we won't be respected or valued
> We don't know the answers
> We acquiesce to others' expectations at the cost of our own

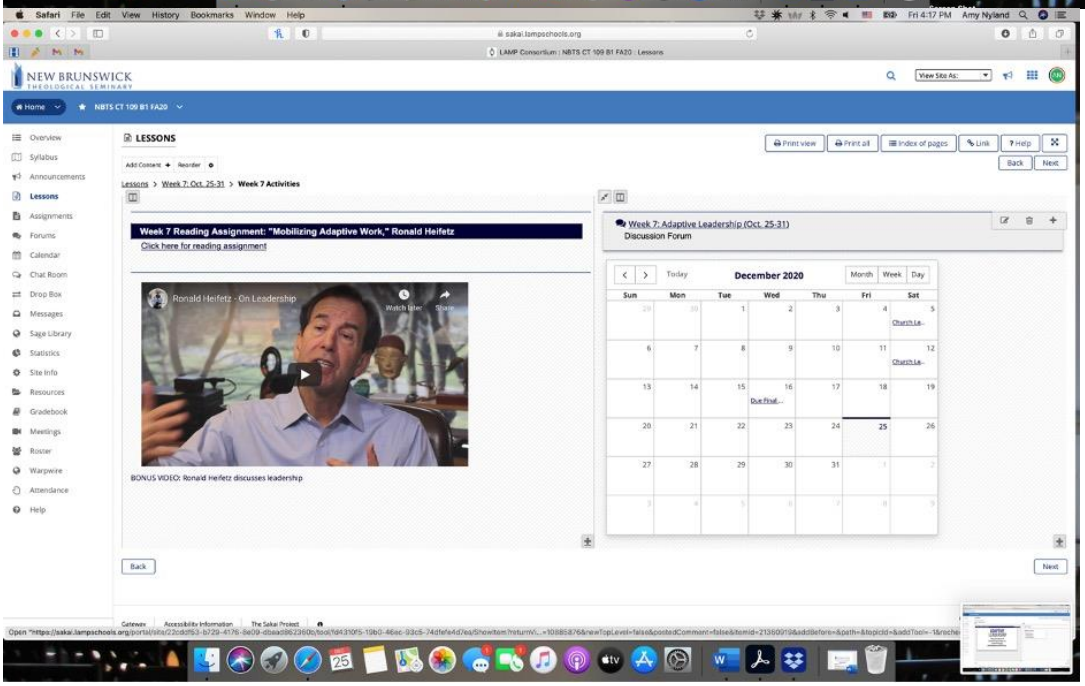
We use power over
We make decisions out of fear

The class agreed that often these factors cause them to shut down and detach from the congregation and that most of the time, these arise from our own internal issues and have little to do with what is actually going on in the church. One student shared a very personal experience that helped illustrate why we lockdown and what the result can be.

We talked a bit about shame and the resulting problems of perfectionism and armor. Most in the class admitted to being at least somewhat perfectionistic and were surprised to learn that it was shame-based. As they reflected more, some shared experiences of shame that led to their need to over-achieve or be perfect and their feelings of near despair when they could not be. Several students related this to the class and their grades. One student shared that, in her culture, a "B" was not good enough and she would lament and despair over a grade of B in her college years to the extent that she would withdraw from friends and family for months if she got a B in a course for fear of being shamed.

Week Seven: (Oct 25-31) Adaptive Leadership
Reading Assignment: “Mobilizing Adaptive Work” Heifetz (in Sakai)
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the Heifetz reading (100-150 words) and post responses to two (2) classmates’ reflections.





This week, we discussed Heifetz' work in *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. I was surprised that most of the students had never read this book or even heard of adaptive leadership, even though most had been to seminary in the last 5 years. This reinforced for me the need to teach leadership specifically to those who will be serving in leadership in churches in the present and future.

Heifetz distinguishes between "Technical Solutions" and "Adaptive Solutions" to problems leaders face. Technical solutions are what many church leaders rely upon when faced with a challenge. Leaders in the church, in my experience, tend to solve problems by using solutions that have worked in the past. An example of this is churches still gauging success by numbers of people in Sunday morning worship and by dollars given, the standard of success in the 1970s. One student shared her perspective on this saying, "It's like when you are trying to talk to someone who speaks a different language from you and you start speaking louder, as if speaking your own language only louder will solve the problem." In the church, we do this a lot by continuing to rely on packaged programming, old models of worship and Christian education, and even in how we design our leadership structures. Unfortunately, there are few technical solutions that will meet the challenges facing the church today because these challenges are unique to our current culture and circumstances.

We discussed Covid-19 as an example of an adaptive challenge. Learning is/was required both to understand the problem and to find solutions. Many challenges in the church are adaptive but often we rely on technical fixes that don't require that we learn new things and new ways of responding that meet the needs of the current context. The class discussed what the consequences

of dealing with Covid-19 as a technical problem would be and determined that the U.S.'s initial response to Covid-19 has been primarily technical, while experts encouraged adaptive learning and new ways of coping with the challenges. Claims of "It's just like the flu" demonstrate a desire to respond to an adaptive challenge with a known solution rather than to learn new and more effective solutions. Like those struggling with Covid-19, churches often end up on life support, metaphorically, before they recognize that new ways of coping and meeting the challenges they face are necessary, if they do at all.

A key component of leading adaptive challenges is managing anxiety. The positional leader must manage her own anxiety and be able to contain the anxiety of others for adaptive change to be possible. Change causes anxiety and being prepared for that is an important component to leading adaptively with success. If a leader has not done the work of self-reflection, practiced vulnerability, and encouraged an environment of safety, the anxiety of the congregation can be overwhelming for both the congregation members and the leader. Heifetz and Bolsinger both claim that leading through adaptive challenges means being able to disappoint the people at a rate they can absorb or tolerate. This is true of anxiety especially. Too much change too quickly will raise anxiety to an unmanageable level and not enough change or change extended over too long a period of time will cause insufficient anxiety to push the congregation to change.

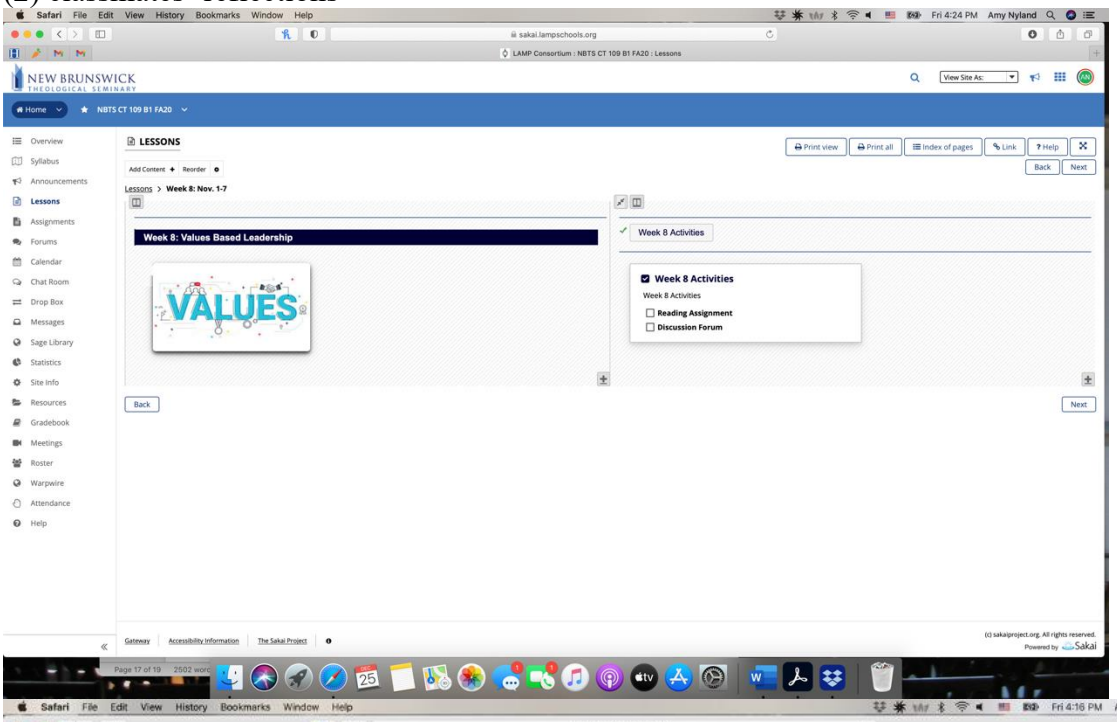
We discussed that technical "know-how" is not necessarily leadership. The leader must ascertain the adaptive capacity of those he is leading and guide them through the process of learning a new way of being. This is adaptive leadership. We also discussed the different forms of authority: formal authority which is authority gained from expertise and experience and informal authority

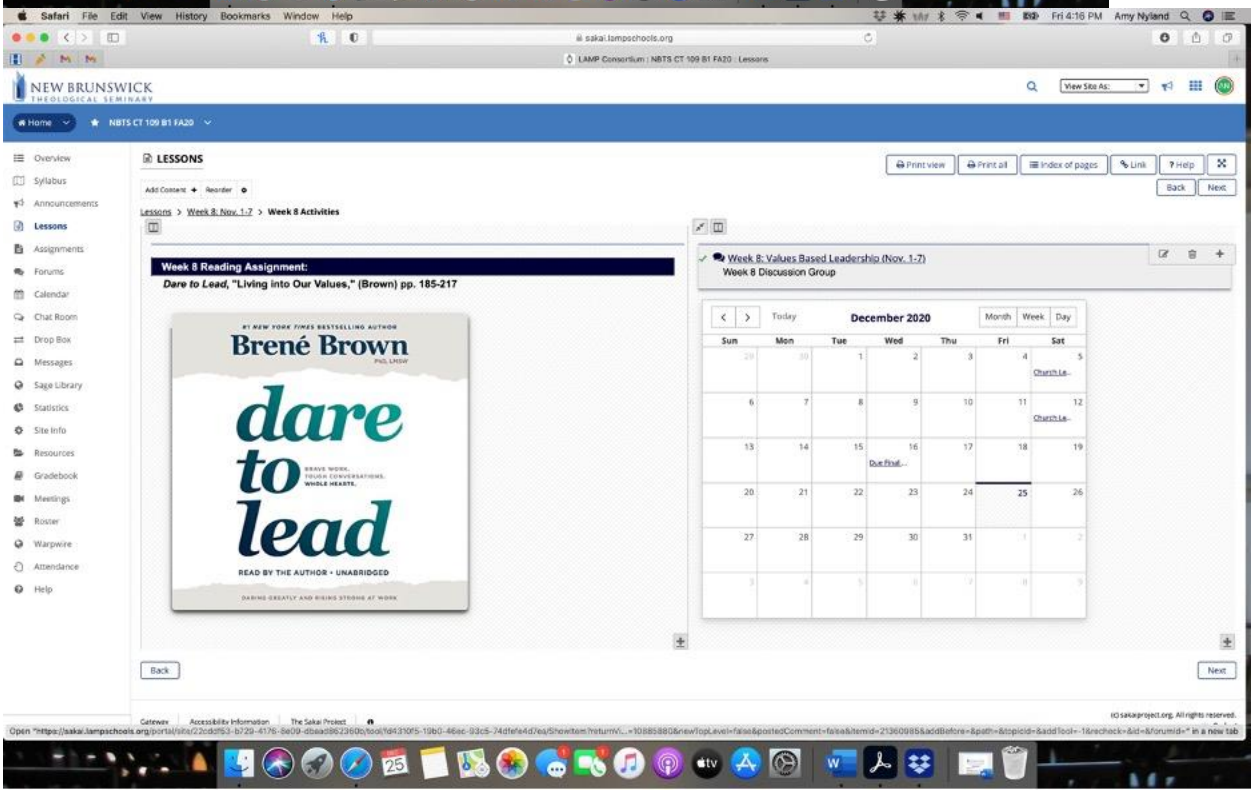
which is authority that is given by another. In some churches, formal authority is the standard in that a pastor has authority because she has had theological training and experience but it takes informal authority to meet adaptive challenges well.

Adaptive leadership requires that we shift the expectations of others. Shifting expectations is ultimately failing others' expectations—but at a rate they can stand. Many in the class had not considered informal authority as such, but considered it to be influence people had because of their status in the church. This is also true, especially in Black churches, where church "mothers" have a great deal of informal authority and to effect change without their participation can be extremely difficult.

Several Latina/Latino students expressed that in their contexts, formal authority is primary in the church, the pastor is in charge and no one questions him (because it is always a "him"). We discussed the pressure of this type of understanding of leadership on the pastor as well as how difficult it is to make significant changes from this perspective. Other students asked about how people who don't like what the pastor is doing will respond and the Latino/Latina students replied that people within the church who disagree with the changes will sabotage the effort, rather than express their disagreement. We talked about how this is actually asserting informal authority in an unhealthy way.

Week Eight (Nov. 1-7) Values Based Leadership
Reading Assignment: Dare to Lead (Brown) “Living into our Values” (pp 185-217)
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the reading (100-150 words) and post responses to two (2) classmates’ reflections





This week's discussion began with the quote, "Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things" by Brené Brown in the reading for this week.

If we are not clear about our values, criticism and challenges can stop us in our tracks. When things get uncomfortable, we have to be clear on why we are there in the first place, Brown writes, "A value is a way of being or believing that we hold most important." [19] Living into our values is more than just professing them, we have to practice them. We have to "walk the talk." We can't walk the talk when things get hard if we are not clear on what we believe and who we are. This, again, goes back to self-examination and owning our stories so they do not own us.

Brown's chapter discusses the steps we can take to live into our values and the most important is to be able to name our values. We do this by asking questions like, "What is most important to me? What is most sacred? What is my 'north star?" We can't stay aligned with our values if we don't know what they are specifically. Leaders will have to remind themselves of their values when things get difficult or when those values are challenged and we are tempted to compromise our values to "get along." Values are those things you will speak up about regardless of the setting or context and they should be so clear and so much a part of us that they don't feel like choices. Our values, when clear, are just who we are.

[19] Brown, *Dare to Lead,* 186.

Brown defines integrity as choosing courage over comfort, choosing what is right over what is fast, fun, or easy, and practicing your values, not just professing them. Several students talked about their experiences in the church with leaders who have expected something from members to which they themselves did not adhere. We discussed how this relates to integrity as Brown describes it. Many students previously identified integrity as honesty and were surprised by this new perspective. I offered another perspective on integrity as defined by Jim Herrington and the Faithwalking organization,[20] that integrity is doing what you say you are going to do, when you say you are going to do it, and in the way in which it was meant to be done. The class discussed how these different perspectives of integrity are related and how they are actually practiced. Brown's notion of integrity as choosing what is right over what is fast, fun, or easy hit chords with several students. One student described his leadership role in a secular company and how he imagined that integrity meant being honest. He went on to say that the concept of integrity as doing what is right when doing something else would be easier struck him as a major difference between leaders and those who do not lead. He talked about employees who would never be promoted because they were known to typically choose what is easy over doing what is right or doing what would keep them out of trouble or allow them to "get by" instead of doing things the way they should be done.

As I reflect on the discussion in this class session, I am struck by how seriously the students took this concept of integrity. Not that I thought they wouldn't, but they were so clear that integrity is essential in leadership. We all discussed leaders, mostly pastors, we know who did not act with

[20] Faithwalking.org is an organization that offers retreats that focus on the individual doing the work of self-examination in the context of faith and learning to own one's story and understand how the foundational events in our lives shape us into who we are today.

integrity, those who preached one thing but did another, and how that impacted our understandings of faith, church, and leaders. We also discussed people in our lives when we were children who did not act with integrity and how that shaped us and our understanding of ourselves and leadership or authority in general. Some students reflected on examples of people who were part of their lives when they were children who did not choose integrity and caused them to believe that anyone with authority was not to be trusted. The discussion then went to our current day politics and reflections on why leaders who are obvious in their lack of integrity continue to be elected by the very people who claim that integrity is their priority, a clear example of how different understandings of integrity can profoundly impact the community.

Brown continues, in this section, with positing that empathy and self-compassion are the two most important seats in the arena. Leaders must understand their privilege and listen to those who do not share in it. She writes, "A brave leader is someone who says, 'I see you. I hear you. I don't have all the answers, but I'm going to keep listening and asking questions."[21] We all have the ability to foster a culture of empathy as leaders.

When we push back on silence and judgment, we push away shame and live more fully into our highest values. We discussed the questions:

How do you know when you are living outside of your values?

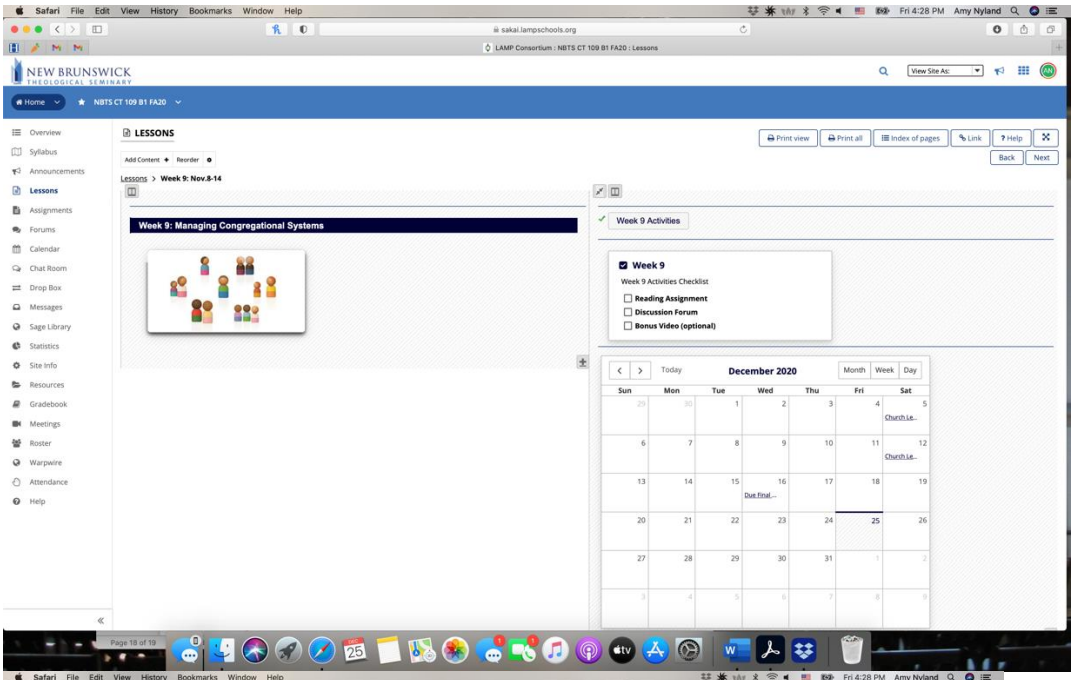
What does it feel like when you are living into your values?

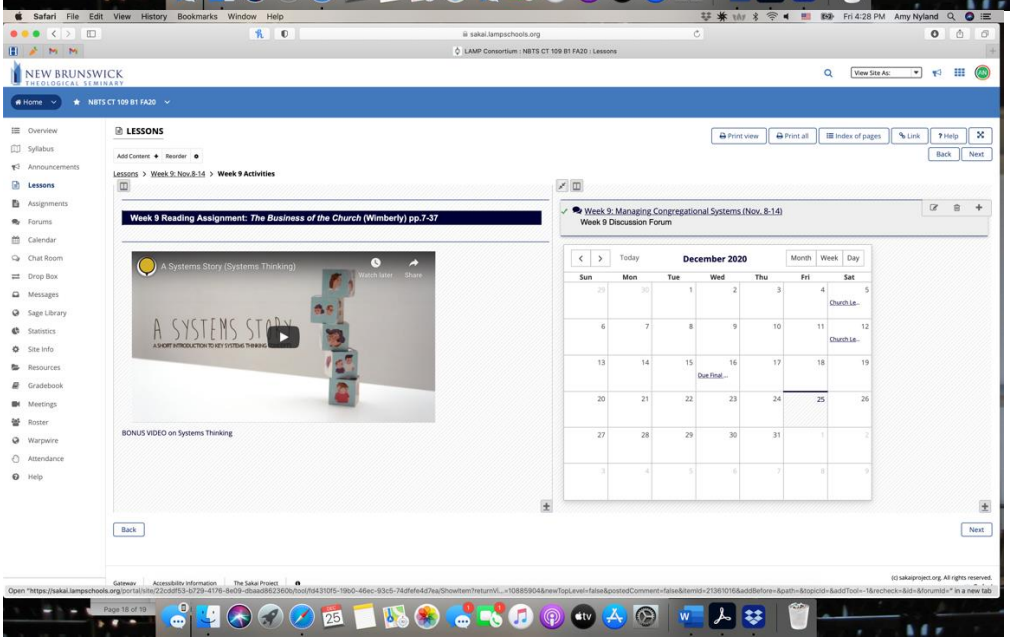
and we talked about the challenges of pushing back on and challenging judgment, especially when the judgment is discriminatory. Some African-American and Caribbean-American students

[21] Ibid., 195.

in the class expressed apprehension at pushing back on judgment when it is a white person doing the judging. They shared that it felt to them as if their pushing back would be seen as defensiveness or threatening rather than integrity, even if it really was integrity. The class discussed racial implications and challenges for living with integrity, especially around cultural norms and expectations.

Week Nine (Nov 8-14) Managing Congregational Systems
Reading Assignment: The Business of the Church (Wimberly) (pp. 7-37)
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the reading (100-150 words) that discusses the difference between management and leadership in congregations based on the work you have done so far. Post one (1) response to a classmate's reflection.





John Wimberly discusses the importance separating leadership from management in this section of *The Business of the Church*. A leader, for Wimberly, is a visionary. She has a dream of what her congregation can be. A manager, on the other hand, is a person who can transform a vision into reality. Good leaders choose good managers who communicate, relate to people well, and build momentum among the members. Such managers can help the leader's vision come to life.

Wimberley stresses the importance of clarity especially when it comes to the roles people have in the church. When there is a lack of communication there is a lack of leadership. Brené Brown describes clarity as kindness in *Dare to Lead*. Leaders also empower others to believe in their vision and work with their strengths to serve the church's larger purpose. Managers, on the other hand, are the ones who make sure the technical and logistical details are attended to so that the vision is accomplished. Both leadership and management are important in the church--one is not more necessary than the other.

One student came to the conclusion that churches need both a leader and a manager to accomplish its vision and goals related to the vision. Several students agreed but pointed out that a small church can't usually afford hire two pastors, so what happens then? We discussed the different gifts and strengths of leaders and managers and came to the conclusion that a leader can often also manage (though it might not be a strength) but usually a manager does not also lead effectively. A church that can only hire one pastor would do well to hire a leader and allow volunteers to share in the work of management. Some students gave examples of how that is already working in their churches.

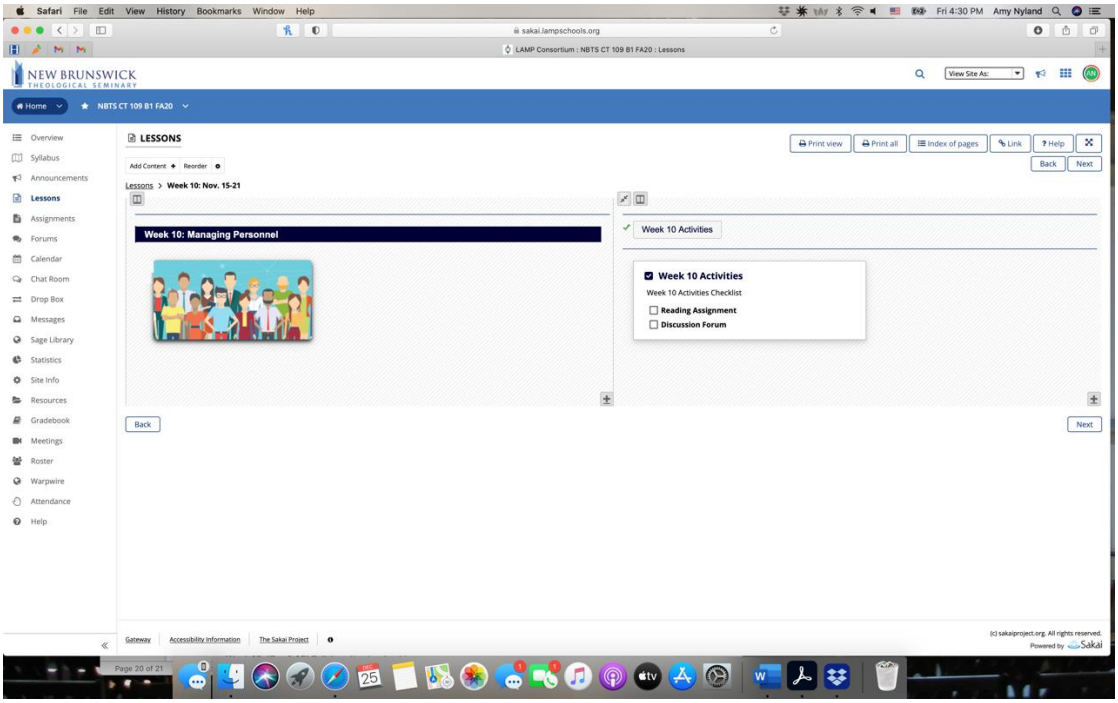
Wimberly also addresses the need to think of the church as a system and reminds us that in a system, everything is related to and dependent upon, in some way, everything else. We discussed how something as simple as running out of toilet paper in the bathroom affects a visitor's view of the church as a whole. More seriously, the way money is handled in the church is a reflection of the values the church holds and impacts all parts of the system, so if there is money for foreign mission but none to hire a sexton to manage the building, that tells us something about the values the church holds. One student shared an example of her church that says it wants to draw in younger people but refuses to spend the money necessary to hire someone to develop a social media presence for the church. She shared her frustration with this and her new understanding that this church proclaims this value but isn't living it—so is it really a value or is it just a wish?

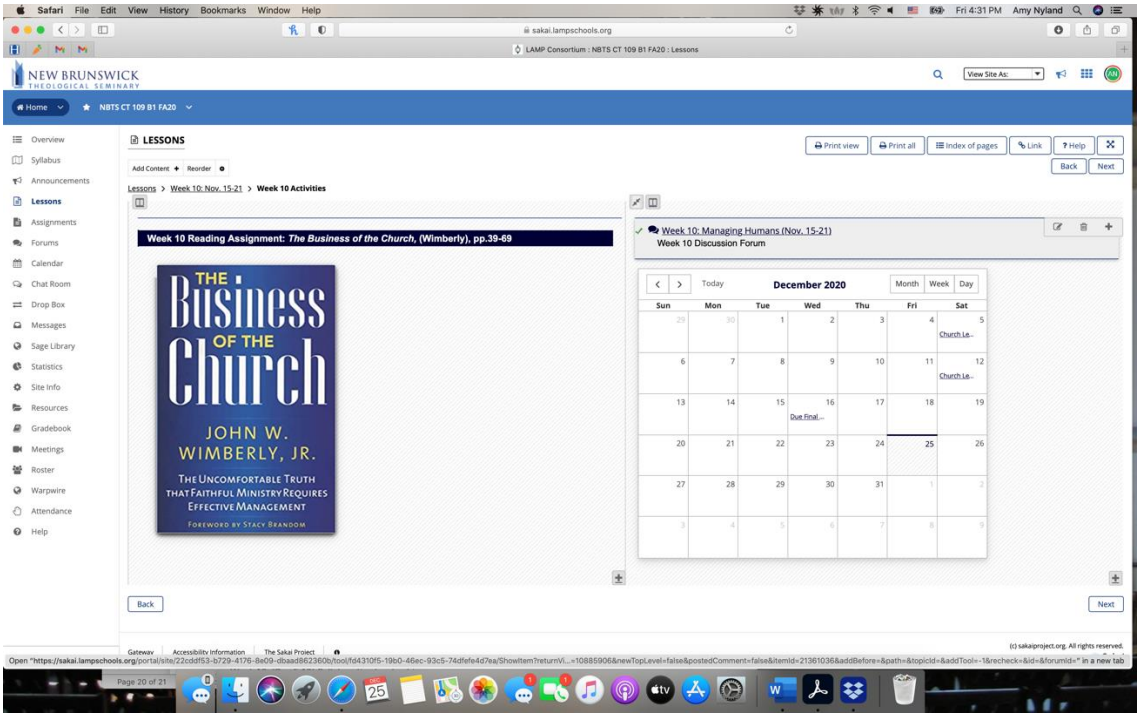
Change within a system takes time and sensitivity. The leaders in the church must be sensitive to the real values held by the church and not try to actualize the proclaimed values, until it is understood why the church has proclaimed values it is not living into and whether or not the church really does hold those as values it is willing to live out. The leader has to be aware of the impact of whatever change is happening in all areas of the life of the church and be willing to listen to the impact on people even when it is hard to listen to. This class came to the conclusion that, above all else, people want to feel like they have been heard, even if things don't go their way. We referenced Lencioni's video from a few weeks earlier regarding his statement that if people don't weigh in, they won't buy in. Lencioni tells us that even if people disagree with the outcome, they will go along if they felt they had been heard.

The church needs leaders. We have a lot of good people, buildings, Bibles, and prayer. We have a God who provides and cares for us. We need leaders who are trained to see themselves, the church, and the world as canvasses upon which God will paint the future. To do that, we need leaders who are able to be vulnerable with God, with themselves, and with others and who empower their people to be the same. We need leaders who enjoy power in vulnerability rather than power over. We need leaders who understand the past and are able to move into the future without the unnecessary baggage of pain and resentment as much as possible.

We need to train our leaders. The church tends to place people into leadership roles who are not at all prepared for that work. Seminaries tend to train people to think theologically but neglect also to train them to lead with the courage necessary to effect positive change in their communities. Pastors are spiritual leaders and, as such, need to know what that means in real life. Prayer is necessary. Teaching people to pray is necessary. Leading people genuinely and courageously into mission, steeped in prayer and self-reflection, is necessary if the church is to make a difference in the world, or even survive in the world.

Week 10 (Nov 15-21) Managing Humans
Reading Assignment: The Business of the Church (Wimberly) Chapter 2 (pp 39-69)
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the reading (100-150 words) and post two (2) responses to classmates' reflections.





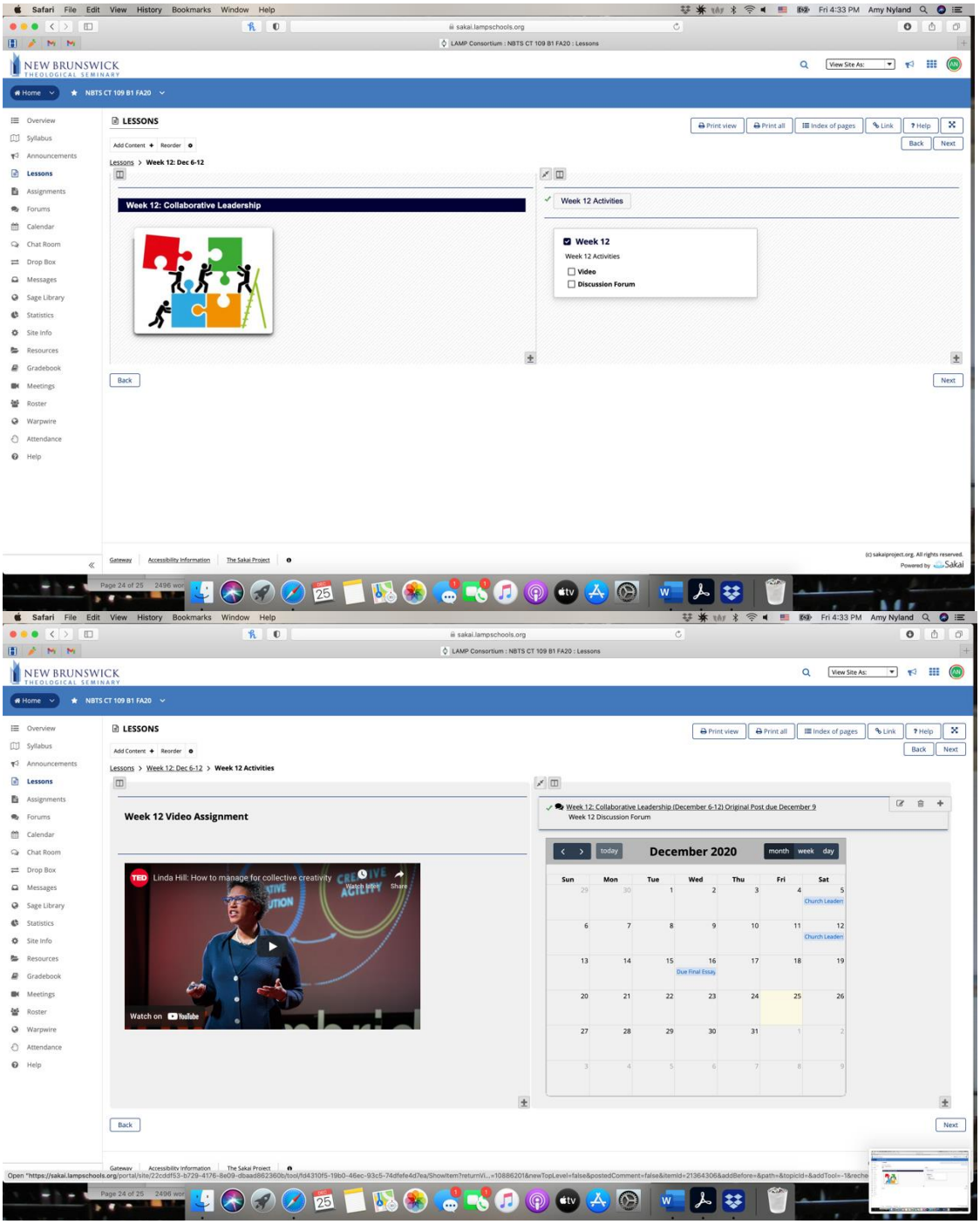
Knowing that the church is a system, it is important to recognize the need for managing personnel using a systems approach. Good personnel management is key to creating an effective and efficient church staff. Church staff might be managed like a secular company in terms of defining clear practices, policies, and repeatedly communicating that the staff works as a team--things that tend not to happen in churches. The head of staff would do well to manage using a "team" mindset and recognize the abilities of individuals and how they uniquely contribute to the team. This requires a joint effort consisting of the head of staff, staff, and congregation members all working together. Personnel management is an important task that is often ignored in the church, leading to staff burn-out, frustration, and resentment. Pastors, particularly, often have no job description or clear expectations to track their own work. Volunteers tend to just do what they do without considering the impact of their work on the rest of the system. I shared an example in my church where there is a finance team, a treasurer, and a deacon chair, all of whom make financial decisions for the church, but there is no clear understanding of who makes what decisions and there is very little communication among them or from them to the rest of the leadership. I sent out information regarding the PPP loans from the Small Business Administration to all three of these entities and spent a week trying to determine who would be the person to complete the application! Clear job descriptions would have eliminated the frustration and chaos that ensued.

One student shared that personnel management has generally failed to be established in Korean-American churches, particularly in creating and using job descriptions. She shared that there are often no job descriptions, and even if there are, they are irrelevant. The culture of first-generation Koreans is for paid church staff to do everything without consideration of fair

compensation because they are working for God. She said that she had seen a lot of conflict and disagreements when first-generation and second-generation staff members work together because the expectations are different and this led to one side accusing the other of being lazy or inconsiderate.

In small churches, this seems to be a problem as well. One student discussed how they just "Do what needs to be done!" When asked how this system typically functions, she replied, "Well, things get done, but usually a week or two later than they should have been." In a small church, the pastor is often expected to manage staff and volunteers but without clear job descriptions and expectations, and it becomes difficult to hold volunteers accountable without them. We discussed how we often feel grateful that someone is doing something in the church, but then suffer the consequences of things not done correctly or in a timely manner. Leadership doesn't want to hurt people's feelings, often at the expense of the overall functioning of the church.

Week 11: (Nov. 29-Dec. 5) Collaborative Leadership
Assignment: Video- Harvard Professor Linda Hill: Collaborative leadership
https://www.ted.com/talks/linda_hill_how_to_manage_for_collective_creativity?referrer=playlist-10_guiding_principles_for_leaders
Discussion Forum: Post a reflection on the video (100-150 words). Respond to two (2) classmates' reflections.



In the video by Dr. Linda Hill, in this week's assignment, she discusses the need for leaders to step back and allow room for staff to be creative and solve problems themselves. To lead collaboratively means, for Hill, to make space for different ideas and ways of doing things that the leader might come up with on her own. This fits nicely with the notion of kenotic leadership in that a leader who is busy telling everyone how things are going to be done and what things are going to be done, is not leaving space for compassion, understanding, or even the work of the Spirit though other voices. This need to control every aspect of the work is ineffective and often leads to less creative solutions than would including others in the process and execution.

A student from the Black church culture shared that in his church's patriarchal structure, it is difficult for some people like women and lay members who don't have any special relationship or standing with the pastor, because they usually don't have access to the pastor in order to have their voices heard, so they have no say in anything the church plans or does. I shared that in my church, where a woman is the pastor, a very different phenomenon occurs; people in the church, whether part of the leadership or a one-Sunday-per-month attendee, feel completely free and entitled to tell me exactly how they think the church should be working and what we should be doing or how we should be doing things better (aka, their way). The class discussed whether that was because I am a woman or because that is the culture of the church. I think it is both and we discussed the implications of that sort of culture on the wider impact of the church in the community.

Hill's definition of innovation is "The creation, development, and implementation of a new product, process or service, with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness or competitive advantage." Several students discussed this definition as necessarily a team effort, however, many of them previously thought that innovation began with one person up front having the total picture of a new idea and how to implement it. He would have all the answers and would then instruct departments or people on next steps for implementation. While one person may have the beginning of an idea, the development and implementation of something new requires a team of people empowered to use their creativity. Students discussed places in their churches where they have seen this happen, primarily in Sunday school and Vacation Bible School or summer camp work-all areas involving children. We talked about why collaboration is invited with children's activities far more often than in the leading of the church as a whole.

Further discussion led to questions like, "What does it say to the community when a church's pastor is not empowered to lead? What happens within the community when there is a crisis and no one has authority? How does a church allow for both strong leadership and congregational involvement?"

Week 12: (Dec.6- 12) Kenotic Leadership

Reading Assignment: “What is Kenotic Leadership?” Amy Nyland, Duke Divinity School

Discussion Forum: Post a response to the question: “How does kenotic leadership relate to we have learned so far about: self -reflection, values-based leadership, courageous leadership, and adaptive leadership?” (200-300 words)

As this class went on, it became clear to me that these students were passionate about leading the church well, even if they didn’t agree with or completely understand the concepts discussed. This class became very close and grew in honesty and willingness to share vulnerably. One man in the class who was Latino and led a Latino church shared very openly some of his fears and failures he had experienced and how those things affected him as a leader and as a person. He expressed how this class helped him see that it wasn’t because he was a bad leader, but he just didn’t understand how to look at things like Brown or Weems or Heifetz looked at them. He expressed his relief that he had some tools that he could use in the future and that he did not feel like a failure any longer. He realized that he was not responsible for doing everything in the church, even though that was the current expectation of church members, and that he could help others learn to see the church as a system that had many parts, all needing leadership and management.

Conclusion

I was introduced to the phrase, "already/not yet," in my very first seminary class, New Testament, taught by Dr. Jim Brownson who was possibly the most influential person on my journey through seminary. Dr. Brownson taught our class that in order to preach the kingdom of God to people whose lives were filled with pain and for whom God had not responded to prayers for justice we, ministers, had to accept that while Christ's presence inaugurated the kingdom of God, God's kingdom in its fullness was still also yet to come. Eventually, as a pastor I learned to preach God's presence among us in Jesus Christ to the people in my care while also holding them (us) accountable to the "not yet" of the coming reign of God. In many ways, Christianity is aspirational; we are seeking to live in ways that do not always make sense in the present. But Christianity is also a remembrance; we are to remember what Jesus taught and how he lived as an example for how we ought to live. I am still learning to live in the already/not yet reality of ministry and life with Christ despite years of training and practice. It is a journey that takes a lifetime.

Kenosis also exists in the realm of already-not yet. Christ's kenosis has already happened and has impacted human existence, perhaps existence beyond what humans can know, in profound ways. Kenosis on an individual level is ongoing, however. It is a day-by-day, sometimes moment-by-moment letting go of those things within that keep people from experiencing all God has to share and all that is available through other people. As leaders in the church, an ongoing practice of kenosis is necessary if we desire to lead in ways that reflect the kenosis, and indeed

the person, of Christ. We cannot hold on to pain, envy, fear, resentment and also be open and available for what God and others will teach us tomorrow.

Benedict Thomas Viviano[1] describes God as a great mystery, one that cannot be known directly. For him, God is known to humanity in a way similar to a poem, through imagery and metaphor, veiled and foggy. He writes, "God ...is present, yet elusive, hidden and ungraspable, except in 'his' ways of manifesting Godself."[2] God manifested Godself through Jesus Christ. While God remains a great mystery that cannot be known directly, we can know God indirectly through what we know of Christ. Christ was fully God and also fully human and while human beings cannot comprehend that truth entirely, Rowan Williams expresses clearly that Christ was divine at all times and in all ways. Christ did not at any time lose his ability to be Savior yet, in Christ the vulnerability required to allow others to have a voice and to have a power of their own, the vulnerability required to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves becomes visible and knowable. We humans are able to see the pain involved in his risking that vulnerability. The profound ways in which Jesus' leadership changed humanity forever is also made visible. If today's leadership can take on even a tiny piece of the vulnerability demonstrated in Christ, it will have congregations that exist in genuine community, leaders courageous enough to take risks to lead in new and compelling ways, and communities capable of following wherever God leads.

[1] Benedict Thomas Viviano, "God in the Gospel According to Matthew," *Interpretations* 64, no. 4 (2010): 341–54.
[2] Ibid.

Kenosis was a choice for Jesus, he did it of his own will in order to experience the fullness of God's intention for humanity. Human beings can also choose kenosis. We can choose to empty ourselves of the things in our personalities and our natures that make it impossible to experience humanity more fully, not as Christ did, because we are subject to sin, but better, more openly, and more authentically available to others and to God. Through kenosis the choice is made to make room for the experiences and voices of others so that new realities might emerge that will allow the church to express more fully the coming, and already present, kingdom of God.

Comments and expressions like those heard from the students in the leadership course are what drive me to work on leadership training for seminarians and clergy, particularly clergy who do not have the privilege of attending an elite divinity school like Duke, one that understands this need for education in leadership. As I develop my understanding of kenotic leadership further, I think there is really something to it (not a terribly academic statement, I know) in that some clergy are put into leadership roles without understanding the cost to them personally of unhealthy patterns of leadership. Leaders must continually empty themselves of fear, of pride, of arrogance, of privilege in order to truly see their people and help them live into the values and plans God presents to them. Leaders who hold onto negative characteristics like fear, pride, resentment, envy, are likely to experience burn-out or exhaustion or frustration—or all three and more. Exhausted leaders cannot make room for something new. Lencioni, Brown, Herrington, Jones, Weems, and Wimberly all say this in one way or another--that leadership requires a letting go of the destructive parts of self in order to make room for grace, love, compassion, understanding, and courage. Not only must they let go of the parts of themselves that keep them disconnected, they also must open themselves, as Jesus did, to hearing God's words and doing

God's work rather than fulfilling their own plans or goals in the church. True kenosis isn't an exchange of one for another, of pride for grace, or of fear for joy, but a complete dismissal of those parts of ourselves that keep us from genuine connection with Christ and with others and an opening up to growing those parts that encompass joy, grace, courage, and love.

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Biography

The Rev. Amy Nyland was born and raised in a Jewish family in Chicago, Illinois. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Biology from San Jose State University in 1986. In 1986, Rev. Nyland began a Master of Arts program in Clinical Psychology at San Jose State University but changed her focus to Special Education, with an emphasis in Deaf Education, in 1988. In October of 1989, just one semester short of graduation, a large earthquake in the San Francisco area where she was living was life-changing for Rev. Nyland. She chose to return home to Chicago after completing the current semester and, subsequently, did not graduate.

Rev. Nyland worked in non-profit administration in Chicago with families of persons with disabilities from 1990 to 1993 when she and her family moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan. It was there that Rev. Nyland began to explore the Christian faith, attending Unity Reformed Church in Kentwood, MI, and was baptized with her three young sons in 1997. From there, Rev. Nyland became increasingly involved in leadership within the church. She owned a business for 9 years in the Grand Rapids area until 2008 when the economy began to decline and she sold in order to go back to school.

In 2005, Rev. Nyland was admitted to Western Theological Seminary where she completed her Master of Divinity in 2009. During that time she was offered an internship at Second Reformed Church in Zeeland where she served for two years until graduation. She was ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed Church in America on August 3, 2009 and received a call to serve as Associate Pastor of Alto Reformed Church in Alto, Wisconsin. Being the first woman to serve in any leadership capacity in this church in its 150-year history, Rev. Nyland quickly learned the challenges of being a “first.” It became clear very early on that the all-male church leadership and Senior Pastor were not prepared to serve alongside an ordained woman. Rev. Nyland left after just two years.

In 2011, Rev. Nyland was called to serve as Pastor for Cortlandtown Reformed Church in Montrose, NY. While it was a big move for her and for her family, it turned out to be a great fit, both the church and New York. Unexpectedly, in 2014, Rev. Nyland was offered the position of Executive Minister for the Regional Synod of New York in the Reformed Church in America. In this position, Rev. Nyland was able to accomplish a great deal for the churches in New York, particularly in the area of advocacy. During her time with the Synod, Rev. Nyland had the opportunity to participate in the Duke Executive Leadership Course through the Fuqua School of Business, and this week-long intensive study of leadership fine-tuned her interest in leadership study.

In 2018, Rev. Nyland was admitted to the Doctor of Ministry program at Duke Divinity School where her studies focused on Christian Leadership. In 2020, she elected not to renew her contract with the Synod in favor of serving as pastor again in a local church. She currently serves as Pastor for the First Reformed Church in Fishkill, NY and also as an adjunct instructor at New Brunswick Theological Seminary where she teaches church leadership.

Rev. Nyland currently lives in Putnam Valley, NY, approximately 35 miles north of Manhattan.