

SPIRITLUNKING BIBLICAL CAVES: PROBING THE DEPTHS OF CONTEXT
FOR NARRAPHORS THAT SUPPORT TRANSFORMATION AND THE PRACTICE
OF DOING SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
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requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

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ABSTRACT

SPIRITLUNKING BIBLICAL CAVES

Byron W. Kaiser

North Webster United Methodist Church, North Webster, Indiana

The purpose of this study was to identify a group of twenty-something adults to help guide and develop a sermon series to transition a congregation through the grief of losing a primary staff member. The study was originally focused on using the advisory group to develop a preaching style effective for the age group from which the advisory committee emerged. During the course of the study, the church experienced traumatic loss. The study shifted focus to support the collective grief of the congregation and transition to a new person to replace the absent staff member. The advisory group met face-to-face as well as through video conferencing, which was a new experience for the advisory group. The congregation overall successfully transitioned to a new staff member, yet a small though significant group of leaders could not adequately deal with loss, causing additional trauma in the context of the congregation, that, by the end of the project, continued unresolved.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INVITATION TO A SPIRITLUNKING JOURNEY

The box rests in the back of my closet. I open the box to a plume of musty clay. Inside the box neatly layered with brown fire hose canvas pants and jacket, my hands find a helmet, a head lantern, water bottles, gloves, rope and boots. The pants are threadbare at the knees through the first of several layers. The jacket smells of adventure with cord hanging from its elbows. The helmet, though polished, displays deep gouges having done its duty against granite and limestone. The headlamp is worse for wear. I hit it against the palm of my left hand hoping to knock functionality back into place, the batteries perhaps long depleted. I reach for the bottles. The assorted water bottles have kept drops of water from evaporating. I twist the cap off one bottle and taste the gritty water drops, stale yet freshening my desire for quest. The gloves I lay to the side noticing the perfect representation of my grip as the leather recreates the curl of my fingers. The rope, so trusted and life-saving, shall never leave the box. Filled with accomplishment and permeated with mica, gypsum, coral, quartz and basalt. Each grain cuts into the rope's fibers, weakening its ability to secure lending to its potential for failure. This rope filled with too much sentiment to discard and too much sediment to use, shall stay in the box. At the bottom, I touch boots. Sour leather made brittle by drying from walks in mud and water. The box contains gear I need to explore dark places.

Old adventures smell sour and musty. My soul yearns for the new adventure - salty and earthy. I anticipate the drop into deep caverns on the end of a rope belayed by

fellow travels from ledges high. I want to feel the sharp rock in passages dulled by canvas on knees and elbow. I thirst for the warm water refreshment earned by crawling through narrow courses. I reach for handholds and stretch for footholds putting leather and boot to the test. My helmet, more than a place to hold my lamp, protects me from the unseen; yet holds the lamp bringing knowledge into my mind of the way to go.

Please be my companion on this speleological adventure into dark places.¹ These dark places team with potentiality and promise the stuff of life. These dark places hold no trivial specter to titillate you into fear. These dark places shield you from distractions so that you may meet the Holy Ghost and be renewed. Come with me. Put on your helmet. Charge your light, fill your canteens and grab your rope.

We shall reconnoiter the “Cave of Context.” We will rappel into this cave, experience the opportunities for ministry in the hollows of day-to-day ministry in a small town in north central Indiana. We will explore the aspirations of people to live a life of Christ. We will explore the tragedies that happen. We will sense the future that can be.

We will explore the “Cave of Tradition.” We shall follow the veins of gold and become lost in the twisting and turning of the course in this cave. We shall be entangled and be perplexed by paradoxes. We shall text our way and navigate paths to daylight.

We shall lie out a route in the “Cave of Intentions.” We will ponder ways to explore caves and methods to retrieve information. We will consider what is necessary to take and what may be left behind. We shall create a map by which we may travel.

¹ W.E. Davies, I.M. Morgan, and Geological Survey (U.S.), “Geology of Caves,” *U.S. Dept. of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey (Denver, CO)*, (Books and Open-File Reports Section, Washington, DC, Supt. of Docs), 1991.

We shall plot the “Cave of Practice.” We shall set our survey poles and level our transits so that we may discern the patterns of these chambers. We shall methodically record the slope of the corridors, the height, the width and the length of the rooms. We shall record the route we took.

Come with me to the “Cave of Results.” Here we get to rest and drink fine wine to ruminate about the impact of our journey together. We have the opportunity to sift results from the raw material of our experience. How did our life change for having traveled together?

Like panning for gold, we will let the waters wash us clean in the “Cave of Wisdom.” We will let the water wash away the minerals of lighter weight. We shall see the dense nuggets of wisdom shine in the light of our headlamps. We shall see experience, enlightenment for having been in dark places.

What of this adventure do we pass on to others for their growth? In the “Cave of Alchemy,” we shall search for that which may propagate. We shall look for those elements in the wall of the cave that may have transformative power. We shall look for those things that may bring life in other contexts of ministry like a seed raised in one field and planted in another.

So, please, grab your box of gear and be my companion on this high adventure in dark places.

CHAPTER 2
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF CONTEXT:
THE OPPORTUNITY NARRAPHOR

GRAPHIC 1. SPIRITLUNKER 1 - RAPPELLING¹



Descending into the context of ministry may very well be like rappelling into a cave. One stays alert to the expected and to the unexpected. Expecting darkness, the pull of gravity, dampness and coarse rock one keeps senses sharp for their peculiar configuration. The unique ledges, nubbin handholds and overhangs give the context its character and culture.

I am a Gutenberg², as I learned from Leonard Sweet in a conversation and found in a video online, in a TGiF³ world, three generations away from those who are

¹ Ashley Robinson, *SpiritLunker 1 - Rappelling*, Ink on paper, North Webster, Indiana, 2015.

most open to the Gospel. The context is grieving desperately for their worship leader. The opportunity is to assist the congregation to emerge from grief into new reality through the guidance of Millennials.⁴ I am fifty-six years old at the writing of this project. Persons may believe that a fifty-six year old may not understand or relate to the world-view of a twenty-something. Some may hold the assumption that a person of my age cannot or will not relate to a younger generation in a worship context through preaching. This project affords an opportunity to test this assumption by developing a method to engage twenty something worshippers as co-creators of the worship narraphor. This project may be of particular interest to clergy as the median age of clergy in the United States as of 2011 is 52.8,⁵ and 55⁶ for United Methodist Clergy. Here is my experience of the environment for the project.

² Leonard I. Sweet, *Youtube*, “Len Sweet: The Gutenberg World vs The Google World,” accessed November 12, 2014, <http://youtu.be/dRHlgx6RctY>.

³ Leonard I. Sweet, *Viral: How Social Networking Is Poised to Ignite Revival* (The Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 2012), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 4, Location 1169. “It is time for all of us to move into the TGIF world, and to move the TGIF world toward the gospel.”

⁴ Bob Farr, Doug Anderson, and Kay Kotan, (2013-05-01). *Get Their Name: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships* (Abingdon Press), Kindle Electronic Edition: Section 1, Location 87. “Among the Millennials (children born in the past ten to twenty years), fewer than 10 percent will be connected to God through church— and if Protestant, the vast majority will not be in a mainline Protestant church.”

⁵ *Bureau of Labor and Statistics*, “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey,” accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.bls.gov/cps/occupation_age.htm.

⁶ *Lewis Center for Church Leadership*, “Research: United Methodist Clergy Age Trends,” accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.churchleadership.com/research/um_clergy_age_trends10.htm.

The Ligonier United Methodist Church resides on fifteen acres of ground on the near west side of Ligonier, Indiana. Two facilities for worship and education, two soccer fields, a pavilion with sand volleyball pit and playground, and the senior pastor's parsonage rest on the contiguous acreage. The church carries a \$1.4 million mortgage on the improvements with monthly payments of \$14,000. The high water mark for average worship attendance came the year of ground breaking for the second facility. Current weekly worship average is 202.

There are two themes. Theme 1 is Transition. Theme 2 is Healing. "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand," – Jesus.⁷ Theme 1 is the transition to a two-facility church. The congregation has ancestors in both the Evangelical United Brethren Church and Methodist Church. In the denominational merger of 1968, the two churches in Ligonier voted to combine into one congregation and build a new facility on the west side of Ligonier, "out by the old oak tree along Townline Road." Until the congregation saved the money to build, they worshiped in the former Methodist Church; (Some remember it as the former EUB Church. The Lutherans currently own the church. Going to the old building, one can read, "Methodist Episcopal" in the corner stone.) All remember the years of joining together with stories of conflict and challenges from whose dishes to use to whose organist will play. The congregation moved into the new facility in 1973 and soon out grew the space.

⁷ *Crossway Bibles, "Mark 3:25" The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (with Cross-References)* (Good News Publisher, 2011), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter Mark 3, Location 156982.

I lived through this transition as a child growing up in a parsonage of a Methodist pastor. Through my pre-teen years, my father served Methodist churches in New Jersey and Indiana. In 1968, with the merger of the Methodists and EUB's, the bishop appointed my dad to a "former" EUB congregation with the new name, "Trinity United Methodist." The only thing Methodist about the church was the third word of its name. During my formative junior high school and high school years, we lived in Hartford City. Good EUB's with strong ties to Taylor College in Upland, Indiana influenced my faith. I received Methodism from my father and EUB from the professors at Taylor who attended our church.

In Ligonier, two expansions to the facility came in the next ten years. The first added a fellowship hall to the building and the next added a two-story educational unit. Money for the expansions came through bequests and through an annual holiday bazaar. The women of the church made the bazaar and accompanying chicken noodle dinner a tradition in the church. They drew hundreds (some say thousands) of people from several miles away. The women assigned each room a different theme. The women dedicated one day a week to work at the church for the entire year to create the craft items needed for the sale. The men of the church who worked in wood made items as well. Through the 1980's and the 1990's the church continued to operate with surplus finances and no debt, like a good German evangelical church "should."

The church had great vision for the area and passion to reach people for Jesus Christ. The vision led the church to rent a facility at the corner of US 6, US 33 and Indiana State Road 5. The town, Ligonier, is exactly half way between the Fort Wayne Metro area and South Bend/ Mishawaka/ Elkhart Metro area. Notre Dame University is

in South Bend. Each metro area is about an hour's drive. The highway building, though small, accommodated a worship area in the front of the building with a youth center in the back of the building. The church named the worship center The Salt Shaker, and the youth center The Garage. The small space and parking lot accommodated room for visitors. For several years, the highway worship and youth center thrived. The style of worship was casual with good coffee and snacks each week. Worship leaders encouraged people to drink their coffee and eat the snacks during the worship. Because of the success of The Salt Shaker and The Garage, the church made plans to build a facility that would accommodate the crowds and allow for growth.

Pastoral leaders changed. The pastor appointed by the bishop in 2002 came with a construction plan and fund raising already underway. The church voted to proceed with a building project. They passed the proposal for the project by 70% majority rules tally. The church owned fifteen acres, five of which the church developed for the first facility and for the pavilion, park and parsonage. The church planted crops on the other ten acres.

The church voted to receive the recommendation of the building committee to construct a \$3.2 million building. The building has a sports area in the center, wrap around balcony and stage area with high quality lighting and sound. The kitchen is professional grade and there is a parlor that has sound and video built in. The building is a wonderful tool for ministry with the idea of bringing The Salt Shaker and The Garage under the new roof. The church named this facility The Cross Walk.

Once the building was up, fallout from conflicts during the building and fund raising between the "old-timers" and "The Salt Shaker" materialized. Families drifted away from the church and let their financial commitments drop. With worship and youth

center at the Cross Walk, the church did not renew the lease on the building on the highway, now houses a both tobacco and pornography shop.

Most of the worshippers at the US 6/ US33/ SR 5 intersection did not follow the worship service to the new building. Reported reasons are loss of intimacy because of going from a small but full to overflowing worship space to a space that can seat 450 when all the chairs are set up, loss of coffee house feel, loss of snacks, loss of good coffee, music became quieter, and the facility was built without exposure to any highway or road. This placement of the facility reflects the EUB influence of placing church buildings in neighborhoods rather than the Methodist practice of setting buildings on major roads. Though the worship attendance in the new facility hit a high of 186, it has gradually declined to 100.

Meanwhile at the 1970's facility, which the congregation named The Mount, Sunday school happened in the educational unit with classes for all age levels and one worship service. It also housed an after school program for children. With the completion of the new facility, the church determined to abolish the Sunday school and move all educational classes to Wednesday. Three adult classes refused to disband. By 2009, Sunday school attendance only averaged 36 and only 2 adult classes were meeting. The church was moving to eliminate worship at the older facility altogether. The church released staff that had been added to accommodate growth and care of the new attendees because of lack of funds. Because the highway facility was abandoned, the major threshold into the church disappeared.

In 2009, the appointing bishop and district superintendent gave me a mandate when they appointed me to Ligonier. They charged me to stabilize the attendance, grow a

staff and pay off the mortgage. This seemed like an impossible task. Not being a part of the decisions regarding the building project freed me to be present and listen. Comments from people after four years are similar to, “you are a minister to both sides.” After four years, there is still a sense of “us” and “them.” The bills are all paid. The church refinanced the mortgage and a member of the church put up \$500,000 for a matching gift fund. The church is to match the gift over a two-year period. In order to help the congregation manage the debt, a team attended Dave Ramsey’s Momentum program. The purpose of Momentum is to support having 80% of the congregation take Financial Peace University. Over the course of the year, we had 160 people take Financial Peace University. The matching gift, the refinancing of the mortgage and a reconfiguration of the finance committee took place because of that program.

The shadow side of theme 1 reverberates in the echoes of chaos left by the previous pastor (think triangulation). One person said, “I told [the pastor] you are good at tearing down. Sometimes the church needs to be torn down; but you have to build up after you tear down. You continue to tear down.” It was also noted, “Some people react to any direct, frank comments as bullying, when in fact the comments are intended to make sure that all positions are understood. Too often people react to any comment that does not agree with their viewpoint as bullying. For healing to effectively take place, all in the congregation need to be able to express their thoughts in a respectful yet direct manner. And when doing so, they should not need to have concern that they are offending someone. The passive aggressive who are offended are a great deterrent to healing,” (this was in a comment that was written to me.) Another comment, “Of course, there are many elements and foibles to our stories; many details which are better left to

mental refuse collections. Our organization and many of our lives have been ransacked. The thought of persevering to do bigger and better things with our ministries seems ridiculous right now. The thought of "doing small things with great love" seems manageable and perfect right now. I believe we should do small things faithful and well, and not worry about success or failure."

"Just rub some dirt on it. You're ok,"—Peyton Manning Commercial.

Theme 2 emerged these past four years. The first healing ministry that I remember knowing anything about was Ernest Angley. I only knew enough about him to make fun of him with my teenage friends. "Say, baby." "Baby." "Say, baby." "Baby." "Say, Jesus." "Baby." (Or the Mork Parody.)⁸

In later years, I spent a little time actually watching and listening to Benny Hinn after a parishioner gave me his autobiography to read. He was the first one that I heard explain the blood atonement theory.

The healing ministry that was close to home for me was the "Glory Barn." I had a relative help start this particular anathema on Christianity. It thrived in the 1970's. The demise came when the preacher and elders were given prison sentences for child abuse after children began to die for the lack of medical attention. These are great shadow stories of what we do not mean when we say we have a healing ministry. Healing is what we need and that to which Jesus calls us.

⁸*Wikipedia*. "Mork and Mindy," accessed December 1, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mork_&_Mindy. "Mork & Mindy is an American science fiction sitcom broadcast from 1978 until 1982 on ABC. The series starred Robin Williams as Mork, an alien who comes to Earth from the planet Ork in a small, one-man egg-shaped spaceship. Pam Dawber co-starred as Mindy McConnell, his human friend and roommate. In 1997, the episode "Mork's Mixed Emotions" was ranked #94 on TV Guide's 100 Greatest Episodes of All Time list."

The theme of healing at Ligonier UMC manifested in the emergence of the Health Ministry Network. The ministry began because of the intersection of two interests. One, I helped to found a ministry that collects medical supplies and sends them to hurting people around the world. An occupational therapist in the Ligonier church took the idea and made it local. The other interest is that we have a family in that church with three children having special circumstances. The mom created a support group for parents like her. Between these two women and these two interests they birthed the Health Ministry Network.

The theme of healing also manifested in caring for a smaller congregation. A small church three miles from our location did not have a pastor for six months. Three potential ministry candidates from our congregation agreed to rotate preaching each Sunday. We met each Sunday afternoon to debrief and plan for the next week. One of those persons is now in seminary. One is in college to be a youth pastor and has been hired as the youth director at Ligonier. One is continuing as an active volunteer in the church.

A third way that the theme of healing manifested was in the prayer ministry of the church. The prayer ministry team connects with each other daily through emails and texts. Praises to God for blessings, joys, health concerns, safety issues and other things are communicated to the prayer team. A prayer partner prays through each worship service. During Advent, the prayer partner decorated a prayer tree with ornaments that had a verbalized prayer written upon paper and placed inside it. During summer, the prayer partner placed flowers in a vase to represent each verbalized prayer request. The

prayer ministry team has sponsored a prayer seminar and also created subgroups to pray for specific areas of the church.

The theme of healing has continued to manifest in the medical experience of the church. There have been two persons with terminal cancer diagnoses this past year. Each diagnosis came as a surprise and shock. One is in remission. One has died during the time of this writing. Both have given wonderful testimonies. The one has shared his story with numerous faith communities. The other was able to share with his family in ways that he had never been able to share.

The theme of healing manifested in missions both local and elsewhere. The congregation has sent mission teams of adults and youth. Each year there is a summer trip that has had 24 to 48 participants and in the early spring before planting, a group of adults with 12-30 participants will travel to a site to do disaster reconstruction. Twice the congregation has raised funds and replaced a roof for a local church member.

The Shadow Story: Shannon, our youth and worship director died on August 2, 2013, after having suffered a stroke on July 20. He was 38 with five children at home, and he and his family lived in the church's second parsonage. With Shannon's death, the themes of healing are acute. During the fall of 2013, I started worship by simply standing in front of the congregation and asking for their questions. One Sunday the question was, "Why did God take Shannon, who has a wonderful family, is so good, so talented and such a blessing to the church and community, and leave murderers?" Great question. Part of the reality is that God gives us free will. Shannon weighed 300 pounds and was five foot three inches on his tiptoes. He was an insulin dependent diabetic. Shannon struggled with his addiction to food. He inherited this problem from his mother. She has

been a successful gastric band surgical patient. Shannon attempted to have the surgery once. As the surgery was scheduled, the company he was working for fired him from his job and he lost insurance. He assumed that he lost his job because he scheduled surgery. He never considered the surgery again. Shannon often chose a pork burger, no bun, with bacon and deep-fried cheese and cornballs for lunch. This was not the meal of a champion. Had his choice of food been better would Shannon have lived longer? Probably, yes. Was God going to save Shannon from the consequences of food choices? No. We can only save ourselves from these kind of choices. Sometimes what we bring to the table does not make sense with who we are.

Our transformation comes as we press into the healing of God for our grief and as we press into the healing of God for our bodies before we come to the point of a stroke. God wills life. God wills abundant life. A healing context supports choices that are consistent with God's will for abundant life. Our challenge is to create a healing context. Within this context, the degree to which I am able to exemplify personal practices of healing is the degree to which I have the personal credibility to lead.

The journey of healing is a long path in my life. A woman in my Laity Advisory Committee from Hazel Crest United Methodist Church awakened my personal healing. I lost an eye working for an Amish carpenter at a local tourist attraction in Nappanee, Indiana. The accident had happened almost ten years before my time as a student assistant pastor at Hazel Crest. I had never thought of having someone "faith heal" me. I declined the woman's offer of this, as I realized that for me to "be healed" would discount how God had used my one-eyed-ness to reach people for God. The question brought me to the awareness that I was healed. The physical impairment mattered little.

My mother tells me I have grit. I love my gray hair and the many scars on my body and soul. I earned each one with my blood and through the blood of Jesus. I know the interview with a new doctor will be long when we get to the injury and surgery list. My right eye, right ear, right knee and right shoulder all are on the list. I think I will start leading with my left. As Paul says, "I count it all as loss compared to the riches in Jesus Christ." One day, I did wake up to the reality that I, too, would be 300 pounds and probably die of a stroke if I did not change my ways. This is not an allusion to Shannon; these are the actual words from my health provider's mouth.

The journey begins. Fifteen years ago or so, I participated in a Heart Math study through the Ph. D. work of a student working with Notre Dame and the Heart Math Institute. The study, based at Memorial Hospital in South Bend, Indiana, tested the claims of the Heart Math Institute in the context of spiritual leaders and pastoral care providers. I was one of the few not wearing a nun's habit. We first had to learn the techniques and then use them over a course of time. I still use them today. It is a process of centering through the heart rather than the brain, leaving the mind for the blood, as Len Sweet may say. Shortly after, I joined a yoga class for 70 and 80 year old people. We did such poses as, "getting up from the commode pose." This pose actually improved my downhill skiing. I stayed with this class for six years until my move to Ligonier. Having no Yoga studio near, I practice on my own. Adding running and bicycling to the Heart Math and Yoga completes my healing practice.

Speaking generally, if I fail in ministry today I will be at the same place tomorrow as I am today. I am at the beginning of my practice. Failing or succeeding is not the issue. For me, I start in the practice of Jesus' ministry today. When I am caught in the "having

a stake” mentality, I use what I know. I return to the practice of Heart Math and yoga, go for a run or ride and intone “Jesus.” Then, I am back at the beginning ready to start my practice. I find that I am not the agent of change. I, like all that I minister with and to, am polymer. The Holy Spirit is the phenol that causes cross-linked [pun intended] reaction in the polymer resulting in transformation. I hope my practice breaks my resistance to the Holy Spirit in self and community.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF TRADITION: THE ENTANGLEMENTS AND PARADOXES NARRAPHOR

Graphic 2. Spiritlunker 2 - "Walking"¹



Walking into the tradition's cave senses the past through the echoes from the hard packed walls. One walks to the edge of light into full darkness and sits, voices seem to whisper from the partitions. These voices whisper full experiences of the living.

*The walls of dejection, of ancient affliction, do not have an end or escape.
The darkness blinds my eyes with a sorrow. Crying blood for ages!*²

¹ Robinson, SpiritLunker – Walking, 2015.

² *Encyclopaedia Metallum: The Metal Archives*, "Phil," accessed December 1, 2013, <http://www.metal-archives.com/artists/Phil/64765>.

Black Metal artist, Felipe Diez III, (Ogrustorm) captures the essences of grief in his debut album, “Caverns of Grief.”³ When my church lost its worship leader/ youth director due to a stroke, the presenting pastoral issue became how to lead the congregation from loss to recovery. In my experience recovery is not the elimination of pain, but rather coming to a place of managing the pain. “In shock your actions are mechanical. You do what you have to do. In suffering your actions are forced by convention or by your own restlessness. But in recovery, your actions are by your own free choice.”⁴ Grief eventually leads to recovery.

The ‘new normal’ demands the ability to manage life regardless of suffering. “The loss is still felt, but the loss has become part of the griever’s more typical feelings and experiences.”⁵ The experience of grief with facets of shock, suffering, sadness, anger, guilt and anxiety, feels like “The walls of dejection, of ancient affliction, do not have an end or escape...” Louise from West Australia writes it this way...

The Pitt of Grief

*The abyss is dark and bottomless
although sometimes I think
if I sit long
and stare hard enough,
I might be able to make sense of it.
My questions are futile
and fall without echo.
It gives nothing.
Nietzsche wrote “if you gaze into the abyss,
the abyss gazes also into you”
I’m aware of the reflection.
The depth gazes back at me
trying to find the end.*

³ Youtube, “SorrowStorm - "Caverns of Grief" Full Album,” accessed December 1, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTUbjrzACdw>.

⁴ Bernadine Kreis and Alice Pattie, *Up From Grief: Patterns of Recovery* (The Seabury Press, 1969), 99.

⁵ Ibid.

*It has a way of opening space
within me, making the hole larger
but in turn making me bigger too.
I wonder what will come of it.⁶*

We go into caves in order to find recovery--in order to experience the management of pain, and for life-giving choices to be selected. The pit, the cave, the cavern-- may become for the griever a womb of new-birth.

Beyond the tourist experience of Rock City, Tennessee, I have had only one significant experience in a cave, as a Boy Scout in southern Indiana's Wyandotte Caves. In 2013, these caves were closed due to white nose disease among the inhabitant bats. My scout troop went spelunking through a cave, in and out of rooms, narrow passages and bat colonies. What I remember most is how the dark and quiet of a cave seem to magnify small things. Small noises echoed endlessly. Small movements sent gravel flying in all directions. Small light beams from our flashlights sent shadows soaring to the highest places.

This amplification of small things brought forth a sense of disorientation and confusion. My adrenal glands secreted epinephrine into the blood stream increasing the intensity of the experience. The amplification of the small to large, with increased intensity due to adrenaline, can describe the cave of grief as well. A hypersensitivity to light, to touch, to taste, to temperature-- often accompanies grief due to the griever's senses being overloaded with the pain of loss. Thinking spiritually, Mother Teresa's appeal rings twice: "small things done with great love." Small things in the dark/quiet of a cave ring twice. Small sound→great reverb; small movement→great impact; small

⁶ *The Sacred Cave: Slowing down to notice the present moment...*, "RIP – Our Beauty," accessed August 11, 2014, <http://thesacredcave.com/tag/grief/>.

light → great illumination. “Little is large if God is in it,” says Leonard Sweet. So, when exploring caves of grief, one looks for the small things that loom large.

Leonard Sweet gives a wonderful description of spiritual speleology in his book, *The Well-Played Life: Why Pleasing God Doesn't Have to Be Such Hard Work*.⁷ Len gives the adventurer strong advice before entering into a cave.

*[A spiritlunker] must be willing to play with God in deep and dark places, listen to the “still small voice” [Kings 19:11-18] that echoes at the mouth of caves, the place where mysteries are not solved but resolved into deeper mysteries, a place where we must release our grip on belief and surrender ourselves to faith, a place where we must “give up everything that does not lead to God,” [Titus 2:12] confining but defining places where we can be fashioned into God’s image and share in God’s own nature.*⁸

The object of helping a congregation through a collective grief process is to help bring them into a new reality of the deeper mystery involving the transformation of broken hearts into hearts evident with seams of gold, involving the transformation of beings into an image and nature of God. Though success repeats rewards of the greatest value to human life, the spiritlunker may enter with trepidation. The spiritlunker may enter with the desire for transformation, yet stand hesitantly before the open cave and fear the unknown. Listen to Leonardo da Vinci, as quoted in Timothy Ferris, *Coming of Age in the Milky Way*, 381.

Drawn by my eager wish, desirous of seeing the great confusion of the various strange forms created by ingenious nature, I wandered for some time among the shadowed cliffs, and came to the entrance of a great cavern. I remained before it for a while, stupefied, and ignorant of the existence of such a thing, with my back bent and my left hand resting on my knee, and shading my eyes with my right, with lids lowered and closed, and often bending this way and that to see whether I could discern anything

⁷ Leonard I. Sweet, *The Well-Played Life: Why Pleasing God Doesn't Have to Be Such Hard Work* (Tyndale Momentum, 2014), Kindle Electronic Edition.

⁸ Sweet, *Well-Played Life*, 75-76, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 4, Location 1117.

*within; but this was denied me by the great darkness inside. And after I stayed a while, suddenly there arose in me two things, fear and desire—fear because of the menacing dark cave, and desire to see whether there were any miraculous thing within.*⁹

It is in the tension of desire and fear that we begin the journey into biblical caves.

There are many caves, pits and caverns in the Bible. I have chosen to explore those in the sermon series that includes: The Cave of Joy, The Cave of Kindness, The Cave of Whispers, and The Cave of Wonders. The themes are: Jesus’ tears bring life; David’s connectedness culls revenge; Elijah listens for light; and Women defy fear together. Each of these themes shall be linked to one of the general rules for spelunking which are: Prepare with the right clothing; Take enough water to go in and return; Keep three points of contact with the ground; Carry three sources of light; and Travel with two or more people. Jesus’ tears bring life in the Cave of Joy, connecting John 14:4, with the tears as “A spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” In this cave, we see Jesus responding to our grief with the gift of life.

- Prepare, Dress for success. “The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit.”¹⁰

⁹ Leonardo da Vinci, Quoted by Timothy Ferris, *Coming of Age in the Milky Way* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 381. As quoted by Leonard I. Sweet, *The Well-Played Life: Why Pleasing God Doesn't Have to Be Such Hard Work* (Tyndale Momentum, 2014), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 4, Location 1068.

¹⁰ *Crossway Bibles*, Ephesians 6:14b-18, “...having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, a with all prayer and supplication.” Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter Ephesians 6, Location 188346.

- Stay grounded. Keep three points of contact. “Touch me and see.”¹¹
- Use three light sources. “I am the light of the world.”¹²
- Go with a group. “For where two or three gather together...”¹³

Additionally, the leading of a congregation through collective grief seems to resonate with C. Otto Scharmer’s, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges – The Social Technology of Presencing*.¹⁴ Dr. Chris Hammon introduced me to Scharmer’s writing. Ironically, Dr. Hammon died a few months after I met him, which infuses this project with another layer of grief. In Scharmer’s development of the social technology of presencing, he moves the reader to consider opening the mind, opening the heart and opening the will. One process in Theory U helps the reader understand listening levels, and how regenerative energy moves through a process of presencing. I think of ‘download’ in the context of a death--such as the rituals we do with each other that add comfort. Downloading are the routines and habits we share in this context such as the order of wake, funeral and committal or the comments “I’m so sorry,” “What can I do?” Factual information takes a little longer to receive. Family members share stories about

¹¹ *Crossway Bibles*, 1066, Luke 24:39, “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

¹² *Crossway Bibles*, 1078, John 8:12, “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

¹³ *Crossway Bibles*, 993, Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

¹⁴ C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges, The Social Technology of Presencing* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2009).

the person, “facts” of the person’s life such as favorite foods, trips traveled, advice given, etc. Often in the finding of facts and to the degree that those sharing are willing to be honest, new understanding takes place as to the experience each had of the deceased. On occasion the facts are disputed, but rarely do they create a large conflict, as friends and family do not want to be perceived as speaking ill of the dead. I find the degree to which people are willing to speak honestly of the deceased is the degree to which the third type of listening may be engaged.

Empathetic listening approaches being present without being generative. Verbal triggers I use to invite the sharing to move to the realm of empathy include: “Teach me how it is for you”; “What is bubbling up?”; and “Name a color your feeling.” Often, one or two in the family/ friend circle sabotages empathetic reflections by steering the circle to a preparation detail, or showing a photo on a cell phone that alters the moment. When that happens, I gently try to nudge the circle back to the emotions beneath the facts. Since generative moments seem to come at the end of the time of sharing, I purposefully remain with the circle for a time after the closing prayer. The prayer is critical, for it allows people to be in silence and be drawn to their new reality. In the moments after prayer, people often share what the future holds as the vision of it begins to emerge in their hearts. This is the most precious time for me. Though I have not spent time considering words to describe the above process, I have intuitively followed these steps as described in most funeral preparations. Also, in leading celebration of life and faith services, I have intuitively practiced this limited form of the Theory U.

A celebration of life and faith service moves from downloading why people are present in the room together, to sharing of facts regarding the beloved through personal

testimony, and witness to the deceased's character. The more honest the reflections shared, the more genuine the celebration. If the deceased had a curmudgeon aspect to their story, naming it (but not dwelling on it) draws the mourners closer toward an empathic moment. There is a need to touch on all aspects of the deceased's personality, because if I don't, how can the mourners trust me when I move from the factual to the empathetic? I work toward a shared moment of empathy in the words of eulogy, which often follows testimony and witness from the family and friends. As with the small closed circle of family and friends, I bring the celebration to a close through prayer. Here, my hope is that we may have a generative experience that transcends the past and brings the mourners into the present shared reality of loss and their newly emerging future.

The challenge of this series was to develop worship experiences that move the congregation from downloading to generative listening each Sunday morning, and to also move through this portion of Theory U collectively over four weeks. At the end of the series, the emerging future of the congregation may be realized. Unique situational aspects bring opportunities for creativity and variations to the process. When developing the series, leadership of my church's human resource committee gave me strict orders to not use the names of our deceased staff member during worship. This order came in January before the sermon series was to launch. As the sermon series began, the human resource committee hired a new praise team / worship leader for the contemporary service.

I framed the first challenge in my mind by likening it to the person in the inner family circle during the planning of a celebration service that diverts the process from

going deeper into the emphatic interchange. My experience of my congregation was that it was not ready to let go of naming Shannon (the congregation's deceased worship leader). Since Shannon had died some five months before, some who were new to the congregation had not known him. And yet some long-time members still openly shed tears on Sundays. Shannon's picture remains on display on a table in the lobby, with a votive candle burning in front of it. The HR committee's instruction to not name Shannon during the sermons seemed unreasonable and harsh, and I still struggle to understand it. For those in the congregation as a whole, naming the loved one lost was still necessary. As to the second emerging challenge-- to have a newly hired worship leader during the series-- gave an exciting emphasis on the emerging future. Shannon was a classically- trained baritone, Caucasian, male, short, three hundred-pound guitar player, who led through performance. Lois, the new worship leader, is a petite, ordained Assembly of God pastor, female, Hispanic, informally trained alto, charismatic singer / leader who worships God publically and invites others to follow. *This* challenge could be fun.

I thank God that we are not left in, "The walls of dejection, of ancient affliction, do not have an end or escape," as sung by Black Metal artist, Felipe Diez III.¹⁵ I thank God that we have Jesus who does not stay in the cave but moves us into a glorious future of light and love.

¹⁵ *Youtube*, "SorrowStorm - "Caverns of Grief" Full Album," accessed December 1, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTUbjrzACdw>.

LABS FOR SPIRITLUNKING THE CAVE OF TRADITION: THE ENTANGLEMENTS AND PARADOXES NARRAPHOR

1. Caves: here are three examples of caves, the biggest, the longest and a familiar cave for you to experience. I hope these inspire you to strap on a helmet and get muddy!
 - a. World's biggest cave discovered in Vietnam!! Hang Son Doong Cave¹⁶
Just wow!
 - b. World's longest cave Mammoth Cave, Kentucky.¹⁷ Mammoth Cave has an apt name. Mammoth Cave has yet to be explored in its entirety. More rooms and passages continue to be discovered.
 - c. Merango Cave, Indiana.¹⁸ The Wyandotte Caves in southern Indiana are closed to exploration and visitors due to the white nose disease in the bat population. However, to get a feel for the Hoosier caves, Merango Cave in a sister cave to Wyandotte and will give a sense of the experience.
2. Spelunking is the sport of cave exploration. As in other nature experiences, safety is paramount. Here are some technique guides to help you understand

¹⁶ *Youtube*, "World's biggest cave discovered in Vietnam!! Hang Son Doong Cave," accessed September 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWaKRjTbZdI>.

¹⁷ *Youtube*, "Geology of Mammoth Cave, Kentucky," accessed September 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFLDvzc5P2k>.

¹⁸ *Youtube*, "Merango Cave," accessed September 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMsTjhm1HyE>.

the sport. How would you apply these spelunking techniques to your spiritual life?

- a. Tight Places in Caves¹⁹
 - b. Caving & Safety: Climbing Techniques & Safe Caving²⁰
 - c. Caving & Safety: Carbide Lights & Water²¹
 - d. Caving Techniques: Finding Your Way Out of a Cave²²
3. Grief touches everyone. Making a way through the labyrinth of grief confounds because the experience is personal. These links may give you some insight into process that assists people in coping with grief.
- a. Into the Cave: When Men Grieve by Dr. Ronald G. Petrie.²³ Men and women experience loss differently. This book focuses on stories of grief and grief recovery from the cave in which men tend to hide. You may compare your experience with those of the men in the book to verify or to challenge the author's experience. Either way you will

¹⁹ *Youtube*, "Caving Techniques: Spelunking Through Tight Places," accessed September 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWbWOJMEZ8Y>.

²⁰ *Youtube*, "Caving & Safety: Climbing Techniques & Safe Caving," accessed September 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hvf3N03IOI>.

²¹ *Youtube*, "Caving & Safety: Carbide Lights & Water," accessed September 22, 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGTiCvSmrWw>.

²² *Youtube*, "Caving Techniques: Finding Your Way Out of a Cave," accessed September 22, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_cduDFmmIU.

²³ *One to Another*, "Into the Cave: When Men Grieve," accessed August 11, 2013, <http://www.onetoanother.org/books-dvds/into-the-cave/>.

grow in your understanding of the shadows in grief's cave. You may also like clicking around on this site for other resources and helps.

- b. Check out this innovative approach to helping grieving children:

LifePath Hospice's Circle of Love Center for Grieving Children has set up a cave that gives a safe place for children to experience their grief.

Thomas Kaplan, a Times Staff Writer, reports on the cave, Tuesday, July 1, 2008 9:34pm.²⁴

- c. Judy Tatelbaum considers how grief is a unique experience and challenges people to tolerate the uniqueness of each person in grief.

Check out her article on, "How do you grieve?" Judy Tatelbaum, MSW,²⁵ is a psychotherapist, public speaker, and author of "The Courage to Grieve", and "You Don't Have to Suffer", as well as videos "The Courage to Grieve" and "The Courage to Grow." She trains people in dealing with catastrophic illness, grief, death, and dying.

- d. Excellent resources regarding death and dying may be found at Hospice Foundation.

²⁴ Thomas Kaplan, *Tampa Bay Times*, "Grief Cave to Help Children Coping with a Loss," accessed August 9, 2013, <http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/grief-cave-to-help-children-coping-with-a-loss/655292>.

²⁵ Judy Tatelbaum, *Hospice Foundation*, "How Do You Grieve," accessed August 13, 2013, <http://hospicefoundation.org/End-of-Life-Support-and-Resources/Grief-Support/Journey-s-Newsletter/Journeys-Featured-Article>.

4. I am not a fan of black metal fusion. Sometimes, it helps to not like it, because the raw energy of the music and lyrics hit what is felt. Like the prayer from Psalm 137:9, “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!”²⁶ The music of Felipe Diez III, (Ogrustorm) of SorrowStorm shocks the sensibilities as it identifies the darkness of the Caverns of Grief.²⁷ What music identifies your dark cavern?

5. Dr. C. Otto Scharmer is a Senior Lecturer at MIT and the founding chair of the Presencing Institute. He focuses on building people’s collective capacity to achieve profound innovation and change. He is the author of “Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges.” This video introduces you to his concepts.²⁸ Take a look at the video. Are you curious for more? Go to <http://www.presencing.com>.

MATERIAL FOR SPIRITLUNKING THE CAVE OF TRADITION: THE ENTANGLEMENTS AND PARADOXES NARRAPHOR

1. Shannon Kathary is the friend, colleague, father, husband, leader, musician, and Dallas Cowboys fan, missionary who died of a stroke August 2013. Get to know him a little by visiting his Facebook page.²⁹

²⁶ Crossway Bibles, 626.

²⁷ Encyclopaedia Metallum.

²⁸ *Youtube*, “Otto Scharmer Hi Rez DV,” accessed September 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8HKxvKVUsU>.

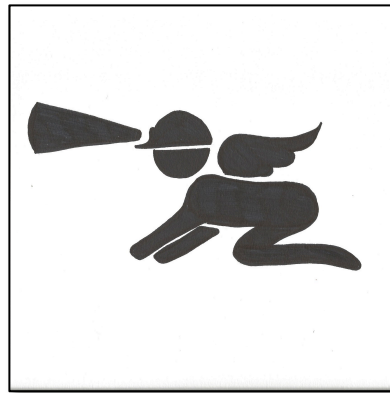
²⁹ *Facebook*, “Shannon Kathary,” accessed August 23, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/shannon.kathary>.

2. Lois Tamayo is the spark plug that now holds the position of Director for Worship Arts at the Ligonier United Methodist Church. Get to know her through her Facebook and consider the question, I wonder what God is bringing into the future of this church?³⁰
3. Dr. Chris Hammon introduced me to Dr. C. Otto Schramer's writings and prayed with me for Shannon as we learned of Shannon's stroke. Cancer destroyed Chris' body but never his spirit.

³⁰ *Facebook*, "Lois Tamayo," accessed December 1, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/lois.m.tamayo?fref=ts>.

CHAPTER 4
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF INTENTION:
THE BLUEPRINT NARRAPHOR

Graphic 3. SpiritLunker 3 - Crawling¹



Boasting about the route one takes in a cave may lead to being squeezed in a chimney unable to move up or down. Judiciously planning a route based upon the experience of previous explorations enhances success. My purpose is to gather a design team and feedback loop for the creation of a worship experience that incorporates a narraphor embracing the world-view/ culture of the twenty-somethings in the greater Ligonier area to assist the congregation to emerge from the cave of grief into a present reality.

¹ Robinson, SpiritLunker 3 – Crawling, 2015.

ENGAGING GRIEF

In the Entanglements chapter, I linked grief and culture and therapies for grief. Here I touch on grief again to underscore the universality of grief and key helps for those who grieve. Grief applies to all. You have heard it said that ignorance is bliss; but now I say to you that life teaches grief even to the ignorant. Speaking of life touching the ignorant with grief, pastors also grieve. Alydia Smith of Toronto observes in her work with ministers in the United Church of Canada, “What I am noticing from talking to ministers is that they have not had the opportunity to grieve things that they needed to leave behind to go into ministry. For instance one person mentioned that they grieve hanging out with friends on Saturday Night. So, I was wondering about a ritual of grief - I currently do one with water and a sponge - wringing out the tears, offering it to God. But I am looking for others.”² Len Sweet steps up the universality by including God in those who grieve, “In Eastern cultures, they view the "flood" as "God's tears" . . . tears of hurt and brokenness from our rebellion and refusal to repent and be in a relationship with our Creator.”³ All grieve. Even Jesus.

“When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of man, but in his death on the cross also enters into the situation of man's godforsakenness. In Jesus he does not die the natural death of a finite being, but the violent death of the criminal on the cross, the death of complete abandonment by God. The suffering in the passion of Jesus is abandonment, rejection by God, his Father. God does not become a religion, so that man participates in him by corresponding religious thoughts and feelings. God does not become a law, so that man participates in him through obedience to a law. God does not become an ideal, so that man achieves community with him through constant striving. He humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and the godforsaken can experience communion with him.”

² Cohort discussion, April 12, 2014.

³ Ibid.

— Jürgen Moltmann⁴

“God weeps with us so that we may one day laugh with him,” Jürgen Moltmann.⁵

If all grieve, including God, then it is for us to start with God to heal. Jürgen Moltmann develops this theme. “Not only a consolation in suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise against suffering.”⁶ Moltmann continues to build his case for hope and even seems to foreshadow Scharmer’s presencing model as looks to an emerging future, “For our knowledge and comprehension of reality, and our reflections on it, that means at least this: that in the medium of hope our theological concepts become not judgments which nail reality down to what it is, but anticipations which show reality its prospects and its future possibilities.”⁷ Melissa Kelley⁸ argues for a practical step from theology to living in her work on grief and simply titled, *Grief*. She works a theology of grief predicated on the physic-social development of humans. Her result speaks plain to ear, “With a secure attachment to God, we may have a fundamental sense of trust, security, and safety, even in the midst of loss.” Bill Gaventa in his article for a Hospice Foundation publication reminds us of the simple attachments in addition to God that require attention during grief. “First, they [meaning those who are grieving] have to find appropriate and

⁴ Goodreads, “Jürgen Moltmann,” accessed September 21, 2014, http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/52217.J_rgen_Moltmann. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. John Bowden and R.A. Wilson (Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 1972).

⁵ Goodreads.

⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸ Melissa M. Kelly, *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 114.

effective professional services, or ‘formal’ support. Second, there is the task of maintaining or strengthening the ‘informal’ support they receive from friends, extended family members, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, and members of the community organizations of which they are a part.”⁹ Greg Garrett adds his voice to how all of this gets done with an insight that makes Len Sweet say “Amen, brother.” “Everything changes, and eventually, everything that is keyed to this physical world. It is how we deal with those losses that ultimately matters, and that is why without a resilient story that incorporates continuing change, we ourselves are lost.”¹⁰ What better story, what better narraphor do we have than that of God in Jesus. “It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”¹¹ Or, as another great preacher, Gregg Thomas, stated, “Jesus has freed us for progress not perfection.”¹²

Grief is universal. My role is to find ways that include but are not exclusive to this project to support those in grief being attached to God and a community of faith.

FROM HERMENEUTICS TO SEMIOTICS

Len Sweet makes the point to Alydia Smith, “You illustrate points; you animate experiences and Narraphors. Think animation, not illustration. Animations are different

⁹ Kenneth J. Doka, and Joyce D. Davidson, *Caregiving and Loss: Family Needs, Professional Responses* (Washington, D. C.: Hospice Foundation of America, 2001), 57.

¹⁰ Greg Garrett, *Stories from the Edge: A Theology of Grief* (Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 116.

¹¹ *Crossway Bibles*, Lamentations 3:22-23, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter Lamentations 3, Location 125966.

¹² Cohort discussion, April 23, 2014.

from object lessons, where there were "points" to the objects. Now the object IS [sic] the point."¹³ Sweet animates the conversion from hermeneutics to semiotics. In my days at Garrett Evangelical Theologically Seminary professors received their salaries to teach me how to decode the biblical text into contemporary meaning using the historical critical method. Though some divergent meanings to the codes in scripture existed in publication, at least the consensus summary for the New Testament was the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* by Gerhard Kittel (Editor), Gerhard Friedrich (Editor).¹⁴ Here is the word. This is what it means. This is what it means in this context. The good student then explored his or her contemporary context for a similar situation in which to apply the meaning. Bringing the biblical decoded message and the contemporary historical context together created the word presented during Sunday morning worship as the sermon. In semiotics, the Kittel Secret Decoder Ring becomes one tool to approach. "For in semiotics we don't simply decipher a coded meaning and leave it at that. Instead, we are asked continually to reinterpret, reformat, rework, rethink, and reinvigorate the meanings that we find around us. And this is what makes it such a rewarding subject to investigate."¹⁵ So as John Wesley required his preachers to master the dominant media forms of the day, today the preacher may master superstring physics, social media, talk

¹³ Cohort discussion, April 12, 2013.

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vols.10 (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964).

¹⁵ Sean Hall, *This Means This This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2007), 173.

radio, binge viewing of movies and TV.¹⁶ I now can justify my twenty-four hour viewing of the “Big Bang Theory” in my bathrobe while tweeting. But isn’t this treason?

Well, yes.

“Ironically, the word tradition is etymologically related to the word treason. Coming from the Latin traditio, the word contains connotations of betrayal, as in the related words traitor and traduce. Why would this be? Isn't tradition exactly what we hold on to rather than betray? Significantly, traditio means "the `handing over,'" as when one generation hands over ancient truths to another. However, when one generation "hands over" a tradition to another, the earlier group no longer has control of it, allowing for the possibility of change and hence betrayal of ancient interpretations. Indeed, "betrayal" is how papal powers interpreted the (re)signing of Wyclif, Tyndale and Luther, all of whom they regarded as "traitors" to the faith.¹⁷

The “Big Bang Theory” TV show is so much fun because it (re)signs orthodox life styles and story lines with fresh images and stories. “Everyone responds to story and image... These are far more powerful than words... our responses (again advertising knows this) are emotional much more than intellectual.”¹⁸ Zorra Epicurator, “Len, the churches ARE [sic] the curators of this authentic, Christ-motivated rationality, and while some search for it in, ehem, coffee shops, etc., we have the market as church leaders, to

¹⁶ Cohort discussion, October 2, 2013.

¹⁷ Crystal L. Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth: A Christian Introduction to the Semiotics of Communication* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 11, Location 3257.

¹⁸ Cohort discussion, May 20, 2013.

beckon the POMO skeptics of authority with that genuine love, "as I have loved you".¹⁹ Bring us home Crystal, "Christian traditioning" is a "constructive activity," expressing ancient truths in new ways, making them relevant to and for contemporary culture."²⁰ Even Paul did this. Think with me about Paul's instructions for the Lord's Supper in Corinthians, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered (Paredoka) to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed (Paredideto) took bread."²¹ Paul plays with the meaning behind the words. The meaning for the meal that Paul is handing over to the Corinthians has meaning as Jesus was handed over after the meal to his enemies.²² "Jesus wanted people not only to understand on a literal rational level -- nor legalistic (Pharisaic) level -- but to embrace the scriptures in an experiential, personal, metaphorical level that would lead to an intimate discipleship relationship and a personal relationship with God and a communal relationship with others."²³ How in the world do we start such an epic endeavor? Downing says, "Start with the simple signs of everyday communication."²⁴ Hence, I am starting with a hole in the ground, a cave.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Downing, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 11, Location 3263.

²¹ *Crossway Bibles*, 1 Corinthians 11:23, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 1 Corinthians 11, Location 183303.

²² Downing, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 11, Location 3261.

²³ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, May 20, 2013.

²⁴ Downing, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 11, Location 3280.

ATTACHING TO MILLENNIALS

Those pesky millennials, what are they thinking. In the old days, one went to church, sat and listened. One knew what God would do in worship because if it was written in the bulletin. If not in the bulletin, it did not happen. Today, “if you have no idea what Pastor is going to do next”, it is like catnip for millennials.²⁵ “Your church should be anything but normal, ritual, ordinary. Where the Spirit is, "Anything can happen and probably will. That's how your church should be for people. A place where anything can happen...and probably will. Jesus was not known for his clarity, but for connecting people to the Truth of God through experience and image/metaphor.”²⁶

We have a challenge and a process. Len Sweet articulated the challenge during a day in the winter of 2013, “We do not want to change our teaching methods to fit the way a child learns so we drug the kids, anesthetize them... Are we doing the same things as preachers to fit into a paradigm that no longer works because we are too lazy to change our ways?” Rob Duncan laid down the suggestion of a process, “Not a model, but a notion of church. Build notions of preaching,” on the first day we had together. Here are five notions, which shall point to a paradigm shift for a church to reach iCulture using technology and social media.

NOTION 1-EFRS, “KEEP AN EYE ON JESUS.”

The social media metaphor for notion 1 is Embedded Face Recognition Systems. On smart phones and social media websites, EFRS is apparent by the yellow box that closes in on the face of a person in your photos. The software prompts you to label a

²⁵ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, April 12, 2013.

²⁶ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, May 20, 2013.

name to the face and automatically identifies the face in all photos as that initially labeled face. For the shaman/ prophet of the faith today, we need to have EFRS in our minds and hearts for the presence of Jesus. Wherever and whenever we encounter Jesus our EFRS needs to kick in and bring to our consciousness Jesus' presence in the moment. Once recognized, keep an eye on him. An ostrich has two eyes that do not track together. Each eye is able to move independently of the other so that it can keep one eye on the egg while it looks for food with the other. Lesson: Keep one eye on the egg. Keep one eye on Jesus.²⁷ The eye detects four actions, which reveal the presence of Jesus: "Takes, Breaks, Blesses and Gives."²⁸ "By these four verbs of Jesus we recognize him."²⁹

To install the EFRS is to have a blood transfusion. Jesus is the source of blood for life; and, by having Jesus' blood in our veins we become the source of blood for the anemic. Jesus is the source we share and Jesus is the source we become for others. "To come into our own as a preacher, we must first let Jesus come into our own hearts. When we speak with an authentic voice, we speak with the voice of Jesus. And there is nothing more passionate than Jesus' voice."³⁰ You see, "Every religious tradition teaches proposition or practice, except for Christianity who gives a person. Moses, "Follow my commandments." Mohammad, blessed is he, "follow the five pillars." Jesus, "Follow

²⁷ Robert Duncan, Story told by Leonard Sweet, Cohort discussion, January 2013

²⁸ See Luke 24:13ff, Walk to Emmaus.

²⁹ Leonard Sweet, Class Discussion.

³⁰ Leonard I. Sweet, "Giving Blood: The Discipline and Craft of Preaching" (Manuscript of book that was published in 2014, 2013), 245. Published work: *Giving Blood: The Art and Craft of Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014).

me.” “Jesus is the singularity of Christianity.”³¹ Patrick Quinn, cohort member, pastor, dad, and beach bum, speaks of the ABO^Ω Type in the shaman when he reflected in class, “It cannot come through me until it happens to me.” Bishop Hilliard also intoned, “Kneel before God, before you stand before people.”

What is the blood of Jesus like? Bishop Hilliard reflected upon the adequacy of blood type the shaman/prophet gives the tribe, “Always give the people all of God, but do not give them all of you. You will never be enough. Love them, liberate them, and lift them.” As Sweet articulates, the Type ABO^Ω—Transductive preaching is universal donor / receiver. A Transductive preacher can preach effectively to any tribe; a Transductive listener can receive from any preacher. This blood has the element of recursion. “If you love me you will keep my commandments. What is his commandment? Love him. If you are doing it, you are doing it.”³²

What does it mean to “do it?” It means tugging on the robe of Jesus on behalf of others through intercessory prayer. It means preaching like Jesus. “Preach like Jesus, means to interact.”³³ It means letting God use our weakness. “Work naturally; work through strength. Work supernaturally; work through your weakness.”³⁴ It means giving all to God. “What is in the image of Caesar give to Caesar; what is made in the image of

³¹ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

³² Ibid., 113.

³³ Ralph L. Lewis with Gregg Lewis, *Learning to Preach Like Jesus* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 27. Leonard I. Sweet, “Giving Blood: The Discipline and Craft of Preaching” (Manuscript of book that was published in 2014, 2013), 123. Published work: *Giving Blood: The Art and Craft of Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014).

³⁴ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

God give to God.”³⁵ It means having the spirit of Jesus. “Jesus’ spirit is humble confidence.”³⁶ It means making a way. “No Way? Yahweh.”³⁷

At our church, we attempt to keep one eye on Jesus during worship by having a prayer team member pray throughout the worship time. During the official prayer time, this person steps up to a table with candles and lights a candle for each spoken prayer request and one for unspoken prayers. The pastor invites other persons to come to the table of candles and pray specifically for the requests during the pastoral prayer. At the conclusion of the official prayer time, the candles remain lit for duration of the worship service. This is a weekly practice.

NOTION 2-TWITTER, “BE PRESENT BEFORE DURING & AFTER, WITH THE ONE WHO IS BEFORE DURING & AFTER.”

Twitter is the metaphor for Notion 2. Twitter is the chirping of now. One experiences a breeze in the present. “God’s question to Hagar is, “Where have you come from and where are you going?”³⁸ The question is a question into which humanity lives. For us, memories bind our past and yearnings bind our future. To live in either is to miss the only thing we truly have - the present. God is eternally present in each moment with us. For terra bound beings, we only have the present. The question of God to Hagar awakens her out of her grieving for her past, desperation over her future, and brings her

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Robert Duncan, Cohort discussion, January 2013.

into the present with God. So that she can “Be present before during and after, with the one who is before during and after.”³⁹

Twitter is a medium of the present. Who can anticipate the news of the feed as it scrolls down the page? Who goes back to find past posts because the now of the feed is so enticing? Yet, in the context of shaman/prophet tools, being present with people before the preaching moment, being present after the preaching moment, and even being present during the preaching moment may be accomplished through Twitter - the ever present feed of the now. “Begin the conversation before, keep the conversation going during, and leave open the conversation after.”...“Being present with Christ, before, during and after worship is a metaphor for being before life, during life and after life.”⁴⁰

The Holy Spirit is the exogenous spiritual reality that we swim with in our environment. When we uptake and incorporate God into our being we transform. God demonstrated the reality of transformation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Spirit becomes incarnate. The real becomes the really real presence in this moment of time. Scripture becomes revelation. What is dry parchment becomes the living reality with the moistness of Spirit in the mind of the incarnate. The preacher becomes a prophet of God, a mouthpiece of God, someone who knows the times, and someone who knows God, someone who can lay the “really real” next to the real and see the consequence therein.

I experimented with inviting the congregation to twitter during a sermon. I had them send a text naming or showing who they love. The sermon, “A Dove Blessing,” focused on Luke 3:21, “One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son, and I am fully pleased with you."⁴¹ Here is the opening line that doubled as the concept for the sermon, "What words transform the life of every child? "You are my child. I love you. You give me joy. I shall never forsake you." Your son, your daughter, at every age needs to hear this from you, their parent. If they are here with you this morning, tell it to them right now." During the sermon, names and pictures of loved ones scrolled down the screens. Comments following the sermon included statements that people enjoyed the twitter feed; however, it interrupted their concentration on the sermon, (common over age forty response.) Younger people loved it. I will use this technique again.

NOTION 3—GOOGLE, START WITH THE SECULAR, FIND THE SACRED

Notion 3's social media metaphor is Google. As EFRS identify the face, Google Latitude identifies the place. Google Latitude shows me where my family and friends are located in real time. The shaman/prophet develops skills to identify the location of people within the context of their world. It is not that people are not spiritual or have spiritual experiences; it is that they have not awakened to the reality of the presence of the sacred on their maps. In other words, "When we start with culture, the message has more meaning for those not connected to Christian faith."⁴² It is not that "They do not have to find Christ, {it is that they} just need to learn to recognize Christ."... "Social Media helps

⁴¹ *Crossway Bibles*, Luke 3:22, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter Luke 3, Location 161300.

⁴² Robert Duncan, Cohort discussion, January 2013.

people connect to what God is already doing in your midst.”⁴³ Google connects people to culture.

Learning the language of culture allows shaman/prophet to correlate the secular and sacred to uncover the sacred for the secular. “Commercials know how to speak the language of the culture.”⁴⁴ “Commercials are windows into the soul of culture.”⁴⁵ “Culture lives and dies by soundtrack.”⁴⁶ We fail often because “The mission statements we have are not in the language of our culture.”⁴⁷ Here is an example of a secular ritual that has wonderful potential for sacred meaning: “Getting screeched in” or Newfoundland Communion. Screech, which was once any cheap booze of 40 proof or more and is now the name of a Newfie rum, is a ritual found only in Newfoundland. It is very popular among tourists to Newfoundland, because people in Newfoundland have a general distrust of people who are not local. To become local and thereby to receive the welcome of community, a stranger gets screeched in. The person wears rubber boots, a slicker, and a dory hat while he or she eats a little food, drinks some rum, recites a few words of Olde English, and kisses a cod fish on the lips. The result, then, is that the person becomes an honorary Newfie.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

⁴⁵ Robert Duncan, Cohort discussion, January 2013.

⁴⁶ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Paul Hutchinson, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

Using a Sweet bite, I invited an eighth grader to Google pictures during one of my sermons. His father wanted to make sure that I prepared his son for the job. I met with the son and the dad for a few minutes on the Saturday preceding the experience. I shared the concept of the putting pictures up on the screens that reflected metaphors in the sermon. Nicholas (the 8th grader) asked to have a copy of the sermon notes to look over before Sunday morning. He said that he would try to find some pictures to have as the sermon began. I said that was fine. On the Sunday morning, I asked him if he was ready, he said yes but had not read the notes or looked anything up. I told him I thought that it was better to have it come from him fresh. I introduced Nicholas as my preaching partner and explained the experiment. The sermon, “A New Normal,” focused on the spiritual realities taught by Jesus through the bad management of money using the parable of the unmerciful slave, Matthew 18:23-35. Response was good. I asked Nicholas if he would repeat and he affirmed that he would.

NOTION 4—KINTSUKUROI, STORIES ARE WHERE THE GOLD IS

Notion 4’s metaphor is repaired Japanese pottery. When porcelain is broken, artisans fill the break with gold. The Japanese word is kintsukuroi, meaning trauma transformed.⁴⁹ God uses weakness. God uses our brokenness to bring healing to others. God uses our stories of trauma to heal others. “Sell who you are. Not a product. Who you are determines whether you make the connection.”⁵⁰ Share your stories. I do not have to come up with all the illustrations. Content is present in the room. Post-modern

⁴⁹ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

preaching brings the stories out of the relationships in the room.⁵¹ “New content is the relationships that you make. Content is experience. What you are paying for is a story. Information is free. Experience, connections, relationships, story is what you pay for.”⁵² Patrick adds, “Develop your voice through your story.”⁵³ For the shaman/prophet, each story has the same ending. “No matter where the story starts, it ends at the cross.”⁵⁴

Gail Martin gives guidance if one does not know how to begin writing the story. She comes from a business perspective and recommends starting with the owner’s story, then the product’s story, the business’s story, the customer’s story, and the story of your mission.⁵⁵ In my context, the owner may be God, Jesus or the people of Ligonier called Methodists. The product may be grace, salvation, or the ministry of Methodists in Ligonier. The business story may be the Biblical witness or the history of ministry progression in Ligonier. The customer may include all of creation or focus on those attending, or may even include those non-attendees in the ministry area. Telling the story of our mission is the easiest. Our mission statement is, “Ligonier United Methodist Church Serves Noble County, Northeast Indiana and the World. Our Purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our Vision is to connect people to God and each other creating transformed persons, families, communities and churches. Our Journey is to Connect, Serve and Lead.” Len has challenged us to translate

⁵¹ Robert Duncan, Cohort discussion, January 2013.

⁵² Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

⁵³ Patrick Quinn, Cohort discussion, December 2012.

⁵⁴ Don Medley, Cohort discussion, December 2012.

⁵⁵Gail Z Martin, *30 Days to Social Media Success* (Pompton Plains, New Jersey: Career Press, 2010), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 6, Location 325.

mission statements into narraphors. Therefore, future work is to develop a narraphor through kintsukuroi, which is finding trauma-transformed metaphors that lay behind the words of mission and linking them together for a coherent story. Creating this narraphor will be the basis for social media strategy for the church.

NOTION 5—FACEBOOK, BE A LOCALVORE

Notion 5's metaphor is Facebook. In my zip code, this is the number one social media utilized. It is intergenerational. Those who do not use Facebook use Twitter. Facebook seems in my context to be the best single source for local stories. We go to Facebook to find information regarding births, deaths, illnesses, and engagements. Being a localvore is vital. Shane Claiborne tells the story of the 39 people - the more particular you become the more universal is your appeal. "The more I have read the Bible and studied the life of Jesus, the more I have become convinced that Christianity spreads best not through force but through fascination," Shane Claiborne says. "Jesus loved a zip code enough to cry over it. Do you know your zip code enough to cry over it?...New model is the artisan church. Particularize for global appeal."...For example, Swiss create some of the best of the world cheese. Appenzeller cheese is a hard cow's-milk cheese produced in the Appenzell region of northeast Switzerland.⁵⁶ We know it as Swiss cheese, though our Swiss cheese does not resemble the real deal. "Fly your freak flag high."⁵⁷

Facebook is the only social media in which we, as a community, function naturally. We have a mom in the church that loves to get on Facebook to follow friends

⁵⁶ Leonard I. Sweet, Cohort discussion, March 2013.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

and friends of her kids. She administers the church's Facebook page. She or I will post items about events in the church and sermon topics and questions. We get some response to the questions regarding the sermons. We have not attempted to do much with replying to the services to keep the conversation going. We use Facebook for prayer and pastoral care information. We are learning slowly.

Community happens through social media. Social media creates community. Social media enhances community. I am looking at streaming the worship services. We are set up with a streaming expert-to-be, Jose, who is in the sixth grade. All we need is a computer and camera, and then we go live. Meredith Gould recommends we do a communication audit of the church, looking at all the ways to communicate Jesus, then determine which media will create the most advantage for our situation. I will be talking more with Meredith. Meredith runs a twitter blog, #chsocm, on Tuesday evenings at 9:00 PM EST. One Tuesday the topic was supporting preaching with social media. One final note - learning comes in all forms. I learned something about copyright infringement for the video I used for the class in January 2013. I was given a warning by YouTube and had to attend copyright school. Live and learn.

Speaking of going to school, the key element to connecting with millennials just may be the preacher. "Cross Walk," this is the name of the Ligonier United Methodist contemporary building project, which sits on the north portion of a fifteen-acre plot. The church chose the name as a reference to the way of Jesus. Soccer fields lay to the west and south of the building, a parking lot to the east. Coming from the southeast corner of the building is a concrete path. Midway, stands a cross, surrounded by memorial trees with its base in a circle of memorial bricks. At night the cross walk cross crossbar lights

up red with the words, “He loved you this much!” At the southeast end of the path are the parking lot and building for the older, smaller structure, the Mount.

Crosswalk Googles as the name for many websites having a Christian faith bias, such as youth centers and Bible studies. A crosswalk also comes up as a pedestrian walkway across one or more lanes of traffic. For the purposes of this paper, crosswalk is a table mapping between metadata formats like mapping address information from Microsoft Outlook Notebook to Microsoft Access. You may also think of the charts in the index of Ronald J. Allen’s book, *Thinking Theologically*, as crosswalks. I will use a crosswalk, a map between metadata formats of Spirit, scripture, shaman, and tribe to categorize insights from the readings, lectures and discussions of “DMIN 907 Creative Homiletics: Preaching for Kardia, Kairos, Kainos.” The metadata formats (Spirit, scripture, shaman, and tribe) make up the x—axis. The elements of the y—axis are: αίματος, καρδιανός, καιρος, καινός and μετασχηματισμός.⁵⁸ Know that crosswalk is in the context of the preacher’s being. It is in the being of the preacher that all of these entities and elements interact to create the preaching moment shared in community.

Here is the crosswalk.

⁵⁸ Johannes Behm, “αίμα”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), 172-176; Johannes Behm, “καρδιά”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3 (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), 605-613; Gerhard Dellling, “καιρος”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3, (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), 455-464; Johannes Behm, “καινός”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 3, (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), 447-454; Johannes Schneider, “μετασχηματίζω”, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel, Edited and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 7 (Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), 957-958.

TABLE 1. THE BEING OF THE PREACHER

Entities	<u>SPIRIT</u>	<u>SCRIPTURE</u>	<u>SHAMAN</u>	<u>TRIBE</u>
Elements				
<u>ΑΙΜΑΤΟΣ</u>	Spirit Flesh	Story of God's Bleeding	Blood Type offered	Blood Type needed
<u>ΚΑΡΔΙΑΝΟΣ</u>	Consent	Attentive	Sensitivity	Desire
<u>ΚΑΙΡΟΣ</u>	Presences	Need	Mindfulness	Affirmation
<u>ΚΑΙΝΟΣ</u>	Filter	Celebration	Voice	Questions
<u>ΜΕΤΑΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ</u>	Incarnation	Revelation	Prophet	Body

ΑΙΜΑΤΟΣ

Len Sweet has been talking about the Blood of Jesus for decades. In his forthcoming manuscript, *Giving Blood*, he puts a lifetime of blood on to the page as he lays out his practice and discipline of preaching. The book asks the preacher to reflect upon sacrifice, the blood. Where does it bleed? Where is the Sacrifice? Where does the Spirit have skin? A man of forty-five years of age climbs the steps to the arena of a high school girls basketball game and sits down as his breath becomes uncatchable. His life flutters out as his eyes lose focus. Sitting in the living room of his home with his widow of three days, the Spirit becomes flesh as my wife holds her hand, puts her arms around her and cries the cry of grief.

Scripture is the story of God bleeding for us. Scripture becomes revelation when we access the scripture as a personal testimony of our own journey with God. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ incarnates the unseen to the “seen”. An ornery cantankerous cuss of a man is admitted into the hospital because of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). The only regard he has for God is to blame God or fear God. Then his health radically alters. He moves in and out of conscious sedation as he can no longer breathe on this own. Every chance he gets to rail against the nurses for the restraints on this arms, he takes. Weeks of prayer pass. Health begins to return.

For the love of God of others and prayers that brought him a second chance, he gives his life to Christ. Scripture becomes revelation. The suffering of Jesus becomes his own.

Bishop Hilliard reflected upon the adequacy of blood type the shaman gives the tribe, "Always give the people all of God, but do not give them all of you. You will never be enough. Love them, liberate them, and lift them." Sweet helps the preacher think about the method of the revelation through the metaphor of blood type: Type A—Deductive Preaching, Type B—Inductive Preaching, Type AB—Deductive - Inductive Preaching, Type O—Abductive Preaching, and Type ABO^Ω—Transductive Preaching (Trans-incarnational Preaching). I am mainly an AB blood type shaman creating a line of argument and drawing a conclusion or building to a narrative moment with release and conclusion. I have to think about how to apply the Abductive type of preaching. Abduction is moving away from the center, drawing the meaning out of the center. Robert Stewart reminds Len Sweet that Abduction has a logical sequence of rule, result, and case.⁵⁹ Now, in the medical field a transducer is the wand used in an ultrasound to see inside a person's body making the unseen, seen. I think this fits very well with Len's argument for Type ABO^Ω—Transductive Preaching (Trans-incarnational Preaching).

Type A—Deductive Preaching and Type B—Inductive Preaching, have limits. If a shaman has only one of these as arrows in the quiver, s/he may miss the mark. Not all listeners can access logical arguments. Can I have a witness from the parents of teenagers? Therefore, if the listener cannot follow the points and end at the conclusion with the preacher, the preacher may fault the listener. Conversely if the preacher is limited to these types the listener may fault the preacher bonking them with the ageless

⁵⁹ Sweet, *Giving Blood*, footnote 104, 137.

criticism, “I’m not being fed.” As Sweet articulates, the Type ABO^Ω—Transductive Preaching is universal donor/receiver. A Transductive preacher can preach effectively to any tribe; a Transductive listener can receive from any preacher.

Patrick Quinn, cohort member, speaks of the ABO^Ω Type in the shaman when he reflected in class, “It cannot come through me until it happens to me.” Bishop Hilliard also intoned, “Kneel before God, before you stand before people.” Dorian Mendery-Vaz, cohort member, pastor, and preacher, stirs the pot with a big spoon when she said, “When you preach with power, it comes from an ethic of love. If you miss the ethic of love, you miss it all.”

In the tribe, there is blood. Hilliard states: “Gross lack of personal pastoral care (self-care) increases insensitivity to those around me.” Again, “Pain caused her to reach that note.” Hilliard speaks to blood contagion, “Do not assume the people you preach to are the cause of all of your pain.” A blood sugar meter for our day may be the question: Does it preach in Connecticut? “Those in the pews left Hell at home and walked several blocks to come to church. Listeners are going through too much pain, too much failure, too much struggle to play with worship.”⁶⁰ What type of blood does the tribe need? The tribe needs the blood type that will bring the tribe to health, ABO^Ω.

KΑΡΔΙΑΝΟΣ

The Spirit does nothing in the heart except by consent. By consent, as the heart pumps the blood through the body, the Spirit pumps the blood of Jesus. Kardia defines the center of being from which the prevenient, justifying and sanctifying blood flows.

⁶⁰ Donald Hilliard, Jr., Cohort Discussion, December 2012.

Hilliard goes on to whoop a little about the ability of the Spirit to overcome, “Nature formed me, sin deformed me, education informed me, Christ transformed me.”

When the heart is attentive to God, scripture becomes revelation. “Passion awakens the latent power of God in the Word.”⁶¹

“Don’t allow your experience to eclipse your sensitivity to the voice of God,” warns Bishop Hilliard. The Bishop’s warning is that the shaman can hurt the tribe by the lack of attention to the heart. “Before God can give us a clear vision for our church, we must prepare the fertile soil of our personal lives. We must give careful attention and care to our prayer life, our preaching, and our programs—in that order. Our prayer life comes first. Our preaching grows out of our prayer life just as our programs should be an outgrowth of our preaching.” Shaman’s heart health is key. Kenneth Yelverton, Bishop, preacher, son, father, leader, and cohort member said, “LaRue’s book affirmed my being a hard stickler to devotional life. When I train up a pastor, I train them in the devotional life.”

However, when the heart is right with God and the shaman is prophet scripture becomes revelation as the Spirit incarnates as the body in the tribe. “The sermon should come out of heart, help the hearers, offer hope, and raise the level of honor and dignity of the hearer.”⁶² Patrick: “When it is time to pause in the moment of pain, it is a moment in history: You are going to hold heaven and earth for the family.” Bishop Hilliard summarizes, “Do not underestimate a heart that wants to be right.”

KAIPOS

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Into what time does God speak? The incarnation happens in this moment. The Spirit works in the eternal now.⁶³ Old preacher saying “Tomorrow is a mystery, yesterday history, today is a gift called the present.” The gift of Spirit comes as a present in the present. “When I stand up I need God to show up.”⁶⁴ Sensitivity to God speaking in the moment is to be free of the past and unattached to the future. Lama Surya Das argues for the skill of mindfulness so that one may live fully in the present.⁶⁵ “Again and again, examine; every aspect of your mental and physical activities. In brief, that is the very way of observing mindfulness”—Shantideva.

It is in the mindfulness of the moment that Scripture becomes revelation. Speaking to the need of revelation, Krista, chemical engineer, mother of 3, crematory assistant, and Bible student: “I need the sermon to relate to me in my everyday life.” Judy, grandmother, cancer survivor, spouse, farmer, and retired county council member: “I like a sermon that is like a Bible study. I want to relate to the Bible reading. I like the preacher to narrate the scripture.” Krista: “I am a visual learner. Seeing helps me to keep my mind focused.”

Shaman lives with a heightened awareness of presence in the moment. This is the time God has called the revelation forward. It is a time of fading middle. Political discussion has left the middle, only the cries from far left and right are heard. Socio—economic middle class is shrinking, as more fall into the lower class and millionaires become billionaires. It is a time of fading marriage. It is a time of fading ethics of care. It

⁶³ Apologies to Paul Tillich

⁶⁴ Donald Hilliard, Jr., Cohort Discussion, December 2012.

⁶⁵ Lama Surya Das, *Awakening to the Sacred, Creating a Spiritual Life from Scratch* (Broadway Books, New York), 189.

is a time of intensifying extremes. It is a time of intensifying single parent families.

"Ethic of care has been eclipsed by the ethic of greed."⁶⁶ "iPhone, iPad and iAm."⁶⁷

Emmett, lawyer, public defender, zoning board attorney, town cynic, radio DJ, non-church attendee: "The church is a place for people to gather to affirm the articles of what they believe." Emmett understands the sociological implications of the gathered tribe. As the present moment changes, the tribe needs to gather to affirm the changes of the times and to affirm the life it shares in the Spirit.

KAINOS

The Spirit breathes freshness into the moment. "The people must see the wind and weight of God behind the voice of the preacher."⁶⁸ Over the holidays, our number two son was relating a story he had seen on the Discovery Channel show, *Myth Busters*. The myth Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman were busting was the relationship between the premium price and quality of vodka. Ingeniously, they bought the cheapest gut-wrenching brew and filtered it with a Brita water filter. They set out a small sample of each as they passed the vodka through the filter nine times. The first shot being the unfiltered brew, the second having passed through the filter once, the third twice and so on. Adam and Jamie hired a vodka connoisseur to rate each of the shots of vodka. The connoisseur did not know the origin or the methodology of the myth buster case. Amazingly, he was able to put the shots in a perfect line as the times that they had gone

⁶⁶Eddie Glaude, "Lecture: Understanding Our the Cultural Malaise," *Preaching with Power*, 2012.

⁶⁷ Creativepool, "iPhone, iPad, therefore iAm." *Magazine*. Accessed January 26, 2015. <http://creativepool.com/magazine/news/iphone-ipad-therefore-iam-.1268>

⁶⁸ Donald Hilliard, Jr., Cohort Discussion, December 2012.

through the filter and rated the one that had been through the filter the most a precious rare pouring. Likewise, if we filter the crap out of our lives we are most excellent. So, “Has it gone through the cheesecloth of Christ’s love?” The Spirit refreshes as it filters our lives.

Scripture refreshes to the degree revelation leads to celebration. Frank Thomas helps me understand the nature and practice of celebration through the scriptures.⁶⁹ He does this through a series of questions. “What does this passage say to me? What does this passage say to the needs of people in our time? What is the "bad news" in the text? What is the "bad news" for our time? What is the "good news" in the text? What is the "good news" for our time?” Then he shifts from challenging to answering questions to creating a behavioral purpose statement. “I propose that the end hearers will...” Now for the fun part: Thomas has the preacher develop a celebration strategy. What shall we celebrate? How shall we celebrate our response to the Good News? What materials of celebration shall we use? I have used his outline twice and found the ending to the sermons I preach much stronger. Thomas is heavy on method of scripture interpretation.

Zavette Smallwood, advises the shaman to “Come to the text fresh; approach the text with a new set of lenses so that people can embrace it; preach as everyone can eat from the table.” Patrick adds, “Develop your voice through your story.”

⁶⁹Frank A. Thomas (Frank Anthony), *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: the Role of Celebration in Preaching* (United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1997), 75.

As Thomas is heavy on method, Samuel Procter is heavy on content for the tribe.⁷⁰ From his many years of preaching and teaching, Procter states there are four things that people in the pews want addressed.

1. *Is God alive, aware, and active, and is God willing and able to intervene on our behalf? Is the universe a friendly place? God is still present and active in human affairs and intervenes in our behalf.*
2. *Can this carnal package of drives and urges be controlled, restrained, and reconciled to the will of God? Spiritual renewal and moral wholeness are available to us all.*
3. *Is a blessed, genuine community possible? Genuine community is a realizable goal for the human family.*
4. *Is our space-time frame of reference the only one, or is eternity moving through time? Eternity moves through time, and immortality is an ever-present potential. We have already passed from death unto life when we love.*

I preached using Procter's themes the Sunday following the killings in Newtown, Connecticut. It was the third Sunday of Advent. Churches all around the globe lit a candle for "Joy." No joy came for the people of Newtown or in the hearts of those who mourned with them. Here the Scripture became revelation as at the telling of the story of the loss of the innocent by the hand of Herod's power. Joy of God comes not because of what happens in life; but to spite what happens in life. The reality of the praise chorus, "Trading My Sorrows," lives out, "I'm trading my sorrow / I'm trading my shame / I'm laying it down for the joy of the Lord."

ΜΕΤΑΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΣΜΟΣ

"Our Purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our Vision is to connect people to God and each other creating transformed persons, families, communities and churches. Our Journey is to Serve, Connect, and

⁷⁰ Samuel D. Proctor, *"How shall they hear?" Effective Preaching for Vital Faith* (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1992), 10.

Lead.”⁷¹ God does not leave us where God enters us. Transformation is the natural result of an inherent process. “In molecular biology transformation is genetic alteration of a cell resulting from the direct uptake, incorporation and expression of exogenous genetic material (exogenous DNA) from its surroundings and taken up through the cell membrane(s).”⁷² For example, the lysozyme protein, a break-out enzyme, maintains the same protein yet can exist in vastly different states.⁷³ Spiritual transformation occurs when there is a direct uptake, incorporation and expression of exogenous spiritual reality from the surrounding environment. The Holy Spirit is the exogenous spiritual reality that we swim with in our environment. When we uptake and incorporate God into our being we transform. God demonstrated the reality of transformation in Jesus Christ. The transformation is the incarnation. Spirit becomes incarnate. The real becomes the really real presence in this moment of time. Scripture becomes revelation. What is dry parchment becomes the living reality with the moistness of Spirit in the mind of the incarnate.

Think with me of the preacher as shaman.⁷⁴ Consider Ronald Hutton’s definition, “To some a shaman is anybody who is supposedly expert in dealing with a spirit world to

⁷¹ Purpose, Vision and Journey of the Ligonier United Methodist Church.

⁷² Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "transformation," accessed January 03, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com.ezproxy.drew.edu/EBchecked/topic/602613/transformation>.

⁷³ “Molecular Biology: Protein transformation gives new twist to medical research,” *Science Letter* (Jan 25, 2005), 1063.

⁷⁴ Leonard Sweet, *Giving Blood* 89, footnote 24, 131. Here Sweet says, “This is why Calvin Miller suggests that preachers think of themselves (despite the pagan connotation) as Shamans: “The shaman is one (as viewed by his tribe) through whose life strange forces are at play. His whole bearing is one of intrigue.” See Calvin Miller, *Spirit, Word and Story: A Philosophy of Preaching* (Word), 199.

assist other people in the same community.”⁷⁵ Hutton’s definition seems to fit the role of a pastor. Certainly, the priestly functions of carrying the concerns of the people across the threshold of the chancel to the altar and carrying the mercy of God back to the people from on high fit the description of being an assistant to people in realms of the spirit. Leaving the preacher here means the preacher is a shaman, which may have a higher propensity to be a sham. Transfused with the Spirit in the environment, the preacher becomes more than a currier. The preacher becomes a prophet of God, a mouthpiece of God, someone who knows the times, and someone who knows God, someone who can lay the “really real” next to the real and see the consequence therein.

Over the years, Sweet has taught me to think tribally, through conversations and reading. My first recollection was in relationship to the Tribe of Wesley. Now I think of my Wesleyan heritage as my clan, I am of the tribe of Jesus. Like the Pashtu in the mountains of Afghanistan, if no one is attacking my tribe, I will return to beating up other clans. Such is tribalism. Kevin Hetherington helps me to understand the sociology of tribes in this post-modern age. Hetherington states, “Neo-tribes was a term coined by the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli in the late 1980s and was his major contribution to debates surrounding the postmodern turn within contemporary society that came to prominence at that time. The term is used to highlight chosen or elective social groupings that people create with one another based on a strong sense of shared emotion and feeling, often around a common interest. Maffesoli argues that emotional solidarity has become the basis for groupings where there is shared feeling and a coming together around some form of emotional solidarity and an associated set of markers of

⁷⁵ Ronald Hutton, "The Quest for the Shaman," *History Today* 55.7 (2005): 64-5.

membership and identification ranging from values to styles of dress to common enthusiasms and hobbies.”⁷⁶ Maffesoli is right on. I can pick out a Mennonite in a crowd at a hundred paces. Almost all (both men and women) wear polo shirts under a sweater with kakis pants, sensible shoes, and short utilitarian hair - and eat Amish grown organic food. If you take one Mennonite fishing, he will drink all your beer. If you take two fishing, no one drinks beer. When a direct uptake, incorporation and expression of exogenous spiritual reality from the surrounding environment happens, Anabaptists and Armenians come together as the living, breathing, incarnation of the Body of Christ. Jesus does not leave us to our clannish tendencies or tribalism, but grants a life greater than ourselves. As the body we come to the knowledge that "When you were born you were a gift to the earth.”⁷⁷ Resulting in renewal, “Renewal begins with a remnant that experiences a fresh wind of God.”⁷⁸ Alexander Houston, football player, scholar, dad, husband, preacher, politician, and cohort member, articulates the goal for the body, “I want them to play fast.”

Know that crosswalk is in the context of preacher’s being. It is in the being of the preacher that all of these entities and elements interact to create the preaching moment shared in community. Preaching is incarnational activity by which God uses the preacher to break in a mindful moment transforming a tribal gathering into the body of Jesus Christ through the celebration of blood. When the Spirit incarnates, Scripture becomes

⁷⁶ K. Hetherington, “Neo-tribes. In D. Southerton” ed., *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.), 1035-1037.

⁷⁷ Donald Hilliard, Jr., Cohort Discussion, December 2012.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

revelation, the shaman becomes a prophet, the tribe the body of Christ, and the Word has been preached.

METHODOLOGY OF THE PROJECT

TABLE 2. DISCUSSION CROSSWALK

	What?	Why?
TextIt		
StoryIt		
ImageIt		
PlayIt		
ExperienceIt		
SingIt		
CelebrateIt		
AppIt		

The design team shall consist of no fewer than six adults in the age range of 21-35. Members of the design team shall meet face to face at the initiation of the project and at the conclusion of the project. For the seven weekly meetings the design team shall meet together through Google+ Hangouts. The hangout conversation shall be guided by a crosswalk that includes as the vertical axis: TextIt, StoryIt, ImageIt, PlayIt, ExperienceIt, SingIt, CelebrateIt and AppIt; the horizontal axis is: What and Why. Between the initial time that the design team meets and the live event will be two weeks. After the live events begin, the design team shall invite companions to text feedback. The information that has been gathered will be shared with the design team at the beginning of the hangout.

I shall use a narrative approach based upon Mary Clark Moschella's work, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*. Moschella states "Ethnography is a way of immersing yourself in the life of a people in order to learn something about and from

them.”⁷⁹ She goes on to include the researcher as one of the influencers in the context of the research and is imperative to study. “Ethnographers now know that in order to study a group of people they must also study themselves.”⁸⁰ Chris Hammon explores Moschella’s model of research as he taught me to “work the pizza,” meaning to engage people deeply as one works the yeast into the dough of a pizza crust, letting the dough rise and working it into a circle.⁸¹ Chris took a page from Len Sweet as he directed me to listen for the images in the stories.⁸² Essentially, ethnography is to use a sensitized awareness through the intentional and organized engagement of a context for the purpose of constructing truth together.⁸³

I will use ethnography during the Hangout sessions and as a method for evaluation of the project. I will use two different types of research questions in two different contexts. First the final assessment question is a comparative puzzle question. How does this compare to that? Did the project scratch an itch? Did the project make a difference in the life of the people? The question shall be asked in three contexts. The first context in which the question shall be asked shall be observation. Is there evidence of a difference in the grief of the people on the day of experiencing the worship, the days after the end of the project, and weeks after the end of the project? The second context is to have intentional conversation with persons having been in attendance for a worship

⁷⁹ Moschella, 4.

⁸⁰ Moschella, 31.

⁸¹ Chris Hammon, Cohort discussion, August 2013.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

experience and for the project, asking, “Is there a difference in your experience of grief having attended?” The Lay Advisory Committee shall be the engager for the post worship/post project conversations. The third context is to have a group of persons who attended the project experiences reflect on their memory two months after the project completion. I will gather these persons and ask the question, “What do you remember about the project experiences?” “What differences do you now experience for having been present for the project?” The congregation shall not be informed that the project is to assist them to process the grief and loss that it may feel. The congregation shall be told that the project is about having millennials work on themes for worship and help build sermons that are image rich and relevant.

For the Hangouts, causal/predictive puzzle questions (how does this impact that?) shall be used to tease out the images from the scripture that resonate with them. In addition, these types of questions shall be used to help clarify the meaning they apply to the images that they choose. For example, how does the image of a dagger in David’s hand as he hides next to Saul give meaning to the story? I shall use the tools of observation, conversation, group interview and written survey to expand meanings and assess the project through the Lay Advisory Committee. Observation and conversation come into play at the weekly hangout sessions. There shall be seven of these sessions through Google+ Hangout with one face to face meeting before for the purpose of explaining the project and setting up laptops, iPads or smartphones for the Hangouts. There shall be one final face-to-face group interview for the purpose of LAC assessment. There shall also be a written survey provided by the Theological School of Drew University.

My Role is to discover the qualitative narratives from people that demonstrate transformation in the lives of persons for having attended the project worship experiences. I shall be the one to lead the Hangout sessions and the group interview. Also, I shall record the narratives from week to week and at the end of the project. I shall be the one to write the sermons for the worship experiences using the information that the LAC brings to the Hangouts.

TIMELINE

December 8

Preaching: Advent 2, Matthew 3:1-12, "Have a Small Christmas: It is such a little thing, no one will know."

Hangout Face-to-Face Meeting

December 15

Preaching: Advent 3, Matthew 11:2-11, "Have a Small Christmas: Little Things"

Hangout 1

December 22

Preaching: Advent 4, Matthew 1:18-25, "Have a Small Christmas: The God of Little Things"

January 5

Hangout 2 "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Joy," John 11

January 12

Preaching: "Spelunking"

Hangout 3 "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Kindness," 1 Samuel 24: 9-15

January 19

Preaching: Sermon 1, "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Joy," John 11

Hangout 4 "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Whisper," 1 Kings 19: 1-29

January 26

Preaching: Sermon 2, "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Kindness," 1 Samuel 24: 9-15

Hangout 5 "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Wonder," Matthew 28:5

February 2

Preaching: Sermon 3, "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Whisper," 1 Kings 19: 1-29

Hangout 6

February 9

Preaching: Sermon 4, "SpiritLunking in the Cave of Wonder," Matthew 28:5

February 23

Hangout 7 Assessment Conversations

May 18

Face-to-Face Final Assessment

LAB FOR INTENTIONS

This symbolic action was written by cohort member, colleague and friend Pastor Alydia Smith, United Church of Canada, Toronto.

Washing Grief

Reflecting: For us, water is a sacred symbol of welcome, a symbol of life, power, cleansing and healing. It is also a symbol of our laments, our tears and the hurts that remain with us. Bring to mind something that you are lamenting in our church and community.

Naming: As you feel comfortable come forward and soak a sponge in the water and then wring it out in the second bowl, (symbolically wringing out your heart and releasing the laments you carry). You may wish to name your laments aloud.

Sharing: Use the towel to dry the hands of the person who comes after you, as a symbolic gesture of companionship and service.

Singing: “Here O God, Your Servants Gather”

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

The prophet Habakkuk saw an oracle.

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?

Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous-- therefore judgment comes forth perverted.

I will stand at my watch post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.

For there is still a vision for the appointed time, it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not delay.

Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

REFLECTION: This is one of my favorite texts. Not because it's focus is Social Justice, but because it shows us something about how we can be in transformative relationship with God. The Habakkuk we meet at the beginning of the book is not the Habakkuk we meet at the end. Habakkuk has taken in so much. He is full of questions:

'O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you Violence! And you will not save? Why do you idly look at wrong?'

And doubts:

Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes perverted'

Laments and hurts.

He cares so much and has tried everything, yet he feels stuck-in-a-moment. He is so full that it is slowing him down. Finally he has no choice but to pour it all out. To literally wring out all that troubles him and release it to God, so that he can go about his work as a prophet.

[Wring out sponge]

And once he has released it all, once he has created space for God's grace, mercy and renewing spirit,

God replied.

If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay – we need to listen to and for God's vision and then to make it plain so that she may run and read it or so that she who runs may read it.

And God refilled that space in Habakkuk's heart with a gospel he could run with.

WATER RITUAL:

For us, water is a sacred symbol of welcome, a symbol of life, Power, cleansing and healing.

Reflecting: Bring to mind something that you are lamenting in the worshipping life of your congregation.

Naming: As you feel comfortable come forward and soak a sponge in the water and then wring it out in the second bowl, (symbolically wringing out your heart and releasing the laments you carry). You may wish to name your laments aloud.

Sharing: Use the towel to dry the hands of the person who comes after you, as a symbolic gesture of companionship and service.

Reflecting: What was this experience like for you? How will you wait and discern God's vision?

CHAPTER 5
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF PRACTICE:
THE OPERATIONS NARRAPHOR

Graphic 4. SpiritLunker 4 - Climbing¹



Journaling the journey lays out the trail for others to follow. We survey the ground and measure the depths to write the route. The information recorded in the tables of this chapter is notes from the conversation during the Hangouts through Google+. Direct quotes have been recorded with quotation marks though no attempt was made by the author to record the person who framed the statement. Information contained in the tables without quotation marks is information having been recorded as a general summary of a thought though not a direct quote. Dates for the information contained in the tables correspond to the respective date of the Hangout. Here is what happened.

¹ Robinson, SpiritLunker 4 – Climbing, 2015.

DECEMBER 8, FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

My recruitment objective for the Lay Advisory Committee was to have six adults from the age of twenty-one to thirty-five. We spent the first part of the evening talking through the project and my expectations for the group. We set up calendars and meeting times. The second half of the meeting we set up everyone in +Google and did a run through of calling up each other in Hangouts.

DECEMBER 15, HANGOUT 1

We discussed the current sermon series for the advent season and shared insights into the text and topics that were currently being used.

JANUARY 5, HANGOUT 2 “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF JOY”

As we gathered for the Hangout, we greeted each other and had a time of prayer. I read the scripture and invited others to read other versions of John 11. Conversation notes are contained the in table below.

TABLE 3. SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF JOY

	What?	Why?
TextIt	Jesus wept	Very Relatable
StoryIt	Jesus calls into the cave	“Jesus calls those in grief’s death to life.” “Jesus commands to unwrap”
ImageIt	Tears	“Kneeling with hand in their face weeping crying groaning”, “emotions: joy, pain, fear, anger, grief”, “Jesus weeping; not normal crying, snot crying”, “Jesus weeping; invokes emotion”, “if God was there the brother would not have died-taking for granted, assumed Jesus had already,” “if God is with me in death, why is Jesus weeping?” “Jesus is Son of God but held accountable,” “Jesus wept in response rebuke,” “Groaned in the Spirit and was troubled,” (KJV) “He takes their grief on himself.” “Jesus took the grief of the family.” “Jesus gives back what we cannot-life.” “Family gets reassurance. We get reassurance.” “Visual confirmation of what happens.” “People see by believing.”

PlayIt	“Ring a Round the Rosie”	Set up in circle and falling down would be in the chair; use tables - that’s your rosary circle;
ExperienceIt		
SingIt	“Ring a Round the Rosie,” “Happy Day,” “I have a river of life flowing out of me.”	
CelebrateIt	KC and the Sunshine Band	
AppIt	The tear of Jesus is our water of life.	“Commercial about passing on one good thing to the next.” “Connection to life, to Jesus that keeps the fragrance.” “Where does this spiritual truth apply? Hardest thing to trust and having him work through me; want like Thomas to see and to touch him and feel him with me.” “Hints at “blessed are those who believe without seeing” “like at the wall; getting over the hump; not having to have visual confirmation; seeing it in every day things;” “once you trust he is there without confirmation you begin seeing him in every day life without him looking for him.”

In the appendix under “Worship Resources” please find by sermon topic, media links for the visual and auditory images that were found and used for the worship experiences. Also, you will please find the worship flow chart for the CrossWalk worship service and a media link for the presentation for the worship service.

JANUARY 12, WORSHIP, “SPIRITLUNKING”

Through the preaching of the “SpiritLunking” sermon and the rest of the series, I had several visuals prepared. For each worship location, I asked a mother and her high school daughter to create a cave of some sort. They went with creating a “dark hole” by using half dome camping tents and covering them with black paper. They placed trees and stones around them for extra effect. If one squinted, the effect went well. I also, used a helmet, headlamp, gloves, water bottle and rope to illustrate the five “rules” of spelunking. Throughout the series, I kept the items on display, lifting them as I preached for emphasis on particular points of the sermons.

To set up this worship experience and to set up the series, the LAC found a video that we shared early in the worship experience. The video showed the Devil’s Graveyard cavern in New Corydon, Indiana. The cavern is a pit with stalagmites and stalactites. The video is a series of still photographs with grand music in the background. During worship, we auditioned Lois Tamayo for the position of worship leader. Lois chose two early generation praise songs and translated one song from Spanish that seemed to her to support the topic. “Trading My Sorrows” is a classic that touches the obvious connection with grief. “Forever,” a neo-classic praise song, features the theme of God’s faithfulness through all times. “Friend of God” caps the worship set by moving the person from “Sorrow” to God’s faithfulness that lasts “Forever” to personal declaration of faith to be a “Friend of God.”

After the worship service the human resource committee of the church met and extended an offer to Lois Tamayo. The following week would be her first worship service as a staff member.

JANUARY 12, HANGOUT 3, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF KINDNESS”

Once all logged in we centered with prayer and scripture reading. Participation was slow and cumbersome as we all were still getting acquainted with the technology. Also, the categories of conversation in the table seemed awkward to use and needed new explanations. We continued the practice of praying and of reading the scripture aloud to begin the session.

TABLE 4. SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF KINDNESS

	What?	Why?
TextIt	1 Samuel 24:9-15	
StoryIt		
ImageIt	Enemy	“Someone who wants to do you ill

		will” “Work” “Actively oppose.” “May oppose ideas” “disagreement does not make one an enemy” “Like the Devil” “someone who despises you.” “KKK.” “Martin Luther King” “love your enemy” “Mother Nature” “What if one of your enemies is yourself” “Pray for the devil.” “Consequence” “Should people be informed about Christian persecution”
PlayIt		
ExperienceIt	“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”	Child, Soldier, Western Front, WWI, Christmas Eve, (Video Clip) Chuck Norris movie, Firewalker
SingIt		
CelebrateIt		
AppIt		

In the appendix under “Worship Resources” please find by sermon topic, media links for the visual and auditory images that were found and used for the worship experiences. Also, you will please find the worship flow chart for the CrossWalk worship service and a media link for the presentation for the worship service.

JANUARY 19, WORSHIP, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF JOY”

Jesus’ tears heal grief. This was Lois’ first worship service as a staff member. She brought to the worship a loving presence of God. She worshiped God and invited the congregation to join her in the worship. There was a collective sigh in the congregation as the pain of the loss of Shannon began to subside. Lois strategically did not use music that was Shannon’s favorite. The preaching seemed to go well.

We set up the worship experience by having the congregation sing, “Ring Around the Rosie.” Round tables had been set up with chairs prior to worship. As the congregation sang the song, they were instructed to sit in the chairs rather than fall on the floor –not wanting to have someone hurt by falling down. We practiced the song, then sang and walked around the table, sitting at the appropriate time. A brief explanation was given regarding the meaning of the song with its connection to death and the Roman

Catholic Rosary. Lois followed the theme activity with the songs, “Your Grace is Enough” and “Open the Eyes of My Heart.” Lois chose one classic and one neo-classic praise song. She led the songs, starting with “Ring around the Rosie” as the human condition, moving on to God’s sovereign grace and to our response to the grace with God’s help.

In the preaching, the sermon started with a dark slide and the sound of a woman crying. The purpose was to reflect upon the grief that comes with death. The sermon ended with a dark slide and the sound of a woman laughing. I used dark slides for each of these because I wanted people to go inward with the sound experience. The service ended with “Trading My Sorrows” as Lois led the song and offered the front of the worship space for people to lay down their grieving in prayer.

JANUARY 19, HANGOUT 4, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WHISPER”

We have the technology down but the use of the crosswalk for discussion of the topic was labored. Using the crosswalk felt contrived. However, this session seemed to be the most productive to date. Again, we began with prayer and scripture reading.

TABLE 5. SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WHISPER

	What?	Why?
TextIt	1 Kings 19:9-18	
StoryIt		<p>“If you are working for the Lord, you just cannot run away from it.” “It won’t always be easy.” “God knows where you are and will continue to call you.” “God seeks out Elijah.” “When you are called to do something, no one else will get that call. It is up to you.”</p> <p>“Didn’t I do enough?” “Is he justifying or prideful?” “Answering, justifying, with his achievements.” “Hide out in the cave.” “Believed a long time, but gave up.”</p>
ImageIt	The Lord whispers to Elijah	<p>“Question and response; question and response.” “Go out there.” “Repetition is</p>

		<p>sign of importance.” “Could be asking for a different answer. Like a teacher.” “Why are you hiding?” “Elijah is running from what he is called to do.” “He did not come out.” “Had to be intimate.” “Covered self with a cloak because of shame.” “He was hiding out.”</p> <p>“Presented with an opportunity until you take advantage of it.” “God will communicate in a way that I will hear.” “Elijah does not respond to the big things but to the small voice.”</p> <p>“Humility. Is humility in your response to God? Not so much is God speaking, but did I respond with humility?”</p>
	Cloak-Security Blanket, Baby blanket	<p>“When scared hold it tighter.” “The thing that caused fear was a cloak.” “If in a cave the small voice is scary because they’re in there with you.” “What do I hang onto when I am frightened – What do you hold onto to make yourself more comfortable? What do we hold up to keep God away, our sin?”</p>
	Man cave	<p>“Man cave, hang onto place to be with buddies, security blanket.” “SPA for women.” “Day SPA vs. Man Cave”.</p>
PlayIt /ExperienceIt	Music: The Cave of Elijah	<p>A small bass melody from Piteå, Norrbotten, Sweden, 2012-05-18. Tab here: http://towerofstone.com/tabs/The_Cave... www.towerofstone.com © Egon "Ehom" Lundberg, Piteå, Norrbotten, Sweden, 2012- Category Music License Standard YouTube License</p>
SingIt	“Holding Nothing Back” Ryan Stevenson	
CelebrateIt	Meet Benton (#17) Check out this interview with rookie skater, Kelly Benton! Published on May 18, 2012	<p>What is your biggest inspiration? I try to lead a Christian life and set a good example for others. This means trying to refrain from gossiping about others, recognizing when someone is in need and I might be able to help, and having a generally positive attitude about life. That last one is easy for me. I’ve been very blessed to live a happy life so far, and have been able to follow my dreams (from working in television to starting my own business to joining roller derby!). I think that inspiring others can be your own inspiration. I love when I tell someone about one of my new ventures and they stare back in shock or amazement. It means I’m taking risks, following my heart, and paving a path so others might realize they can do the same.</p>
AppIt		<p>“How do I know that God is taking to me?” “Tell them that God will always seek them.” “When they do hear them ... God will not necessarily speak to them the same way.” Elijah is pursued.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enemies pursue Elijah. • God pursues Elijah. <p>What are you doing here, Elijah?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As in why are you, Elijah, here and not there? • As in what are you, Elijah, doing and not doing? • As in what are you doing here and not there? Doing and not doing? <p>God's job tickets are unique.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniquely assigned. • Uniquely delivered. • Uniquely described. <p>God pursues you.</p>
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In the appendix under “Worship Resources” please find by sermon topic, media links for the visual and auditory images that were found and used for the worship experiences. Also, you will please find the worship flow chart for the CrossWalk worship service and a media link for the presentation for the worship service.

JANUARY 26: WEATHER CANCELLATION

All was cancelled in the county due to a weather emergency.

FEBRUARY 2, WORSHIP, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF KINDNESS”

Choose kindness. Chuck Norris doesn't walk up the stairway to heaven. He takes the elevator. Chuck Norris helped us frame the morning worship experience through a clip from the 1986 funky hair movie, Firewalker. Chuck encounters an enemy in a cave. Tough in typical Chuck Norris fashion, the enemy does not survive, the LAC thought it would be a fun way introduce David's encounter with his enemy in a cave. Lois chose two songs that focused on the character of God as the sermon focused on making a Godly choice, “You are Worthy of My Praise” and “Everlasting God.” We finished with Lois leading “Trading My Sorrows” and calling for people to deal with their enemy through the character of God.

FEBRUARY 2, HANGOUT 5, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WONDER”

The crosswalk of topics that I created to help focus the conversation was too gimmicky for the people with which I worked. We ended up combining the textit, storyit, and imageit; the playit, experienceit and singit; the celebrateit and appit. Effectively we worked with storyit, experienceit, and celebrateit. Three categories of StoryIt, ExperienceIt, and CelebrateIt were much better for the group. Prayer and scripture reading preceded the conversation.

TABLE 6. SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WONDER

	What?	Why?
StoryIt	You have reasons to fear this cave.	<p>“What are you afraid of?” “The force, someone tampering with it, going into anger, what happened with Replogle” [young man in Kimmel Indiana who died in traffic accident. His grave was desecrated by two classmates who thought if they dug up the remains, he would resurrect. They urinated on the casket. Both served jail time.]</p> <p>“Disbelief, no way, Guards were frozen like dead men.”</p> <p>“Full drama playing out right in front of Mary.” “Seal Team Six.” “Stone being thrown away was important; Guards; extra precautions.”</p> <p>“Line that I really like: from Luke- why do you look for the living among the dead?” “Today, go to a graveyard and there is a deep hole.”</p> <p>“Being in solid white outfit, someone there to meet them.” “Disbelief, jaw dropping” “Mary is the first one. Mary is important to the story.”</p> <p>“Don’t be alarmed, don’t be afraid.”</p> <p>“Trying to Anoint his body.” The messenger says, “Do not be afraid!” because you have reasons to be afraid. Be afraid, Jesus is not where you left him. Be afraid, the messenger just lifted a two-ton stone away from the cave. Be afraid, the messenger just befuddled Seal Team Six. Be afraid, the messenger sits giggling on the stone swinging his legs and snapping bubble gum.</p>
ExperienceIt	You cannot live in this cave.	<p>“Where is he. Do you know where he is? Why would he leave?” “He has risen, just as he said.” “Disbelief; Come and see the place where he lay.” “This makes sense only if they disbelieve. When they see that he is not there helps them to know it is really real.” “Maybe I am looking in</p>

	<p>the wrong places for Jesus.” “Somewhere he may have been before but not now.” “Just when you think you know where the ball is, Seattle fumbles on the 15 yard line.” “Jesus is not where I left him.” “Jesus fulfills promises; why be surprised.” “Never alone” “Anywhere, everywhere-He’s ahead of you. Follow in his footsteps.” “Do you stay in the tomb or go out to meet him?” “Consequence of staying in the tomb, being in the dark.” “Consequence of going out to find Jesus, good thing; leave something behind-tomb, grief, sorrows, maybe even home, or friends or family that think you’re crazy.” “Tell. Don’t tell-people will not know. Tell-world will be changed; liar, ridicule.” You cannot live in this cave. You’re desperate Jesus is not in the cave where you left him. The world as you know it has changed. The really real is different then the real. Jesus is not in the past. Jesus is not in the present. Jesus is in the future. Jesus is out ahead of you. Jesus meets you in the future.</p>
<p>CelebrateIt</p>	<p>Hide and seek; Sardines-Children story Song-“The Seeker” by the Who</p> <p>We have gone into caves and found healing. We may go to the cave of weeping to remember our lost loves and opportunities; and yet, through God, in the cave we find new life. We may go to the cave of warriors and meet our enemies; and yet, through God, we choose the gracious response. We may go to the cave of whispers and lay down to die; and yet, through God hear the call and claim of God upon your life. But you cannot live in any of these caves. And especially, you cannot live in the Cave of Wonder and expect to find Jesus. You can choose capitulation as in giving up. You can choose despondency as in discouragement. You can choose depression as in emptiness. You have to leave this Cave of Wonder to find the wonder of God.</p>

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FEBRUARY 9, WORSHIP, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WHISPER”

God’s not done with you. For this service Lois chose to focus on the character of God using one new song and one song used previously in the worship series. “You are Good” speaks of the God’s character ringing true to the “God is good” “All the time” antiphon. Lois reminded us again of God’s limitless faithfulness in “Forever.” At the beginning of the sermon, we entered the Cave of Whisper by listening to Egon “Ehom” Lundberg’s “The Cave of Elijah,” a small bass melody from Piteå, Norrbotten, Sweden. The service ended with Lois’s theme song, “Trading My Sorrows.” The congregation was challenged to pick up the claim that God has on their lives and fulfill their call.

FEBRUARY 9, HANGOUT 6

We continued the process with sermon topics for the next series.

FEBRUARY 16, WORSHIP, “SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WONDER”

“Be not afraid.” We hosted a combined worship experience for the purpose of officially welcoming Lois Tamayo as the Director of Worship Arts and welcoming Cody Cripe the Director of Student Ministries. Pastor Pedro Tamayo, spouse of Lois Tamayo, participated in the worship as well. The planned worship experience to introduce the topic of “get out of the grave into life” was planned by the LAC to be a game of Sardines. It did not seem to fit well. The youth that had been asked to do it by a member of the LAC were too embarrassed. So, it did not happen. The worship segment started with the praise chorus, “You are Good” from the previous week. The praise chorus was followed by the praise team and chancel choir singing “Amazing Grace” with Lois and her daughter Becky singing duets and solos. The music had great effect.

The sermon focused upon fearlessly leaving the cave of grief and seeking Jesus among the living. No media presentations were used as we moved from the sermon into a time of prayer and consecration for Lois and Cody. Having finished the sermon, I called Lois and Cody to the platform as examples of people who fearlessly seek out Jesus among the living. Members of the congregation presented to each of them symbols of their work in the church. Pastor Pedro Tamayo spoke on the meaning of a call from God. We invited members of the congregation to stand and move to the front connecting with Lois then with Cody as Pastors Pedro, Candy and myself gave verbal prayers of blessing and encouragement for the work ahead. We finished the service with a contemporary version of “Nothing but the Blood.” By the end of the service people knew that they had been to church by the high level of energy in the room and blessings that God bestowed on the congregation. People smiled wide. This service was the high tide of the ministry I shared with the Ligonier United Methodist Church.

FEBRUARY 16, HANGOUT 7 ASSESSMENT CONVERSATIONS

We met one last time to check on the experience that each had and to remind everyone of the last meeting coming up in May with my faculty advisor. We had thought that we might continue the hangouts. However, spring schedules became complicated so we put the Hangouts to rest. Assessment topics we discussed shall be shared in the assessment portion of this document.

MAY 18 FACE-TO-FACE FINAL ASSESSMENT

For the final assessment and faculty interview, the LAC came to my home for supper as we waited for the Skype call with the advisor. After an hour delay, I released

the LAC and thanked them for their effort. Time for the call had been confused. The written assessment was accepted without the Skype call.

CHAPTER 6
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF RESULTS:
THE EVALUATION NARRAPHOR

Graphic 5. SpiritLunker 5 - Praying¹



From Plato's account of Socrates' defense in 399 BC, comes ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ, "the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being," Apology, 38a. Socrates by way of Plato made a great spiritlunker. How did our lives change for having traveled together? To have the experience of the cave without reflection upon the experience leaves us with a moment of titillation. Chris Hammon encouraged his students to construct truth together with people in the context of the projects through the levels of listening as described by Scharmer, downloaded, factual, empathic, generative=I/Us. At the end of the project did it scratch an itch? Did the

¹ Robinson, SpiritLunker 5 – Praying, 2015.

project make a difference in the life of the people? I will give an assessment overview then reflect on the levels of listening apparent in the assessment. These levels of listening help to describe the building crescendo of the regenerative energy experienced during the final worship service of the project.

OVERVIEW ASSESSMENT

Design of the Team

The design team was to consist of no fewer than six adults in the age range of 21-35. The LAC and design team were the same group of people who gave the input through +Google Hangouts into the worship experiences. The project was to gain insight from twenty-somethings into the worship experience and assess how the congregation manages grief. Essentially, does the engagement of twenty-somethings in Hangouts assist me to be a better worship experience leader? Preacher? Do the insights help the listeners be engaged by God to a higher degree in order to manage their experience of grief? All participants were in their early twenties. This was the first major hurdle. In the congregation I had a pool of twenty-seven people from which to pull. Thinking that this would be easy, I plunged ahead. My first learning was that this age group does not use email often. I used an initial invitation through email and followed up with face-to-face conversations. Many had not looked at their emails before I had the face-to-face contact. Initially, twelve of the twenty-seven people expressed interest. Some of the folks were married couples and some were single. Some had significant others. Of those initially interested, one (with significant other) backed out due to his desire to be a police officer and the fact that another in the group was a “usual suspect” in petty crime. Four declined participation because they were not “techy.” The issue seemed to be the use of

Google+ Hangouts for the sessions. Two couples committed and two single males committed. I had my group of six. The sixth person in the group was communicated with through texting, phone calls and face-to-face conversation throughout the project. He never showed up for any activity and gave no reason or input. I challenged the group to invite someone to take his place. By the end of the first evening, we were up and running with five members of the group committed and smiling. The participants were: Cody Cripe, Director for Student Ministries; Tiffany Cripe, Youth Mentor, Hospitality Member; Seth Reidenbach, Church Member; Michael Handshoe, Youth Mentor; and, Natasha Helmuth, Youth Mentor. Due to everyone's schedule the group experienced "times [that] might have been hard to come together." They reported difficulty maintaining group attendance because of busy schedules.

Using Hangout

We used the Hangout feature on +Google. At the beginning of the project it was reported to me that most young people use Facebook. By the end of the project, the same persons reported that since Facebook was the social media choice of parents, youth had moved to Twitter and Instagram. The most pronounced feedback that I received after the Hangout was from the parents of one person. They informed me that he spent over an hour arranging the items on the wall that would be seen in the background of his video feed. I found this interesting. I had not thought of what may appear in my background. I also found it interesting how important it was that he sends the image he wanted of himself and not let it be given to chance. The quote of the night during which we set up the Hangout program on computers and laptops: "An old fart is teaching me how to run my laptop!" Pastor Alydia Smith responded to my findings with, "My experience of

younger folks is that they would prefer to tweet and text - video conversations is not a regular mode of conversation and requires extra effort.” (140412Cohort) I chose Hangout as an easily assessable tool for video chatting for a group. I am not sold on the tool as a replacement for face-to-face conversation. However, it did give a relatively easy access to each other. It seemed easier than Breeze and seemed more stable then Skype.

Crosswalk of Topics

The initial discussion crosswalk of topics was:

TABLE 7. ORIGINAL DISCUSSION CROSSWALKS

	What?	Why?
TextIt		
StoryIt		
ImageIt		
PlayIt /ExperienceIt		
SingIt		
CelebrateIt		
AppIt		

By the end of the project, the crosswalk changed to:

TABLE 8. REVISED DISCUSSION CROSSWALKS

	What?	Why?
StoryIt		
ExperienceIt		
CelebrateIt		

The group reported that the initial table was too gimmicky and redundant. The smaller crosswalk was still gimmicky and “cute” [sarcastic comment intended to mean – cease and desist] but not redundant.

The word “SpiritLunking”

Chris Hammon taught us to “work the pizza,” find the stories. A qualitative narrative came from conversation with the cohort and email follow-up from Len Sweet. ““Spiritlunking” . . . and “lunking” is different from “lurking” . . . “lunking” means you lunge in with all you are . . . lurking means you hang back and watch . . . the only way we go spelunking is with a guide and mentor . . .and the Spirit is our guide into the darkest, most cavernous places, and only the Spirit can turn tombs into wombs of new life and new birth.”² I think of playing with the image of “spiritlurking,” “gymlunking,” “being a lunk,” “being a lunk lurking in the cave,” etc. The group seemed to like the “SpiritLunking” concept; yet, it did not scratch an itch for them because spelunking is not a sport they felt compelled to do. “SpiritLunking” seemed to connect more with a pre-teen audience as it excited the possibilities of adventure. Or, it was wearing the helmet with headlamp after the service that gave them a thrill.

Observations

Did I observe a difference in the lives of people because of the project? Following the worship services, I experienced an increasing degree of positive energy. I noticed that people stayed in the lobby of the building longer to socialize. People that had sprinted for the doors at the final blessing were lingering. I noticed an increase in smiles, hugs and handshakes. I also noticed a unifying energy with the people in the group as they became better acquainted with each other. I made the assumption that all twenty-somethings in the congregation knew each other. Wrong. What I did not do was

² Leonard I. Sweet, Email correspondence, October 8, 2014.

think through the behaviors that I would want to encounter as a result of the project. Therefore, I was not prepared to quantify the behaviors. At this end of the project, this seems elemental.

Conversations

Intentional conversations with persons having been in attendance for a worship experience and for the project gave better verifiable results for me than observation. Many comments came to me such as, “the project went well.” A more articulate comment was, “The project allowed for me to be focused on a certain theme with its intended purpose to allow the congregation to grow in God’s grace.” People also provided positive feedback regarding flow and focus of the messages. People report that they “learned” information about the Bible and coves, that they experience personal growth, enjoyed the group activities and felt they had advanced spiritually. One person said, “I think the project was well thought out and planned.” Another reported, “Lots of growth and info came out of project.” Another person said that the project had, “an impact on my life.” Another said the themes of the sermons were focused and that helped the congregation understand.

Two Months After

Two months after the project completion I asked, “What do you remember about the project experiences?” “What differences do you now experience for having been present for the project?” On May 6, I attended our worship committee meeting attended by eight people. I asked them to think with me about the worship experiences over the past four months. Think about moments in worship in which transformation was

experienced. The two moments that were unanimously experienced were the last service of the project series when we had the chancel choir and praise team sing a version of Amazing Grace in a combined worship. We also installed the new worship leader and the new youth director that Sunday. The second moment came when a guest preacher spoke in my absence while I was on vacation. He gave a sermon that was highly interactive and polished, as he had delivered the sermon in many contexts from Indiana to Mexico. I was hoping to hear that they noticed a change in my preaching style or one of the experiences that I worked to create with the help of the Hangout. However, the most important feedback was what seemed distant: The grief that had been palpable in January and February was not expressed. The affect of the faces in the conversation was positive, heads held high, smiles on faces, raised eyebrows, energy in voices. I believe that the project helped to mitigate the grief in the congregation, allowing for new leadership to take root.

Hangout Observation and Conversation

Observation and conversation came into play at the weekly hangout sessions. The group reported the strengths of these sessions. The candidate demonstrated knowledge in regards to Biblical content and spent time and effort researching different aspects of the same. “Strengths would be his knowledge of the Bible and passion for Christ.” Again, the comment, “Lots of knowledge in Biblical content and has spent lots of time researching info giving.” Also the group liked that the “congregation [was] informed on a weekly basis prior to sermon.” The group reported that the weakness was in the topic. Possibly the candidate could have picked a more applicable theme to the congregation. “The candidate has tendency to get off subject sometimes, but overall a very good

experience.” “Maybe open group up to an older age to keep everyone engaged.” “I would have liked to meet face to face more often”. There was a final face-to-face group interview for the purpose of LAC assessment. They reported that people were kept informed and involved in decisions when ideas were formed so that the collaboration aspect occurred. They liked the focused sermons and less time spent off topic. They affirmed “good ties into “spirit-lunking.” The group reported several compliments on how the candidate invested time and effort into this project.

Off Focus Narrative

Somewhere in my years of viewing movies and stage presentations, I learned to look “off focus” to see the quality of direction in a performance. All directors create intensity by drawing focus to a particular scene or moment in a scene. Great directors add detail to the off focus areas to accentuate what is happening “center stage” or to subtly give a counter viewpoint. Chris reminded me of this when he encouraged me to turn around in the context of the research and see what was happening off focus.³

First Off-Focus Background Narrative

Initially, I had a much larger LAC made up of people ages in the fifty and sixties. They were members of a small group that I had been meeting with over three years. They seemed a natural to be the LAC. On the initial meeting with the small group I opened the conversation up to hear input after laying out the initial plans. A person in the group pushed to have the project focus on small groups that would be trained to support the Upwards sports ministry at the church. It seemed to be taking the project away from

³ Chris Hammon, Cohort discussion, August 2013.

preaching and making it into a recruitment tool for the Upwards sports. As instructed through the summer methods class, I attempted to thicken the conversation. At the end of the evening, the project concept was far different from the initial proposal. However, in the spirit of collegiality, I thought that I would be able to return to the group in a month and redirect.

In the middle of October, the leader of the small group began to circulate complaints regarding my leadership as the pastor of the church. The criticism was that I was not worthy of a raise because of the lack of numeric growth in the worship services, that I did not give clear leadership as to the concept of stewardship and that I was mismanaging the worship team following the time of the death of our worship leader in August. The conflict erupted at Staff Parish Relations Committee meetings in my presence and in my absence. The SPRC called a consultation to be held with the District Superintendent.

My response to these charges was one, the SPRC had not set numerical growth as a goal or a condition of raises; two, using the metric of the ratio of worship attendance to dollars donated we were the highest ratio in the Northeast District and one of the highest if not the highest in the Conference (all of this because we spent two years emphasis on Financial Peace University with 164 people completing the course); three, because of extreme grief and anger over the death of the worship leader, the worship team was paralyzed and not able to function. What we did were band-aides at best, some weeks it was terrible. I also knew that moving too fast to hire a worship leader would only lead to a failure because the congregation had to be ready to accept someone new. So, I waited for three months to begin the interview process. By mid-January we had a new worship

leader and a new worship team, which is as good as anything that had been before it. We also became racially integrated for the first time in the history of the congregation.

Having met personally with the accuser in the month of November, I knew that there was not anything I could do to alter his opinion. I explained this to my cohort and professors. They simply said that I should not use this small group or the person of agitation as leadership in the project. So, I redefined the project and submitted a slimmed down prospectus. Two elements that I kept from the original project were the timeline and the concept of “small things with great love.”

Some footnotes to the conflict. The person who was hypercritical and attempting to gain support from the small group for my removal had the consultation with the District Superintendent on a Thursday night in December. The next morning my wife and stepson were both going into surgery. My wife was donating a kidney to my stepson. The District Superintendent was kind enough to delay the meeting until January in order for the family to get through the trauma of the surgery before taking on a review of my ministry.

Following the January meeting, the “criticizer” requested a meeting with the SPRC chairperson and myself. During the meeting I was lectured as to the three items that I was never to speak of again: One, the death of the worship leader; two, the ministry of the previous pastor; three, the church’s financial debt. In conversation with my therapist, he asked me what I did in response. I just sat and took notes. When he finished, I thanked him for his input. I stood up and left the office. The SPRC sat rubbing his head and eyes throughout the meeting. The therapist asked me how I felt afterward, I replied, “empty.” He said that rape victims customarily reply to the question

using the same word. It is the therapist's judgment that I experienced emotional rape. This is all curious to me because this person was the strongest support of me being in the degree program at Drew. The faculty colloquium leaders helped me by giving me permission to extract myself from the initial project the small group leader advocated. I could not have pulled off a small group to support the Upwards sports ministry under the duress of the leader. I had two weeks to recruit a new LAC.

Second Off-Focus Background Narrative

Music in the worship experiences sets up positive regard for the preaching more than any singular item that I was able to contribute. The project was in the middle of auditioning people to be the new worship leader. When the music was thematic and high quality the regard for the preaching was much higher than in the times that the quality from the musicians lacked polish. As it turned out, poor music meant that I did not have a chance to connect with the congregation. I was shut out before I started. On the weeks of quality music, I was able to get a hearing based on the efforts of the Hangout and my efforts.

Third Off-Focus Background Narrative

During the project, my wife and stepson (who was living with us) had major surgery with prolonged recovery time. As a church, we were learning how to survive after the worship leaders death and hiring a new worship leader. My father's health failed and my sister and I had to place our parents in a nursing home. I began having bouts of vertigo, which kept me out of the pulpit twice. Since October, I have had more dizzy days than clear days. I did the best that I could, given the circumstances. I failed to follow up after the project preaching series to document congregation reaction. I did

make notes. Many of those notes I lost when the hard drive on my computer failed. So, I spent the second half of February and March ignoring the project. In April, my focus was on Holy Week and Easter as well as recreating the data lost on the old computer.

However, I continued to practice the skills learned during the project. I know that on the best days of the project, I was distracted. On the worst days, I was unfocused. As I apply the process in the future, my leadership shall be more on track. Other than by the death of a spouse or being hit by a truck, I could not have had more on my mind.

Fourth Off-Focus Background Narrative

In the summer months, pressure built from key congregational leaders who stated that I lack business “know how” and had failed at growing the giving units of the congregation. These leaders later admitted to having had conversation with people to withdraw funding from the church in order to create a financial crisis (these were the persons desiring to have me removed as pastor). The tipping point came when I was asked to give back 25% of my salary, not take any professional or travel expenses and eliminate the position at the church in which my wife held, Pastor for Congregational Care. I mentioned that my wife and I, as the third highest contributors to the church, already gave fifteen percent of my salary and 10% of my wife’s. The financial secretary affirmed my assertion. Though the rebellious few backed off because they lost face in the meeting, I knew my time in Ligonier had come to an end. I tested this feeling and thought with my therapist, with my District Superintendent and with my spouse. Candy and I prayerfully came to the conclusion that we should open ourselves up to a move. We told the District Superintendent that if Ligonier were truly the best match for my gifts and graces, I would stay, and if another church is a better match, I will move. Through

the end of July, I worked on a self-evaluation and profile. A week after having sent in these documents, the conference called me with an opportunity to move to North Webster, Indiana. After further consultation, I said yes to the move and the Bishop “fixed” the appointment. As I write, I am packing and moving. In the midst of the packing, we attended our granddaughter’s seventh birthday party at a local roller skating rink. My wife fell, and consequently had surgery to stabilize the compound fracture of her right wrist.

FOUR LEVELS OF LISTENING

“Meetings and habitual conversations in organizations, for example, are often based on downloading past patterns.”⁴ These habitual behaviors may be seen in worship settings and in social interactions before and after worship. The habitual downloading behavior may also be seen in the Hangouts. As Scharmer helps us think about listening behavior, the first level is downloading. He refers to the level as habitual patterns of talk that are exchanged without thought. “How ya doin’?” “Great, how you doin’?” “Whatta ‘bout those Cubbies?” People enter into worship with similar patterns. “Great to see you today.” And after the service, “Great day, have a good week.” The downloaded behavior may also be stretched to include the location in the worship space where the person sits. In pews, it seems to be somewhat understandable. In a room like the CrossWalk, where the set-up for worship may be rows or circles or tables, people will still choose a seat with the same approximate location. The Hangout, though at first the participants were focused on the newness, soon developed ritual that merely needed to be downloaded:

⁴ C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Learning from the Future as It Emerges* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers), Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 8, Location 1938.

“How is everyone this evening?” “Fine.” What I attend to when listening are those things that are not downloaded responses, which brings us to the next level of listening.

The majority of the conversation in the Hangouts and with persons during assessment may be identified with Scharmer’s second level of listening, factual. Factual begins the emergence from habits and routines to seeing the reality presenting itself. Information was given from one person to the next, such as that the five SpiritLunking principles to explore biblical caves are: Go with two or more people. “For where two or three gather together...” Pack three light sources. “I am the light of the world.” Keep three points of contact. “Touch me and see.” Take plenty of water. “A spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing. “The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit.” Factual listening is the receiving of information.

The hope is that listening and hearing factual information will expand reality. Yet, some of what may be factual conversation is not intended to enlighten. The intent of factual conversation is to state position and draw lines in the sand. What is heard in some factual dialogue is similar to a high school debate. The content of listening is only attended to the degree that one creates a scheme for rebuttal. During conflict, my instincts are to listen in order to create defenses and offenses in a debate. My instincts are not to enter the reality of the other. “Three distinct principles can help us move from downloading to actually seeing. They are: (1) clarify question and intent, (2) move into the contexts that matter, and (3) suspend judgment and connect to wonder.”⁵ These

⁵ Ibid., Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 9, Location 2074.

principles help to alleviate the need to debate and to defend. The principles help one to enter the others' reality or as Scharmer may frame it, to listen empathetically.

Empathetic listening did not seem to happen to a high degree in the conversations directly linked to the project. Most of the conversation was not about entering into the reality of the other. I found that these conversations occurred in a one on one context in the informal conversations after worship. As people prepared to leave the worship space, they sought me out to recall a story or an event during the past week, the memory of which had been triggered by the worship experience. "When my mom died, it was like walking in a haze for months." "I am glad I came today; but I really didn't want to. It is so hard to look at the stage without Shannon up front. Today was good." "I can't listen to music in church because they don't do the songs like Shannon did them." My verbal response was often, "Tell me more," "It is hard for you," or "What did you find helpful?" I would step in close and touch the other's elbow. Sometimes these conversations lasted until the lights were turned off and the doors were locked.

"Level 4 is generative listening. Generative listening means to form a space of deep attention that allows an emerging future possibility to "land" or manifest."⁶ The regenerative energy that Scharmer describes came during the last worship experience of the project. The worship experience featured the consecration of Lois and Cody as the newly hired staff members. In the time of prayer as hands were laid upon them and as others connected through touch, the worship space had a presence of God into which all were welcome. In these sacred moments, the emerging future became manifest. These

⁶ Ibid., Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter 10, Location 2323.

persons were present with the congregation. The people of the congregation were present with them.

CHAPTER 7
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF WISDOM:
THE ENLIGHTENMENT NARRAPHOR

Graphic 6. SpiritLunker 6 - Surfacing¹

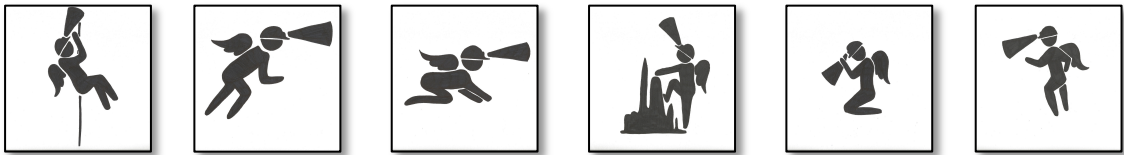


Wisdom shines bright in the lamplight of faith. For all the effort and all the challenge, I find this nugget. “Ethnographers now know that in order to study a group of people they must also study themselves.” Moschella, p. 31. The biggest change is in me. The observer was observed. I felt that I was doing a better job at being conversational, concrete and interactive during with worship experiences. I have changed my approach to preaching from preparing a sermon to preparing the preacher. Shifting from hermeneutics to semiotics will be a continuing challenge. The quality of the Hangout participants and the quality of interaction was high. My personal goal through the project was to learn a new way to prepare and to preach sermons to enhance relevancy to

¹ Robinson, SpiritLunker 6 – Surfacing, 2015.

contemporary worshippers. For me, this was achieved. However, perhaps because of the criticism at the beginning of the process, I have spent much therapeutic time contemplating my role in pastoral ministry. I have learned that after thirty-years in ministry I have a great deal of post-traumatic stress built up. I do not have adequate time to recover before new trauma creates increasingly deeper wounds. With the move happening and beginning a new work, I pray that I can be a “wounded healer” as Henri Nouwen describes in his book having that title. I have my safe places. I have a new set of skills to build upon and I have the support and love of God and family. I helped to lift the Ligonier church out of the mire of grief during what was arguably the worst period of its history. I assisted God in giving Ligonier a new future, a new identity and a new hope. I have been faithful to the great adventure.

CHAPTER 8
SPIRITLUNKING IN THE CAVE OF ALCHEMY:
THE PROPAGATION NARRAPHOR



The ore into which water has bore these caves transforms that others by propagation of this experience may have their own great adventure. Here is that which propagates: learn to thicken gravy.

In the 1980's I became a master of the exegetical study through the historical critical method, word studies and bibliography. Spending an evening conjugating verbs and diagramming auxiliary re-write rules floated my boat. Sunday morning hearers had little enthusiasm for the finer points of declension, especially when grandma was just diagnosed with stage four liver cancer. I learned quickly that illustrations carried the sermons. Like the laundry hanging on the line in the backyard, no one sees the clothesline for the billowing sheets. I was fixated on the quality of the clothesline and the sturdiness of the poles. People in the pews cared only for dry sheets and clean undies. Through exposure to people like David Buttrick, Len Sweet, Rob Duncan, Bishop Hilliard, I became familiar with the use of metaphor in preaching. David Buttrick taught

me to think of preaching as a movie. Project a story through its telling. As an engaging movie has a plot, climax and resolution, so too does a sermon. I had not thought about preaching as bringing the congregation to an emotional peak. I liked it.

Sense *Quantum Spirituality*¹, Len Sweet has been hammering home the power of metaphor like an Amish farmer pounding a rod into a mortise and tenon on a principal rafter of his barn. Len pronounced when I first met him, “I insist on defining the metaphors. He who defines the metaphor gives the power.”² Len’s metamorphosis from meta-phor to narra-phor emerges in his book, *Giving Blood*. In the manner of a wood artisan or a winemaker who develops his craft, Len develops the craft of preaching by bonding notions of moving image and static image with the concept of narraphor. The shift came for me as I understood that narrative metaphors are not illustrations of the point of the sermon, narrative metaphors *are* the sermon.

This is my learning edge, my bleeding edge. Like Eli Manning who, for his first eleven years of playing quarterback for the New York Giants, stepped on his left foot first to drop back into the pocket to pass. This season, 2014, Eli playing under the direction of his new offensive coordinator Ben McAdoo, has to step back on his right foot first. I loved shooting guns as a youth in the farmland of Indiana. At age twenty, I lost the sight in my right eye, the eye with which I aimed. For the past thirty-seven years, when I pick

¹ Leonard I. Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (Better World Books: Mishawaka, IN, U.S.A., 1991).

² The first time I met Len Sweet was at a book discussion in his home in Dayton, Ohio. Len was the Dean of United Seminary. I do not remember the book we read or discussed. I do remember the fine dining, the gracious hospitality and a tall white haired scholar sharing insights that awoke a thirst. I remember his insistence on defining the metaphors by which the seminary would operate.

up a rifle, I naturally put it to my right eye. It feels like what I imagine Eli feels, I have to think against the natural to aim with the left. Naturally, I want to set up a great clothesline. I want to do the word studies and the grammar lessons. It's like swimming in the shallow end of the pool. Deep end diving is communicating in narraphor. It is hard work to learn a new way of preaching and of preaching preparation. However, the results can be tasty. Just as eating good gravy may awaken a craving inside of you so that you become a skillet licker, good narraphoric preaching may awaken a desire for God.

Narraphors thicken the gravy. I grew up loving gravy. I love gravy on potatoes. I love gravy on biscuits. I love gravy on crushed crackers. I love red-eye gravy, brown gravy and white cream gravy. So I set out to learn how to make gravy. Batch after batch I made until I mastered the creamy sauce to my satisfaction. I learned oil and cream work at odds, yet are so essential. Too hot, the oil curled the cream or worse, scorched the curls. Too cool, nothing. All one may get from too cool oil is oily cream. The oil sets the flavor of the gravy. My favorite gravy is to make it from the grease left from lard fried chicken. Not too much grease, just enough. Leave all of those crumbs of overcooked batter. Let the oil cool to the touch. Add the cream. Bring the oil and cream back to a simmer. Add the narraphor. With a table fork, gently stir in narraphor in an amount equal to the grease. Just keep stirring with the fork flat side down. Heat, grease, cream and narraphor all separate swirling in the fry pan. Butter my buns and call me a biscuit, the moment of transformation comes and the greasy cream becomes light brown gravy!

Just as I know the moment of thickening with gravy, I know the moment of transformation in the narraphor. If I do gravy wrong, I have lumpy, or worse, runny

white sauce. If I do narraphor wrong, I miss the moment into which God has invited me to participate in the transformation of souls. Learning the artistry of narraphor will take me beyond my grave and through all the opportunities to preach. The moment of thickening, more often than not, comes to me once the heat is turned up. For me, the grease comes from the fire of past experience. These experiences include my study and preparation, and also include all that which I have accumulated and is brought to my memory. The cream has a holy nurturing about it. The narraphor is the Story, God's story in the story, my or our story. The heat is the preaching event, the worship experience. I the preacher am the fork stirred by the hand God in a hot skillet of worship. A moment comes in worship when the gravy thickens. The moment of holy transformation changes worship attenders eternally. The moment of holy transformation changes me eternally. Preparation for this holy moment has more to do with my heart and mind than with the ability to conjugate Greek verbs. My number one discipline: listen to the people who darken my path. Of course spend time in prayer, of course do reading and traditional Bible preparation, of course study the current and ancient scripts by writers of great things. However, God speaks most clearly and unequivocally to me through the people I meet eye to eye each day. When I am well prepared to preach, I am well prepared to listen to every soul. "The devil will let a preacher prepare a sermon if it will keep the preacher from preparing himself [herself]," Vance Havner.³ Semiotic preaching depends most upon the preparation of the preacher. My test for preparation is an honest answer to, "Do I squarely listen to the person in front of me?" If I cannot attend to the person in front of me, I am not ready to preach for I cannot attend to God. If

³ Leonard I. Sweet, *Facebook*, post November 1, 2014, 5:24pm, <https://www.facebook.com/lensweet?fref=fn>.

I am able to attend to God, I am able to attend to the person in front of me through which God will communicate the narraphor that will thicken the holy gravy. And we all shall eat well.

How do we proceed? We proceed into the caves with the desire and fear experienced Leonardo Da Vinci. We proceed into the caves clothed with cloaks woven with the “fine linen [that is] the righteous deeds of the saints.”⁴ Now, you are my companion on this spiritlunking adventure into dark places. These dark places team with potentiality and promise the stuff of life. These dark places hold no trivial specter to titillate us into fear. These dark places that shield us from distractions so that we may meet the Holy Ghost renewal. Together we go, now, not for ourselves, for those who are in dark places fearing the absence of light. We go, now, for those reaching for a guiding hand. We go, now, for those with open eyes wanting light. We go, now, for those bruised by sharp rocks. We go, now, for those parched hankering for the tears of life. We go, now, for those who believe in their aloneness. We go, now, for those straining to hear movement and life. Charge your light, fill your canteens, grab your rope and put on your helmet. Let’s go into the caves.

⁴ *Crossway Bibles*, Revelation 19:7-8, Kindle Electronic Edition: Chapter Revelation 19, Location 200032. ““Let us rejoice and exult/ And give him the glory,/ For a the marriage of the Lamb has come,/ And his Bride has made herself ready;/ It was granted her to clothe herself/ With fine linen, bright and pure’/ For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”

CHAPTER 9

EPILOGUE

Thank you for taking time to read and to reflect upon this adventure in SpiritLunking. Like a team of explorers passing through the dark of a cave with lamps lit, the optimism and hope generated by this project in its ministry context did not last long. The dark shadow of grief re-emerged. In the months after the completion of the project, “powers that be” in the congregation moved against the pastoral leadership. The “powers” sought to divide the staff. They sowed dissent in the congregation. Consequently, on Labor Day weekend Sunday a change of pastoral staff was announced at the church. The worship leader who held so much hope and a fresh fire of faith submitted a request for a leave of absence, and eventually resigned. The shadow of grief took its toll. My prayer is that the hope and optimism that had been shared will return after the shadow fades.

APPENDIX

WORSHIP RESOURCES

SpiritLunking, Delivered January 12, 2014

I have a list of verses that I'm going to share from the Gospels. I want to use a piece of each of these this morning to put together the message I'd like to share with you. Each verse points to a larger story, and rather than having the full stories read, I've pulled out a verse to bring the story to your memory. This first one is from the Gospel of Mathew, and is one I'm sure is a familiar verse to you. It is talking about Jesus instructing his disciples to prepare for the time when he is not going to be physically present. And he said, "For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them."

In the Gospel of John Jesus is speaking to the people and he is sharing the reason why he is present with us. He says to the people, "I am the light of the world, and if you will follow me, you won't be stumbling in the darkness because you have the light that leads to life." That is a phrase that comes in the midst of chapter 8 & 9, with chapter 9 being the story of the man who was born blind and later healed. But the larger context of this story is about the religious leaders of Jesus's day. Jesus confronts them with their blindness and inability to lead. Any time they did lead, they would lead people into a ditch (spiritually, that is). They were incapable of seeing the light that had come into the world.

From the Gospel of Luke we have a story of the resurrection of Jesus. He tells his disciples, to look at his hands and feet, and invites them to touch him and make sure he is “real.” There is another translation that simply says, “Touch me and see.”

John 4 is a great story in which we have the story of Jesus in Samaria at the well. His disciples go off to have some lunch and he is in a conversation with a woman at the well. He talks with her about water. Not everyday tap water, but water that quenches thirst for eternity. John 4:13-14, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Paul dresses us up for adventure in the caves. Ephesians 6:14-17, “Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The Gospel is in the details, and in any given detail you can tell the complete story of the Gospel. For this series, the details we will be looking at are the various caves in four Biblical stories, and in these caves we will discover the truth about God’s gospel of grace.

How many of you have been in a cave? What caves have you been in?

(Congregational Interaction) Mammoth? Onondaga? That’s a cave? You didn’t just make that up? Forest Cave? Anybody ever been to Ruby Falls? Lookout Mountain? I remember

going as a little kid to that one. Then when I was a little older we went to Wyandotte Cave in Southern Indiana and went caving.

How do you explore a cave? “Spelunking” is another word for caving. It’s a great word, and it means putting on your gear and getting off the beaten path. I can remember spelunking in Wyandotte Cave and there was a particular place that was very flat and you had to crawl through on your belly and twist your head sideways to get through. I was the last one of the group to go through. There were rocks on either side of me, and as I pushed, it felt like the rocks closed in around my hips. Then I had this image of a great big dragon or some kind of big lizard coming in behind me and eating my legs off, so I got out of there pretty quick!

That was also the time I learned about bats, because in Wyandotte Cave there were a lot of bats. You could go into the bat rooms and they would just be hanging on the ceiling. Because you were in their colony, they weren’t afraid of you. You could actually take them off the ceiling and they could hang from your finger. You could just pet them, then hang them back up on the ceiling when you were done.

There’s just something cool about being in a cave. Small things are magnified. Those of you who have had experiences in caves - did they turn the lights off? If they did, you remember the absolute darkness. Did they perhaps light a match? Or have one little bitty light they turned on? I remember that when there was absolute darkness and silence, the smallest light seemed to illuminate hugely, and the smallest sound just echoed and echoed and echoed.

In caves, the very small things seem to be very large things. And there is a spiritual dynamic in that: That in God, things that we do that are small become great. We

want to make sure that we attend to the small things because in God they have eternal consequences.

Let us think together for a moment about going into a cave. The Isaiah passage I mentioned earlier brings us to our first thought. Isaiah is a prophet and he is saying, “Here’s what God’s going to do and here’s what you’ve done and guess what... they don’t quite meet up and there are going to be consequences.” That is the role of the prophet.

So when God shows up a couple of things happen and everybody scurries to hide. They go into the caves, and they go into the holes in the ground. They do this because first of all, they are afraid of God’s fury, or ‘terror’ as Isaiah puts it, and secondly because they are also afraid of God’s majesty. And I think that is a pretty good parallel, because depending on where you are spiritually, you are either afraid of what God is going to do to you, or you are in such respect and awe of God and the majesty of God that you humble yourself.

It’s in that sense that I want to talk about caves. Because entering a cave is an act of humility—to enter you have to give up safety and the pretentious ways of life above ground. It’s interesting to note that scripture backs up this theory, because any time we hear about caves in scripture they are connected to acts of humility. You will see this played out each time we explore our caves in the weeks to come.

Let’s use the rules of spelunking. First, don’t go alone, take two others with you. This reminds us of Jesus’ words in scripture: “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also.”

There is another scripture we might think about as we think about going into a spiritual cave together. It is in Gospel of John when Jesus is preparing his disciples for his absence. It's a long teaching, chapters 14, 15, 16 and spilling over a little on either end; and it talks about Jesus telling the disciples, "You are no longer disciples, you are no longer students, but you are now my friends."

This is why we go into spiritual caves together, as a group, and with Jesus being our friend. So remember to take somebody with you when you want to grow spiritually. You can't do it alone, you do it in community with others.

Second rule of spelunking: you need to have a source of light. You don't want just one source of light, but you want to have three sources of light per person. This is because you never know when you're going to drop your light or break the bulb, or when a battery is going to run out. Some people will carry two flashlights and one headlamp, and some might carry a candle, a headlamp and a flashlight. Always have three sources.

Our first source of light is our "head" lamp, in other words our *mind*, our *logic*. There are a lot of folks who say you shouldn't question matters of faith, but of course you do. USE your mind, USE your logic, and USE your thinking. God gave you the ability to think, so use it! That is a part of growing spiritually.

Another source of light for our spiritual journey is our "hand" lamp, because we use our hands for what we do...for our work and play. We can also glean spiritual wisdom through what we do.

We used to hear a lot about Celtic spirituality, in which spirituality is not separated from the world, but is developed while you do your daily routine. Doing the

dishes, mopping the floor, going to work, your job at work. Sewing, mending, being an accountant, however you spend your days working becomes a spiritual discipline.

Our third source of light is what I call a “heart” lamp. Just as we use our mind and our hands, we use our hearts. When we think of the heart we think of our emotion, our spirit, and our soul. We think of that connection of one to the other...the relationships we have. And all of these become lamps to us to help guide us in the caves of spiritual depth.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” That light comes to us through our thinking, through our heart, and through our daily activity.

The next scripture that I want to reference is the resurrection one where Jesus says to “touch and see.” When you go into a cave, you need gloves because the rocks are sharp. When you’re in a cave, you always want to have three points of contact with the ground. There are many variations as to how this can be accomplished. The point is that in some way you always connect your body in three different ways with the rocks that surround you. This helps you to stay grounded in the midst of changing shadows, light, and echoing sounds.

Think of waltzing. When you waltz with a partner you stay connected – hand-to-hand, side-by-side, foot-to-foot. Likewise, this is the way we should stay connected to Jesus. We stay grounded in Jesus if we can reach and search with one hand but keep the rest of us grounded and connected with the one we know.

In addition to gloves, other protective gear is needed for spelunking. There is never a bad environment in caving, only bad gear. When spelunking, you’re going to hit your head, so you’ll also need to wear a helmet. When we talk about SpiritLunking, there

are going to be times when we are going to hit our heads. There are going to be times when we need a little bit of protection up there. We have to be ready to knock around a bit, so we'll wear our spiritual helmets.

Spelunking teaches us that we have to be prepared for it to be cold, and we have to be prepared for it to be warm. In caves, the outer surface can be very cool, and the depths can get very hot. So you have to prepare for the changing environment with layers of protective clothing that can be removed as the temperature rises.

The last thing we need to go spelunking OR SpiritLunking is water. When you go into a cave, carry enough water to go in, to come out, and for emergencies.

Our spiritual water supply is Jesus. He gives us living water. And so the more Jesus we have, the deeper we're able to go into the cave, and the deeper we're able to explore in terms of our spiritual life. The more Jesus we have, the more reserves we have for emergencies. The more Jesus we have, the better we are able to make it home.

The five SpiritLunking principles to explore biblical caves are:

- Go with two or more people. "For where two or three gather together..."
- Pack three light sources. "I am the light of the world."
- Keep three points of contact. "Touch me and see."
- Take plenty of water. "A spring of water gushing up to eternal life."
- Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing. "The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit."

Now, the best way to learn is to teach. So this week I'd like you to teach someone what you have learned today about "Spirit-lunking", or exploring our spiritual "caves."

A place where you might be able to do that would be our Upwards program over at the CrossWalk on Saturday mornings. We have more people coming into our buildings during Upwards than at any other time during the year. That's a great place if you can go spend half an hour. You don't have to sign up to do anything, just show up and perhaps use that as your spiritual cave. Take a couple of people with you, and just be present to welcome folks. That would be a great thing to do. Share some water with someone. Shine some light for people. Give them a hug if they seem to be in a dark place.

Use that as your laboratory these next four weeks as we experience these caves. Would you pray with me?

Gracious God, we thank you so much again for this day. We thank you for a challenge to grow spiritually. And we ask Lord that, even though we are preoccupied with our own lives and we have things scheduled and planned, that you would help us to be faithful in sharing and in learning. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

SpiritLunking in the Cave of Joy, Delivered January 19, 2014

John 11

I'd like you to do something with me to help us get into the theme of the day. We'll do this now, and then hear the final portion of the Gospel reading. Stand up with me...you have to stand up, because you have to sit down at the end. Do you remember

this old nursery rhyme? “Ring around the rosy, pockets full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down?” Sing with me...

“Ring around the rosy...” We have our special Shannon crosses; others have a rosary...a special set of beads to assist in praying. The idea is that, going in a circle, as you move the beads through your hand you say a certain prayer. As you get to the gaps between the beads, or to larger beads, then you say a different kind of prayer. “Ring around the rosy” literally means praying your way around the rosary. “Pocket full of posies...” where does that come from? This comes from the days when, after death posies were placed in pockets of the deceased to help offset the odor for the people attending the wake. “Ashes, ashes?” Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, earth to earth. These are part of the litany we use at funerals. This song is actually about the fact that everybody dies. This happy-sounding little nursery rhyme was written to help prepare kids for the reality of death. As we listen to the conclusion of the gospel this morning, think about death. The cave we are entering today is the Cave of Lazarus—or you could say the cave of woe or the cave of grief.

Now, we enter the cave of grief. Remember the five SpiritLunking principles to explore biblical caves:

- Go with two or more people. “For where two or three gather together...”
- Pack three light sources. “I am the light of the world.”
- Keep three points of contact. “Touch me and see.”
- Take plenty of water. “A spring of water gushing up to eternal life.’

- Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing. “The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit.”

When we go into caves, also remember that whatever happens inside a cave is exaggerated. A little sound becomes a big sound, a little motion turns into a big motion. In this story, there is a little spring of water that has eternal implications. We enter at street level. We descend into the darkness. When we experience grief...when we experience sorrow...when we experience woe...it is a descending from light into darkness. There's a dimming that goes on in the mind. We experience a disconnection from the sun. Light collapses into a tunnel. We descend the steps into the cave.

For Jesus, his descent into the cave of grief starts in the North Country. Jesus and his disciples were in trouble in Jerusalem, threatened by the authorities to be stoned if they returned. They flee to the north county. While preaching in the north, he gets word that his friend Lazarus is deathly ill. Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was Jesus' age. Some think Lazarus was the disciple who Jesus loved best. Who knows? We do know this person is very important to Jesus. When Jesus hears of Lazarus' illness, he chooses to return to Judea against all the advice. The disciples fear death if they go with him. Thomas delivers his great line, “Let us all go with him and die together.” Their journey gives us a sense of descending down the dark staircase into the cave of Lazarus.

As one steps down the twenty-four steps into that first chamber of the actual cave, signs showing that people have been worshipping here for hundreds and hundreds of years may be noted. Persons have chiseled at the walls inside the cave to open little niches. The niches may have held memorabilia from loved ones or candles to provide aid.

There are parts of Lazarus' story that chisel at my mind. Parts that hurt to consider yet hold memory and light for my spirit. Why in the world did Jesus not respond to the plea to come quickly and help Lazarus? Why didn't he come right away when he was told this very dear friend was sick? Why didn't he just drop everything and go, since he was going to go anyway? Why the delay? Why does God delay when we pray for him to help us in our own times of need?

Martha and Mary question Jesus. Not so much a question as an accusation, "Lord if you had been here, he wouldn't have died!" We say that too, don't we? When we have tragedy in our own lives and loved ones pass away? "God, if you had been here Margaret wouldn't have died! Why did you let Fred die? Why didn't you show up?" And we are left in the cavernous place, with these niches—like eye sockets that are empty and staring, questioning our faith.

When one descends another level through the floor, it requires crawling on hands and knees. You have to humble yourself to get into these caves. To get down into the chamber of Lazarus, which is down below the initial small chapel area, you have to bow down to be able to enter into and stand in the lower chamber. Here is the body of Lazarus. Here is our beloved. Here is hard evidence against God's grace. Here is the body. Here is not hope. Here is our grave. Here is our pain. Jesus may have not come when Mary and Martha wanted him to, but Jesus comes. Jesus goes with them in their pain. Jesus goes with them down into that chamber, down into the lowest place. Here we have the shortest verse in the Bible, John 11: 35. Two words: "Jesus wept."

Why in the world did Jesus weep? Why in the world would Jesus cry at the death of Lazarus? Jesus could have saved his life, right? Jesus was the one who delayed, right? So

why cry? Jesus knows the resurrection that is to come. Jesus knows that death does not have the final say in this life. In fact didn't he just say, "I am the resurrection and the life?" And yet he weeps. In the King James Version we are told he sheds tears and groans with agony. This just isn't Jesus shedding a sentimental tear. No...Jesus weeps with a heaving chest. Tears roll down his cheeks.

Remember Jesus said that the water he gives is the water of life, and whoever drinks of that water shall know eternal life. I wonder if Jesus is talking about his tears? Because when Jesus weeps something happens. He takes death and gives life. Jesus says, "Lazarus, come out." And Lazarus comes out of the cave. I can't imagine the scene. Again, that causes me to wonder, "Why cry when you know you are going to bring this guy back to life? Why weep so heavily when you experience the pain of the family? When you experience the pain of Mary and Martha? What is this?"

I haven't been traveling alone during the time of preparation for these sermons. I've been traveling with a group of 20-somethings who are connecting with me every week to spend some time talking about these scriptures. They tell me, "This story is about Jesus weeping." I asked them, "What about that? What is happening? What's going on here? Why is it that we can identify so much with Mary and Martha when our loved ones die and we call on the name of Jesus, but there isn't a resurrection for us?" Here's what we discover down in that lower chamber: Jesus takes our grief from us. He enters into the grief that we have and shares the pain of our heart. His tears become springs of living water. In taking that pain from us, he then gives us something. That which he gives us is life. Jesus was all about teaching what happens spiritually, and then showing it in the physical reality so you would know there is a spiritual reality at work that may or may

not be reflected fully in the physical reality. The resurrection of Lazarus--or should we say the *resuscitation*—was a demonstration so that people would know power and life after the experience of grief and death.

Let's go back to Thomas for example. At the resurrection of Jesus, Thomas said what? He said, "I won't believe he is resurrected until I put my finger in his hands and a hand in his side. I don't believe it!" Jesus came to him and, says, "Okay, put your fingers here and your hand here. You're blessed because you've seen and you believe." But then he said, "Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe." Jesus is pointing to the spiritual reality. But he gives evidence physically so we can fully know it spiritually. Remember, Jesus does not have to resurrect every person in this life because there is the resurrection to come. In that time we will truly be renewed as Mary and Martha were renewed. We come to the time of knowing that there is life after this life. We aren't left by Jesus to sit down in the lower chamber of the cave. Instead we can emerge and ascend those steps into a new and regenerated life. Jesus enters into our sorrow so that we may enter into his joy and into his life to come; the cave of grief--the cave of woe—becomes the cave of joy. Amen.

SpiritLunking in the Cave of Kindness, Delivered February 2, 2014

1 Samuel 24: 9-15

A couple of weeks ago we began a series called "SpiritLunking". In SpiritLunking, instead of actual caves, we are exploring the depth of God's grace through biblical caves. Last week we talked about the Cave of Joy through the story of Lazarus. Jesus enters into our grief so that we can enter into his glory and resurrection. Once again let's review the five SpiritLunking principles to explore biblical caves:

- Go with two or more people. “For where two or three gather together...”
- Pack three light sources. “I am the light of the world.”
- Keep three points of contact. “Touch me and see.”
- Take plenty of water. “A spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”
- Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing. “The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit.”

Today’s topic highlights contact...remain connected to who we are in Jesus Christ.

Today, though we have opportunities and abilities to do evil, we don’t. Now, you might think, “That’s an odd statement...of course as Christians we don’t do evil.” Let me frame it for you a little bit. Have you ever experienced betrayal in your life? Let me describe betrayal just for a moment. Betrayal would be those times in which you have a set of expectations about how somebody else is going to act, about how something is going to happen, and then it doesn’t go that way. The person involved doesn’t act the way that you anticipate them to act, and so it comes across to you as if you have been betrayed. If you have experienced that then you are human. We all experience betrayal in our lives. I don’t think anybody gets out of this life without experiencing betrayal.

There’s a flip side to feeling betrayed by another person. Have you ever acted in a way that another person didn’t anticipate and they experienced your actions as betrayal? Now that’s the flip side and it’s the harder side to be on, isn’t it? And yet, we’re not going to get through this life without that happening. One way or another we are going to both

experience betrayal as the person betrayed, and we are going to experience ourselves being the betrayer.

When I think through history, I think of one example of being betrayed that you may remember: The story of Julius Cesar and the Ides of March. On March 15, he was assassinated, and his best friend and confidante was one of the assassins. Remember that scene where, just before the daggers are jabbed into him he looks up and says, “Et tu, Brute?”, “You too, Brutus?” BETRAYAL.

This is the story of a royal betrayal and the retribution that could have been. Scripture takes us to a place to which you may never go - the Ein Gedi Wilderness on the west shore of the Dead Sea. Today tourists travel to the Ein Gedi Nature Reserve and National Park in Israel. You can see wild goats on the rocks, hence the biblical name of the cave, Wild Goats Rocks Cave. This is the cave where David before his kingship hid. Now, follow along with me for a moment. The Dead Sea is down here and Jerusalem is here. One travels vertically 3800 feet in the 48 miles to get to Jerusalem. Shechem is north of Jerusalem another 36 miles. Saul, the King of Israel, rules from the city of Shechem, north of Jerusalem, up in the mountains.

King Saul rules on high, and here comes David. When David first enters our scriptural story, he is a person of no account. Samuel, the prophet of God, chooses a young man to anoint as the new king of Israel. God rejects Saul as king and sends Samuel to anoint the new one. Samuel goes not to the mighty, but to the lowly, the lowest tribe of all the tribes. He goes to the lowest clan within that tribe, and he goes to the lowest family within that clan. And we end up at Jesse’s doorstep. Jesse has several sons. He calls all these sons forward one by one to introduce them to Samuel. Finally Samuel

looks at him and says, “Don’t you have anyone else?” Jesse says quietly, “Well, there’s David. Nobody wants David.” David comes out to meet Samuel, and God’s spirit moves in Samuel’s heart. Samuel anoints David to be the next king over all of Israel. The line of succession follows the anointing of God rather than the bloodline of royalty. Saul has no heart for God. David has a full heart for God.

Thursday night we were at a Casting Crowns concert over in Elkhart. Mark Hill, the lead singer, is a youth pastor from Atlanta Georgia. Mark made mention of David as being “someone who loved God and a giant got in the way.” David truly does love God and wants to do what is right. Most of us remember what happens when the giant Goliath shows up. David takes on Goliath and heads rolled. Saul eventually takes David into his family and thinks of him as his son. His first-born Jonathon and David become best friends. David, we find out, is quite the young man about town. He plays what would be a guitar in our day. He plays this guitar and sings songs, soothing Saul when Saul gets his headaches. Then an act of betrayal takes place. David plays his guitar in the house of the king of Israel, to sooth Saul’s soul. In a moment of jealous rage Saul picks up a spear to skewer David. David leaps out of the way and with the help of Jonathan escapes into the wilderness.

David creates a band of folks who understand that he is passionate for God. They are more than a gang but less than a tribe. We are told in scripture that there are 300 men. Now when you say 300 men, you might picture 300 individuals. But you don’t just picture the individuals. You have to picture their wives with them (and they might have more than one wife), and all their kids. Then there would be all their sheep and all their

goats; and all their donkeys to carry all their gear and all their tents-- this is a community of 300 families following David.

They've gone into the Ein Gedi, into the rocks where the wild goats are, and there's a cave in there. They're hiding out in this place primarily because of the water. The springs are gushing out of the caves, and there are beautiful waterfalls coming down from the cliffs, David's hiding place, 75 miles south by south east of Shechem and 3800 feet below. While in the Wild Goats Rocks Cave...what warfare dictates, what David's men dictate is that David would plan to gain revenge on Saul for his betrayal, that David kill Saul for his attempted murder. Saul shows up with three thousand of the best fighters in Israel. These are the professional soldiers. And they have come to the Ein Gedi to finish what Saul started.

It is hard to hide three hundred families with sheep and goats and tents and children. They did not all pack into the cave at Wild-Goats Rocks. They spread out like a nomadic village in the desert around this oasis. They would have been seen. And so as the army comes by, David goes to hide in the cave with his men so as not to draw Saul's soldiers into a battle. Then, even a king hears the call of nature. There were no public restrooms in those days. And if you're a king, you don't want to be exposed. To answer 'the call' you have to take your armor off. It's like a turtle taking its shell off. You don't want to do that out in the middle of a field or up on a cliff, because you would be vulnerable to attack. You're going to find a cave you can go into where you can take your armor off...where you can take your robes off...where you can rest a little while and..... find relief.

Here is the predicament. Deep into this cave where nobody can see Saul, David is hiding. The deeper Saul goes in, the closer he gets to David, and David realizes he has an

opportunity here. God has delivered his enemy to his hands. By the dictates of warfare, and by the dictates of tribalism, by the dictates of even the Old Testament (which says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) David has every right under God and humanity, to take the life of Saul because of the betrayal he perpetuated.

What would you have done, given the same circumstance? I mean, haven't you felt that desire to get even with somebody? If they've done you wrong, don't you kind of want them treated badly? Or worse? I'm sure David felt that way. But as I said earlier, when you are in a cave--when you go SpiritLunking, you remain grounded. You keep yourself in contact with the rocks at three different points, and only move around to reach with one appendage. David remained grounded in who he is as the anointed one of God. As a person of God he said to himself, "You know what? Saul is also anointed. God anointed him to be leader over Israel. When he is finished, I'll be the leader of Israel. He's a man of God. I'm not going to violate my belief in God in order to get even. I'm going to back off." He shrewdly takes his dagger and he cuts off a piece of Saul's robe. You might remember in one translation of the scriptures it says he cut off his skirt. Most of the better translations say he cuts off the "fringe" or the "tassel."

We have prayer blankets up here on the altar that have fringe. This is what he is talking about. The fringe would hang down out of the armor of the king. I think probably Saul took his armor off, but I don't think he would take this off. You know why that is? The fringe is the *tallit*. The tallit is the prayer shawl an Israelite male would wear at all times to show he was in constant prayer and communion with God. And every one of these little tassels that would be on the bottom of the tallit represents one of the 614 commandments in scripture. So the fringe or tassels say, in effect, "I'm following God."

When David cuts off the tassels, he is saying, “You’re a hypocrite. Because you’re not following the command of God.”

Saul finishes his business, gets himself together, and he goes out of his cave. I imagine him rejoining his armies down in the valley as this figure emerges from the cave up on the cliffs; in a place nobody can really get to him (a great place from which to shout and be heard, amplified by the rocks around him). David shouts down to Saul and says, “God has delivered you to me today. And I have given you that which you can’t give me. Mercy.” And he holds up the tassels from the tallit. If Saul had been a true man of God he would have noticed that the tassels were cut from his prayer cloth. But he didn’t notice. His focus was not on God.

Now... I’m sure David would have received quite a bit of push-back from his own men, who would have shaken their heads and said, “Why in the world didn’t you just take Saul out, then you could have been declared king?” An odd change occurs now. Something happens in Saul’s mind that tells him that he better behave. He says to David, “I will let you live. We are going to go home. But do me this courtesy...when you come into your own kingdom, David, will you please not kill all of my children and wipe out my name, (as I would have yours--that’s the subtext). Because David did that which was of God and not of humanity, the greatness of David-- the story of David’s mercy-- spread like wildfire. And the people of the Kingdom of Israel recognized him in their hearts as their true king, even though Saul was still alive.

David’s greatness emerged because he did the small thing...showing mercy, with great love. You and I may make that same choice as we explore the Cave of Kindness only if we too remain grounded and connected to Jesus Christ. We don’t have to live

under the rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. We don't have to live with the rule of being people who do not show mercy. We can choose to live as God has chosen us to live. As people of peace, give him the glory for our lives. Extend mercy and kindness not to people who deserve it, (including ourselves), but to people who don't deserve it (including ourselves).

SpiritLunking in the Cave of Whisper, Delivered February 9, 2014

1 Kings 19: 1-29

We've been working on a series entitled "SpiritLunking the Caves of the Bible". This is our fourth week on the topic, and our third cave. Remember the five SpiritLunking principles to explore biblical caves are:

- Go with two or more people. "For where two or three gather together..."
- Pack three light sources. "I am the light of the world."
- Keep three points of contact. "Touch me and see."
- Take plenty of water. "A spring of water gushing up to eternal life."
- Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing. "The belt of truth ...the breastplate of righteousness ...shoes of peace ...the shield of faith ...the helmet of salvation ... and the sword of the Spirit."

This morning on our journey we are going into the cave of Elijah...into the Cave of Whispers. To kind of get us in the mood, I just want us to close our eyes and be in

silence for a moment. Hear the sounds around us...take a breath in. (Sound tech plays a recording of whispers in a cave.)

You find yourself in the cave of Elijah if you have ever said something like:

“I did my part and I’m just done.”

“I’ve been doing this a long time, and others can step in and take my place.”

“I think I’ll just pack it all up and go to Florida.”

“God, I already did it all...I’m not doing any more.”

Those who have been zealous for God, who have put the extra energy in for God and they have just ‘had it up to here’ know the darkness in the Cave of Whispers. You and Elijah may have a lot in common. A tenderfoot of faith does not enter this cave. The old soldier enters here after their final battle. Let me explain a little bit. If you haven’t read about Elijah in First Kings, it really is a fascinating story. The story centers on Elijah’s conflict with Ahab. Today most of us know Ahab as that wily captain of the ship searching for the great white whale Moby Dick. That captain got his name based on this King Ahab of Israel. The writers of First Kings make it clear to us that King Ahab fails spiritually, morally and administratively as king. You may think of some pretty bad kings. Ahab is the worst of them all. He puts the despicable in “me.” Ahab worships the Baals. Baal worship centered on human sacrifice. Not just any human sacrifice, but the sacrifice of human babies. He also worshiped Asherah, and put up Asherah poles. The worship of Asherah used temple prostitution. Ahab had some bad stuff happening. He married Jezebel. When you hear, ‘Oh she’s a Jezebel,’ do you think, “Oh, she’s the wholesome character?” Oh no...you think quite the opposite. Ahab and Jezebel, two peas in a pod, were the worst of the worst.

Enter Elijah, the prophet of God who says, “Here is what God says, and here is what you are doing and guess what? They’re not the same, so there are consequences to bear.” Jezebel responds. Jezebel rounded up all the prophets of God. It would be like saying she rounded up all the pastors in Noble County, and she had them put to death. She then brought in all the priests of Baal and the priests of Asherah, and sat them at her table every day and fed them from the public coffers. God raises up the prophet Elijah to challenge Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah calls the Jezebel’s priest out at high noon to a show down. 450 of these priests of Baal and Asherah come forward to do spiritual battle with Elijah. He says, “Bring all of Israel, bring everybody in the country, and bring all your priests up to Mt. Carmel and let’s have a contest to see whose god is a real god.”

“Tell you what we’ll do. You make an offering to your god...sacrifice a bull and lay it out on a pile of rocks and wood, and you call on your god to start the fire. And I’ll do the same. But you go first, because there is only one of me left. And there are all of you. So you go first.” All day long, they pranced around their offering getting more and more fanatical, and as the day goes on and no fire burns. Elijah taunts them. “What? Is your god napping?” “Is your god out?” “Is your god incapacitated or just lazy?” “Is your god using the privy?” Evening draws nigh, and it’s time for the evening sacrifice. Elijah puts together an altar of 12 stones and gathers the wood and sacrifices a bull laying it on the altar. He tells the people to pour water on the altar. And he tells them to pour it again, again and again. Soon they have to dig a trench as there is so much water pooling around the altar. Elijah calls out with a loud voice, “Lord God, this is a sacrifice for you. Light its fire.” And God does.

In an instant the fire consumes the offering, consumes the wood, consumes the rocks, and, even consumes the water. Elijah then says, “Ok folks, who is the real God?” The people of Israel riot and kill the prophets of Baal and Asherah. Elijah flees the carnage knowing that Ahab and Jezebel seek to unleash vengeance upon him. Think of the coastline of Israel, at the top of the little peninsula jutting into the Mediterranean, sits Mt. Carmel where the dueling sacrifices took place. Elijah runs. We are told that he goes to Bathsheba, 120 miles south in southern Judea. Elijah leaves his servant in Bathsheba and runs another day into the wilderness. We are not sure exactly where. Elijah goes to pray and to die. He believes everybody who serves the Lord has been partitioned in from Jezebel’s hate. He believes himself to be alone and finished, having failed God. God’s faithfulness came through with water and bread. God calls the revived Elijah to make one more journey.

Any time you hear the number 40 in scripture, it ought to be a signpost for you. God is up to something. Remember Moses and the Hebrew slaves traveled 40 years in the wilderness. Remember Noah and the forty days and nights of rain. Remember Jesus fasting 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and runs for 40 days and 40 nights (not including Sundays). Elijah traveled 40 days and nights. God is up to something. God is not done with Elijah. God is going to do something.

Elijah walks to Mount Horeb. Where in the world is Mount Horeb? After all these years, scholars have not been able to figure this out. You can read all kinds of debates about where it is, and different archeologists and biblical scholars sharing with you where this is, where this cave actually exists. I think the best probable place is somewhere in

modern day Saudi Arabia. Nobody really knows. Because we really don't know, we use the little cave at Mount Carmel celebrate Elijah's story. Elijah goes into a cave in the mountain of God. He is going to the place where God called the Hebrew children out of Egypt and made for them a community of faith. He goes back "home". He goes back to the birth of the faith. He goes back to a cave there. Again, he lies down to die. He utters, "I'm done." Elijah has done all he could for God, so lays down to be found by Jezebel. He lays down for the end. Jezebel is not the only pursuer of Elijah. God pursues him. God doesn't leave Elijah alone.

Imagine him just lying there, in this cave thinking, "Ok, I'm ready. Just take me. I'm letting go now. I'm letting go, just take me." But then somewhere a voice says, "Elijah what are you doing here?" We can listen to that in a couple of different ways: "What are you doing here? Why are you lying in this cave all by yourself in the middle of nowhere? Why have you chosen this location? You aren't supposed to be here, you're supposed to be somewhere else!" Or, you can hear it as: "Elijah, what are you doing here?" "What are you *doing*?" Implying, "you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing." Perhaps it's both: "What are you doing because you're not doing what I want you to be doing, and what are you doing here because you're not where I want you to be?" God comes to Elijah. Wind shatters stone and an earthquake shatters mountains. God is not in the wind or the earthquake. After the commotion comes silence. Again, a whisper of a question lands on Elijah's ear, "Elijah...what are you doing here?"

God whispers to Elijah because God's work is not done. Therefore, Elijah's work is not done. Elijah does not know what God knows. Because as the story progresses, Elijah says, "I'm the only one, poor me," God says, "No, there are 7,000 just like you." Huh.

Elijah didn't know about the others until God told him. God gives Elijah his marching orders: "Go, anoint two kings, neither of whom have anything to do with Israel or Judea—they are kings from other kingdoms-- God's sovereignty over all. I am not just the God of Israel and Judea, I am the God of all nations." Then, "Go anoint Elisha, as your replacement." You and I know that the kings Elijah anoints are instruments God uses to bring justice upon Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah doesn't need to know. Yet, you and I find out God's purpose in the next story. Next Elijah is to raise up his replacement.

When God punches our job ticket and gives us something to do, it is a unique task that only we can do. In the end God wins, but how does God get it done? God's will works through willing people. God chose Elijah to get things done. God chooses you and I to get things done. But if Elijah says 'no', there is no one to go anoint the two kings. If Elijah says 'no', there is no one to raise up his replacement. When we enter into the cave of Elijah, where we go to that place of self-pity and say, "Oh, I've done my part," there is actually still work to be done. God's work is not done. God hasn't said to you, "Go ahead and give up," has he? When we go into the Cave of Elijah, what we understand is that God still has a job ticket and God still pursues us because there are a couple of things yet to be done. We are to anoint the leaders who come after us. We are called to lift somebody up to take our place.

Have you lifted up somebody to take your place? I'm not talking about making babies, I am asking: Have you lifted someone up spiritually? Have you mentored someone in the faith, so they can carry on in the faith? Have you? If you have not, then there is still work to be done. Are you identifying leaders and lifting them to replace

you? Are you making sure there is somebody ready to be sitting in the pew when you are no longer there?

The cave of Elijah is a hard-knock cave. You don't get into that cave unless you've been zealous for God. You may feel pursued and persecuted, but God is not going to leave you there. God will come after you. And the question God has for you is: "What in the world are you doing here? Get out there. Get back in the game." Amen.

SpiritLunking the Cave of Wonder, Delivered February 16, 2014

This morning our text is a single verse that comes to us from Matthew 28. See if you recognize this:

"The Angel said to the women (and these women would be Mary Magdalene, Mary, sister of Martha, Mary, the mother of Jesus), "Do not be afraid for I know you are looking for Jesus who is crucified, but he is not here. He has risen just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

This is the last Sunday we will be talking about SpiritLunking (going into the depth of God's grace). Certainly we will continue to talk about God's grace in the future, but today we are looking at it from within the framework of caves in scripture. To review a bit for those who may not have been with us in the beginning of the series, we've been looking at spelunking, which is the exploration of caves. And when you go spelunking, you need to:

- Go with two or more people.
- Keep three points of contact.
- Pack three light sources.
- Wear gloves and helmets and layer clothing.

- Take plenty of water.

The story we have today is one that completely blows any sense of orientation out of the water. And...it's important to notice that there are three people who are helping out. If you thought, "Well this must be the story of the resurrection from the Gospel of Matthew," you would be exactly right.

It is curious to me that when we have this little bit of scripture that we are looking at today, the first thing that the angel of the Lord said was, "Do not be afraid." Because...you OUGHT to be afraid. You SHOULD be afraid, as you go into this cave.

You should be afraid about going into this cave, and not just because caves are scary places. There was a lot of fear surrounding the time that Jesus lay in the tomb. Jesus' followers are afraid and these women who came early that morning to this cave are afraid. There was also a lot of fear among those who brought Jesus to his death. They were perhaps the ones who were the most afraid.

We have the story in scripture about how Jesus was given the tomb, the cave of Joseph of Arimathea in order to have his body laid to rest. If you go to Jerusalem today and visit the Shrine of the Holy Sepulcher where Jesus lay, you will find that over the centuries people have chipped away at this cave until there is very little left of it. There is a slab of stone where his body lay, and there is just a little portion of a rock where his head lay. The cave is completely gone. It's been gone for hundreds of years because shrine after shrine has been built around it and it really doesn't look anything like a cave. But over to the side there is a place where you can get a sense of what it was like, because there is the tomb where Joseph of Arimathea is buried. There you can see that a burial cave was just a space that was hollowed out of a rock. It's pretty interesting to see,

but there's not a whole lot to it. It's not fancy, but it does show what it was like in Jesus' day—just a hole in the side of the rock.

The folks who put Jesus to death knew the prophecies, and because Jesus said he would rise again they wanted to make sure that didn't happen. They didn't believe it was going to happen anyway, but they wanted to make sure that nobody would steal Jesus' body and SAY he had been resurrected. What they did was what typically would have been done at the front of these burial caves.

What they would do is take a large, round stone shaped like a wheel, maybe a foot to a foot and a half thick. It would have weighed a couple of tons, so 10 to 12 STRONG people would have to be there to move it away. And not only was this stone placed at the opening of the cave, but they also dug a trench out of the rock in front, so the stone rolled down like a wheel and sat in this groove in front of the hole. You not only had to roll the stone away, but you had to roll it uphill to get it out from in front of the tomb.

Not only did they place this stone, they also sealed the cave. What does that mean to seal a cave? Perhaps you've seen a police investigation, and you've seen the crime scene sealed with yellow tape. Well, that tape doesn't really seal anything, but if you break it open it is clear that somebody has entered the area. In a similar manner, the high priests would have put a big, wax seal between the rock and the side of the mountain. If anything moved that rock at all it would break the seal and they would KNOW that somebody had gotten in.

Then they stationed guards. These weren't just any guards, but these were temple guards--the best of the best. This was Seal Team Six—the people who give their lives completely over to their job as warrior. It was their job to protect and defend. They were

assigned to protect and defend this tomb under penalty of death. If anybody disturbed the tomb, they knew their life was forfeited. Fear was what motivated the temple leaders to go to such extremes to make sure no one got into the tomb.

Now let's think about the three women who were walking down the path. They were also motivated by fear, because the Sabbath law of the land had not allowed them time to prepare Jesus' body correctly on Friday. They wanted to add more of the anointing oils and spices to the cloths that were covering his body. They wanted to do it right.

Here they are on the first day of the week, wanting to make things right, and they are filled with fear because they know the tomb is guarded and sealed with the heavy stone. Their fears, however, took another direction when they arrived at the tomb. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that the Angel of the Lord was waiting at the tomb. We don't really know what the angel of the Lord looked like except through testimony of a very bright light. The first thing the angel does is take that stone and flip it to the side as if it were a tiddlywink. The scripture also said that the temple guards stood paralyzed in fear. The soldiers are paralyzed? This is a Seal Team paralyzed in fear. The women are terrified at the power the angel displayed. Can you imagine someone going up and flipping the stone like that?

Then the angel rocks their world in a way we can't imagine, because we have grown up hearing the story of Jesus' resurrection. He says, "Why are you here looking for Jesus? Jesus is alive. He's up north waiting on you." I can't even begin to imagine what is going through these women's minds when they hear this angel of the Lord say these things.

There is a common fact that applies to all of the caves that we have visited in this sermon series. That fact is that these caves are not our home, and God does not intend for us to stay in them.

We have visited some caves that may be very important to us. The first cave we visited was the cave of Lazarus, or the cave of sorrow. Jesus came to that cave--that tomb-- and spoke words of resurrection. We can visit that cave. We can remember our losses and missed opportunities. And the way Jesus responds to us after we lay down those losses is with new life.

The second cave we visited was the cave of David, the cave of warriors or enemies. We cannot live in that cave either. That is a cave where we meet our enemies, and through God's grace and the deepening of our relationship with God we are able to respond to our enemies graciously rather than with what they deserve. But we cannot stay there. We have to go out and take that teaching with us.

We heard last week about the cave of whisper, or the cave of Elijah. This was the cave where Elijah went to give up! He was laying his life down and just said, "Let me die!" He lay down to die but he couldn't die - and why? Because God's work is not yet done so Elijah's work was not done. So we can go to that place, but we cannot stay there because we experience God's grace coming to us and saying, "No, you have more work to do." The work that Elijah still needed to do was go out and anoint a mentee. He needed to mentor someone to take his place. He also had to call forth someone to anoint as king – the leader that God would use in the future.

The cave we came to this morning is the cave of wonder. And we would really love to stay in this cave, but it's just a dark hole in the ground. There's nothing pretty

about it. You wouldn't go into this cave and make a home. More importantly: *Jesus isn't there.*

Can you imagine the Marys' shock when they discover that Jesus wasn't where they left him? You know how it is when you go to get something and it's not where you thought it was, and you start slamming things around in frustration trying to find it. Well...think of how frustrated and terrified these women were when they lost Jesus, and all they had was this empty space where he was supposed to be.

We cannot live in this cave. If we were to choose to stay in this cave, we would become despondent. A sense of giving up would take over. If we were to choose to stay in this cave of wonder, there would be depression. There would be a sense of emptiness and loss. If we were to choose to stay in this cave of wonder, there would be capitulation...accepting that this is what it is, and the shrugging of shoulders that says, "Ok, I've just got to live with it."

But to experience the wonder of the cave of wonder, you have to go out and experience the wonder of God who IS the wonder. He is no longer in the cave. In fact, in this story Jesus is not even in the present. Sometimes today we will say, "Jesus is with me right now." Well in this story Jesus is not with them right then; he is in their future. Jesus is up in Galilee and they have to do something and travel to get where Jesus is.

To experience Jesus Christ, the wonder of wonders, we cannot stay back where he was. We cannot stay in the past. We have to step into his presence and into the future that he has prepared for us.

Today is a very special day in the life of this congregation, because this is the day that we are coming together to say that we are not going to stay in a cave of wonder. We

are going to go out and discover the wonder of wonders that is our future. This is the day that we come together as a church and say, “This is a new beginning for us as a congregation and also as a community. We are going to seek the Christ who is risen.”

MEDIA USED IN WORSHIP FOR THE SERMON SERIES

Please go to <http://spiritlunking.tumblr.com>

WORSHIP FLOW CHARTS FOR THE PREACHING SERIES



The Cross Walk

Rules of the Cave

January 12, 2014

SpiritLunking

Length in mins		Notes
Pre-Worship		
5:00	Tech Team Prayer and Devotions Tech Team Prayer Tech Leader for the Morning Reminds Tech Team to Create Something Wonderful for God and Leads team in prayer for each other and for those coming to worship.	
15:00	Gathering Pre Service Time Starts at 10:10 AM. This is the time to prepare last things and to greet people. The commercials are running on the screens. Music to enhance the worship theme is played.	
5:00	Count Down 5 Minute Count Down Starts at 10:25 AM. Platform servants go to back stage for prayer with the Experience Leader	
6:00	Previews-Announcements	
Worship		
0:45	Who is sitting next to you? "Share the ministry that you are doing through this church with one other person." Invite people to greet at least one other person. Do not let the energy fade from the room. Move to Focus Prayer with in 30 to 45 seconds.	
0:30	Centering Prayer	
0:00	Worship Theme Experience	
0:00	Video	
0:00	Introducing Lois Tomayo	
0:00	Trading My Sorrows Begin at 10:30 AM High Energy. You want to see people dancing spontaneously as they come into worship.	
0:00	Forever	
0:00	Friend Of God	

Length in mins	Notes
0:20 Travel Music For Children Music to Bring Children Forward	
3:00 Small Talk with Kathy and Brenda Children's Leader Brings Children forward.	
0:20 Travel Music For Children Music for Children to move from worship space to learning space	
0:30 Text Message 140 Character Scripture Quotation The text message is a quote from Scripture that can be sent as a tweet or text message. Limited to 140 characters. Read by the Experience Leader or one s/he designates. One slip on PPT.	
12:00 SpiritLunking	
0:20 Transition Music To Prayer Time Must Transition from Children's Travel Music to Prayer Travel Music	
2:00 Prayer Introduction with Music Underneath As the Prayer Leader announces prayer band music needs to come in underneath with a quite slow version of prayer song. As the prayer song begins, the tempo comes up and the singing begins.	
0:00 <i>I Give You My Heart</i> As the introduction into the prayer song ends, the band brings up the song and leads the congregation until the prayer leaders plays. During the prayer, the singer keep humming the melody and instruments keep the song going very quietly and half tempo. When the prayer is over, the volume comes back to normal.	
5:00 Pastoral Prayer-Cody guitar plays underneath lightly	
0:00 <i>I Give You My Heart</i>	
0:00 <i>Everlasting God</i> Blow the Doors off of the Building and the Worshippers into the Street	
0:00 Prayer and Dismissal	
Post-Worship	
2:00 Band Jam-Fun for all Band Jams to something they really like. Not structured, just fun.	
10:00 Recorded Music Musc that reinforces the morning theme.	
30:45	



The Cross Walk

Cave of Grief

January 19, 2014

SpiritLunking

Length in mins	Notes
Pre-Worship	
5:00	Tech Team Prayer and Devotions Tech Team Prayer Tech Leader for the Morning Reminds Tech Team to Create Something Wonderful for God and Leads team in prayer for each other and for those coming to worship.
15:00	Gathering Pre Service Time Starts at 10:10 AM. This is the time to prepare last things and to greet people. The commercials are running on the screens. Music to enhance the worship theme is played.
5:00	Count Down 5 Minute Count Down Starts at 10:25 AM. Platform servants go to back stage for prayer with the Experience Leader
6:00 Previews-Announcements	
Worship	
0:45	Who is sitting next to you? "Share the ministry that you are doing through this church with one other person." Invite people to greet at least one other person. Do not let the energy fade from the room. Move to Focus Prayer with in 30 to 45 seconds.
0:30	Centering Prayer
0:00	Worship Theme Experience
3:00	<i>Your Grace Is Enough</i>
5:23	<i>Open The Eyes Of My Heart</i>
0:20	Travel Music For Children Music to Bring Children Forward
3:00	Small Talk with Kathy and Brenda Children's Leader Brings Children forward.
0:20	Travel Music For Children Music for Children to move from worship space to learning space

Length in mins	Notes
0:30	Text Message John 11:35, "Jesus wept." The text message is a quote from Scripture that can be sent as a tweet or text message. Limited to 140 characters. Read by the Experience Leader or one s/he designates. One slip on PPT.
12:00	Worship Experience
0:20	Transition Music To Prayer Time Must Transition from Children's Travel Music to Prayer Travel Music
2:00	Prayer Introduction with Music Underneath As the Prayer Leader announces prayer band music needs to come in underneath with a quite slow version of prayer song. As the prayer song begins, the tempo comes up and the singing begins.
5:00	Here I Am To Worship As the introduction into the prayer song ends, the band brings up the song and leads the congregation until the prayer leaders plays. During the prayer, the singer keep humming the melody and instruments keep the song going very quietly and half tempo. When the prayer is over, the volume comes back to normal.
5:00	Pastoral Prayer guitar plays underneath lightly
5:00	Here I Am To Worship
0:00	Trading My Sorrows Energy moves from Medium to High to Low.
3:00	Prayer of Commitment Preacher of the day prays for the people in worship.
3:00	Close Worship Song Blow the Doors off of the Building and the Worshippers into the Street
Post-Worship	
2:00	Band Jam-Fun for all Band Jams to something they really like. Not structured, just fun.
10:00	Recorded Music Musc that reinforces the morning theme.
55:08	



The Cross Walk

Cave of Kindness

February 2, 2014

SpiritLunking

	Notes
Pre-Worship	
Tech Team Prayer and Devotions	
Tech Team Prayer Tech Leader for the Morning Reminds Tech Team to Create Something Wonderful for God and Leads team in prayer for each other and for those coming to worship.	
Gathering	
Pre Service Time Starts at 10:10 AM. This is the time to prepare last things and to greet people. The commercials are running on the screens. Music to enhance the worship theme is played.	
Count Down	
Starts at 10:25 AM. Platform servants go to back stage for prayer with the Experience Leader	
Previews-Announcements	
Worship	
Who's sitting next to you?	
"Share the ministry that you are doing through this church with one other person." Invite people to greet at least one other person. Do not let the energy fade from the room. Move to Focus Prayer with in 30 to 45 seconds.	
Centering Prayer	
Video from Firewalker	
You're Worthy Of My Praise	
High Energy. You want to see people dancing spontaneously as they come into worship.	
Everlasting God	
Worship Song	
Travel Music For Children	
Please, Praise band do this. Anything but "The Lord's Army."	
Small Talk with Kathy and Brenda	
Children's Leader Brings Children forward.	
Travel Music For Children	

	Notes
<p>Text Message From 1 Samuel 24, David says "As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you..." Saul says, "When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today." The text message is a quote from Scripture that can be sent as a tweet or text message. Limited to 140 characters. Read by the Experience Leader or one s/he designates. One slip on PPT.</p>	
Worship Experience	
Transition Music To Prayer Time	
Prayer Introduction	
<i>Mighty To Save</i>	
<p>Pastoral Prayer guitar plays underneath lightly</p>	
Prayer Song Reprise	
<p>The Table of Jesus (First Sunday of the Month) Table of Jesus is Holy Communion</p>	
<i>Trading My Sorrows</i>	
<p>Prayer of Commitment Preacher of the day prays for the people in worship.</p>	
Close Worship Song	
Post-Worship	
<p>Band Jam-Fun for all Band Jams to something they really like. Not structured, just fun.</p>	
<p>Recorded Music Musc that reinforces the morning theme.</p>	



The Cross Walk

Cave of Whisper

February 9, 2014

SpiritLunking

	Notes
Pre-Worship	
Tech Team Prayer and Devotions	
Tech Team Prayer Tech Leader for the Morning Reminds Tech Team to Create Something Wonderful for God and Leads team in prayer for each other and for those coming to worship.	
Gathering	
Pre Service Time Starts at 10:10 AM. This is the time to prepare last things and to greet people. The commercials are running on the screens. Music to enhance the worship theme is played.	
Count Down	
Starts at 10:25 AM. Platform servants go to back stage for prayer with the Experience Leader	
Previews-Announcements	
Worship	
Who's sitting next to you?	
"Share the ministry that you are doing through this church with one other person." Invite people to greet at least one other person. Do not let the energy fade from the room. Move to Focus Prayer with in 30 to 45 seconds.	
Centering Prayer	
Introducing and reviewing SpiritLunking	
A Pause to Think About Valentines Day	
You Are Good	
Forever	
Travel Music For Children	
Please, Praise band do this. Anything but "The Lord's Army."	
Small Talk with Kathy and Brenda	
Children's Leader Brings Children forward.	
Travel Music For Children	

	Notes
Text Message Text Message: 1 Kings 19:9c, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" The text message is a quote from Scripture that can be sent as a tweet or text message. Limited to 140 characters. Read by the Experience Leader or one s/he designates. One slip on PPT.	
Introducing The Cave of Whispers	
Audio Experience of "The Cave of Elijah"	
Worship Experience (Sermon)	
Transition Music To Prayer Time	
Prayer Introduction	
<i>How Great Is Our God</i>	
Prayer for the Community with Cody guitar plays underneath lightly	
Prayer Song Reprise	
<i>Trading My Sorrows</i>	
Dismissal with Blessing Preacher of the day prays for the people in worship.	
Post-Worship	
Band Jam-Fun for all Band Jams to something they really like. Not structured, just fun.	
Recorded Music Musc that reinforces the morning theme.	



The Cross Walk

Combined Worship
@ Cross Walk: Cave
of Life

February 16, 2014

SpiritLunking

Notes

Pre-Worship

Tech Team Prayer and Devotions

Tech Team Prayer

Tech Leader for the Morning Reminds Tech Team to Create Something Wonderful for God and Leads team in prayer for each other and for those coming to worship.

Gathering

Pre Service Time

Starts at 10:10 AM. This is the time to prepare last things and to greet people. The commercials are running on the screens. Music to enhance the worship theme is played.

Count Down

Starts at 10:25 AM. Platform servants go to back stage for prayer with the Experience Leader

Worship

Welcome

Experience Leader: Byron

Who's sitting next to you?

"Share the ministry that you are doing through this church with one other person."

Invite people to greet at least one other person. Do not let the energy fade from the room. Move to Focus Prayer with in 30 to 45 seconds.

Experience Leader: Byron

Centering Prayer

Experience Leader: Byron

Intro and Review to SpiritLunking

Worship Theme Experience-Cave of Wonders "Sardines"

Experience Leader: Byron

You Are Good

Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo
Vocals: Lori Miller, Barb Dragoo, Geoff Hemmick, Nathan Denton, Candy Kaiser

Amazing Grace

Choir will sing traditional song

	Notes
Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) Praise Team will sing the contemporary song	Band: Chris Kidd, Matt Leatherman, Frank Pizana, Josuè Guevara, Jose Taylor, Kelly Stephens Abby Guevara, Candy Kaiser Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo Vocals: Lori Miller, Barb Dragoo, Geoff Hemmick, Nathan Denton, Candy Kaiser
Travel Music For Children Please, Praise band do this. Anything but "The Lord's Army."	Children's Leader: Kathy and Brenda
Small Talk with Kathy and Brenda Children's Leader Brings Children forward.	Children's Leader: Kathy and Brenda
Text Message Matthew 28:5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." The text message is a quote from Scripture that can be sent as a tweet or text message. Limited to 140 characters. Read by the Experience Leader or one s/he designates. One slip on PPT.	Experience Leader: Byron Kaiser
Worship Experience	Experience Leader: Byron
Transition Music To Prayer Time	
Prayer Introduction	Experience Leader: Cody Cripe
Sweet Hour Of Prayer	Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo Vocals: Lori Miller, Barb Dragoo, Geoff Hemmick, Nathan Denton, Candy Kaiser
Prayers for the Community guitar plays underneath lightly	Experience Leader: Cody Cripe
Reprise Sweet Hour of Prayer	Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo Vocals: Lori Miller, Barb Dragoo, Geoff Hemmick, Nathan Denton, Candy Kaiser
Consecration of Lois and Cody	
What it means to be called into ministry. Pastor Pedro Tamayo	
Anointing Prayer	
Testimonies of Lois and Cody	
Ministry Gifts Presented to Lois and Cody	
Pastor Then Congregation Blessing	
There Is Power In The Blood (Power In The Blood)	Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo Vocals: Lori Miller, Barb Dragoo, Geoff Hemmick, Nathan Denton, Candy Kaiser
Dismissal with Blessing Preacher of the day prays for the people in worship.	Experience Leader: Byron
Post-Worship	

Notes				
Band Jam-Fun for all			Experience Leader: Lois Tamayo	
Band Jams to something they really like. Not structured, just fun.				
Recorded Music				
Music that reinforces the morning theme.				
Audio/Visual				
Audio	Computer	Lights		
Chris Egolf	Don Gimbrone ?	Nicholas Kathary ?		
Band				
Acoustic Guitar	Bass Guitar	Drums	Electric Guitar	Electric Guitar
Kelly Stephens	Abby Guevara	Frank Pizana	Jose Taylor ?	Josue' Guevara ?
Children's				
Small Talk				
Kathy Holsinger ?				
Spiritual Guides				
Experience Guide	Praise Leader	Prayer Guide		
Byron Kaiser	Lois Tamayo	Cody Cripe ?		
Vocals				
Alto	Soprano	Tenor	Tenor	
Barb Dragoo	Lori Miller ?	Geoff Hemmick	Nathan Denton ?	

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