

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Hearts Perfected in Love:**

#### **A Wesleyan Pursuit of Christian Perfection Through the Practice of the Means of Grace**

by

B. Keith Allen

Anglicans are a people distinguished within the Church by the practice of a Prayer Book Spirituality. The Prayer Book orders the communal life of the Church daily, weekly, and seasonally in prayer, scripture, and worship. The aim is to form mature disciples who will incarnate a Christian witness, as well as promulgate the good news of salvation to both neighbor and the nations. John Wesley was a leading light in his day of how this form of Christian living and witness could change the course of nations as he impacted both England and colonial America.

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the level of engagement in prayer book spirituality, or the practice of the means of grace, within the parish of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. The researcher selected fifteen participants from the membership to participate in a seminar entitled Hearts Perfected in Love. The participants completed a pre-test survey and a post-test survey to measure the impact of the seminar on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors around the practice of the means of grace.

The research demonstrated that participants had a varied understanding and practice of the means of grace at the outset of the project. The seminar served to clarify understanding and increase participation in the practice of the means of grace.

Significant change occurred in the participants self-evaluation of their spiritual condition following the seminar. In addition, the participants began to engage in means of grace, such as fasting, with which they had never engaged in prior to the seminar. The research revealed that the regular practice of the means of grace has a transforming impact on one's spiritual formation. The project also revealed that the Book of Common Prayer is an effective tool to aid one in the regular practice of the means of grace.

Hearts Perfected in Love

A Wesleyan Pursuit of Christian Perfection Through the Practice of the Means of Grace

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by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter One provides the framework for evaluating current knowledge, attitudes, and practices among congregants of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida concerning the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness. The researcher provides a rationale for the project evolving from research and evaluation. Included in the overview of the research project are the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how the results are collected and analyzed. To add support for this type of project, themes of literature review and contextual factors are identified. Further discussion of the project results establishes the significance for and impact on the practice of ministry.

#### **Personal Introduction**

I have been a priest and church planter within the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) since its beginning in 2009. The province was born as a result of theological crisis within the Episcopal Church USA (TEC), which necessitated thousands of communicants, many priests, whole congregations, and even a few dioceses in whole to leave. These courageous Christians left their buildings, friends, family, and pensions behind to form a new and orthodox Anglican home here in the North America.

This is the milieu in which I have served as a priest, planted churches, and shepherded souls. The Anglicans have been building a new province, planting new churches, building new buildings, caring for their cities, and all while fighting legal battles and mending broken hearts. Thus, my ministry has been one where I have been

called on to be a catalyst for building a new future as well as caring for broken and wounded hearts.

As I have lived in this culture, I have noticed that while the leadership has sounded the call for planting churches and caring for souls, Anglicans have not discussed the corresponding needs of spiritual formation with the same fervor. In addition, I have felt the weight of responsibility as a parish priest to not only have a place to worship, but to help people to be fully formed as disciples growing in the Lord and sharing his grace with others. I have a passion for Anglican history, sacraments, and liturgy but also an apathy toward the personal incarnation of the truth that undergirds our faith as Anglicans. These realities caused me to begin to ask myself about the practice of spiritual formation among the parishes of the ACNA, most especially my own parish, Christ Church of Vero Beach, Florida. My observations lead me to fear that much of what is called spiritual formation is merely information transfer that results in no lasting transformation for the disciple or our community.

The process of spiritual formation is grounded in the mandate from the Lord to make disciples and the means of grace given to execute this mandate. In my parish, a corresponding priority to make disciples does not exist. In the five years prior to my coming as rector, regular Sunday morning discipleship for adults or teens did not occur. No process existed for evaluation and equipping of disciples. This lack caused me to ask, “The command and the tools are given to us by the Lord, but what are the attitudes, knowledge, and practices of the people of Christ Church Vero Beach?”

The life and ministry of John Wesley has served as a witness to me and a model for how I would seek to minister in my parish. Wesley’s pastoral influence resulted in a

measurable growth in both personal and public holiness among the people known as Methodists. In addition, Wesley had impact on the society in the areas of social justice for the poor, education, medicine, and government reform. He was an Anglican priest who preached the gospel, disciplined his flock, and helped to bring transformation to his culture. Wesley's was an example of a life transformed that then is used to transform others and even to transform the world. I want to examine and be informed by his life in the pursuit of similar ends in my own life and ministry at Christ Church Vero Beach.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) has focused on church planting as the ACNA was birthed in the midst of a theological crisis. Christ Church Vero Beach was formed when several hundred members, along with the rector and clergy, walked out of Trinity Episcopal Church at the conclusion of the Eucharist. They left behind the building, friends, and years of faithful ministry for the sake of the gospel. They moved into a rented space next to a bowling alley. They answered the call to leave everything for the sake of the gospel.

The first Archbishop of the ACNA, Robert Duncan, issued a challenge to plant one thousand new churches within the period of his archiepiscopacy. ACNA celebrated its tenth anniversary with more than one thousand parishes. Christ Church is one of those new parishes, which, along with others, serves as amazing evidence of the hand of God upon the province. These new parishes are not built around beautiful buildings but around the building of the Kingdom of God.

However, the planting of churches, evangelism of the lost, and ministry in the community require a group of growing disciples. This need is seen in parishes like Christ

Church Vero Beach, which is made up of members who have been faithful followers of Christ for many years, those who are new believers, others who had left the church and are coming back, and yet others who come from other traditions. Each of these realities brings the need for a robust plan for spiritual formation. Thus, the question becomes how should this be accomplished? The Lord left the Great Commandment to love God and love neighbor. He also gave us the means of grace as instruments of growing in holiness, which Wesley calls love, both personally and publicly.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project was to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness.

### **Research Questions**

#### **Research Question #1**

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness prior to the seminar?

#### **Research Question #2**

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness following the seminar?

### **Research Question #3**

What aspects of the seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness had the greatest impact on the observed changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior among the participants?

### **Rationale for the Project**

The reason this project matters is because when Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (*English Standard Version*, Luke 10.27). Thus, spiritual formation, equipping, and enabling the church to love God and love others is the seminal commandment for those who would follow Jesus.

The declaration of Christ is a call to radical transformation. One can imagine that those present would be shaken to hear that entrance into eternal life was not first about adherence to the Law, the result of learning, or having the right lineage but rather a radical giving of oneself to loving God and others. Love is ultimate for those belonging to God while obedience and good works are the overflow of a heart given in love to God. Obedience to the Law can be accomplished without ever giving one’s self in love to God. This type of adherence to the Law would not lead to eternal life but rather the death of legalism. The lawyer, in the Luke 10 pericope, is the personification of this kind of person, one who knows the Law. He has even rightly summarized the Law, yet his heart is not moved to love God and others.

The lawyer in Luke 10 fails to understand the call of Christ as he continues in the following verses to justify himself for not loving others rather than receiving Christ’s



call. The seduction of rule keeping, which often results in pride, has been a trap for all who would follow Christ. This story shows us that course has never been acceptable as God wants a transformed heart set on loving him and others. This same malady is seen in the Church today as the Church teaches bible studies and theology as well as offers an endless menu of programs all while failing to see the transformation of cities and culture.

A second reason this project is significant is that John Wesley, as an Anglican priest, was used of God to reshape England through the process of spiritual formation, which then led to his followers engaging the culture around them for good. A demonstrable difference exists not only in the lives of those who gave themselves to the process of spiritual formation, but in a corresponding good for all who were in their sphere.

Wesley's practice of spiritual formation was a combination of the exercise of the means of grace and regular accountability with one's peers. Levels of participation were present, and each brought greater commitment, accountability, and responsibilities for the participants. The rigor of their practices gave rise to others calling them Methodists. They strictly ordered their lives so that they would be examples of holiness.

Third, Christ Church Vero Beach and other Anglican parishes must take their place in the long history of the Anglican Communion. Like Mr. Wesley and other Anglicans who have gone before, they must continue to obey the Great Commandment to love God and love others. Wesley would say to be holy was to love God and others. So, the aim of spiritual formation is holiness. Anglicans of the eighteenth century have left an example of how to love God and love neighbor in such a way that results in a growing personal and public holiness. The prayer is to leave a legacy of parishes that prioritize

spiritual formation so that they will bring about a renewed personal holiness for their members and a renewed public holiness in their communities. This project evaluated current knowledge, attitude, and practices of the means of grace for the purpose of a growing personal and public holiness at Christ Church as the city needs Christians to be holy.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Spiritual Formation**, for the purpose of this project, is defined as the ongoing process whereby one is progressively formed to live in keeping with the character and commandments of Christ.

**Means of Grace** are defined as those ordinary instruments that are imbued with power of the Holy Spirit and grace that, when practiced, bring about a holiness of life.

**Personal Holiness** is defined as the growing love of the disciple for God and neighbor and the outworking of that love in obedience and surrender to the will of God.

**Public Holiness**, for the purpose of this project, is the love of God and neighbor lived out in public which brings about good for others. The foundation of Public Holiness is a community of people seeking both personally and collectively to be holy. The fruit of Public Holiness is seen in the care of the widow and orphan, the provision for the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, educating the simple, and bringing about good in one's neighborhood and nation.

### **Delimitations**

This study included adult members of Christ Church Vero Beach, eighteen years old and older who were selected by the researcher to attend the seminar on spiritual formation. The demographic make-up of Christ Church Vero Beach is reflective of the

surrounding community which comprised of retired persons. The median age of the city is fifty-six and that of the parish is seventy. However, an effort was made by the researcher to include persons who had been Anglican for differing lengths of time in order to determine the effect of Anglican prayer book spirituality on their spiritual formation.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

The Biblical foundation for this project was Luke 10.25-37, which contains the Great Commandment and the Good Samaritan parable. The command, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself,” calls for total surrender of self to the Lord and to live for the good of others. This command is the essence of being a follower of Christ. He surrendered all for the love of God and the good of others.

The theological foundation is Wesley’s doctrine of Christian Perfection. The aim was to discover both from Wesley’s own writings and current scholarship the relationship between the use of the means of grace and the progress of the disciple in Christian Perfection which means a dynamic living out of both personal and public holiness. The means of grace are tools given to the disciple to use in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to grow in the love of God and the love of neighbor. The aim was to discover the relationship between a disciplined engagement with the means of grace and the resulting growth toward Christian Perfection in Wesley’s day. In addition, what current scholarship revealed about the relationship between the means of grace and current practices of personal and social holiness will be addressed.

The Historical period of the eighteenth century was examined as the life and ministry of John Wesley was reviewed. Mr. Wesley was an Anglican priest in the Church of England during a period of great upheaval in the Church, and desperate need existed in the culture. Thus, his moment in history seems to mirror many of the challenges and opportunities of this current moment.

Mr. Wesley devoted his life to a personal, rigorous pursuit of holiness, to leading others to an incarnational faith in Christ, and to seeking the good of others. The fruit of his life was that of reshaping the history of England and helping to set the spiritual foundations of the colonies that would become the United States of America. In addition, his Holy Club would give rise to a holiness movement that would birth what is now call Methodism as well as many revival movements and social changes that can only be attributed to the work of God. The ongoing mission of the church is to make disciples who will change the world so the researcher took up the study of what Mr. Wesley did to accomplish this in his life and culture.

In this process of research, the writer interacted with sources including Mr. Wesley's sermons and writing as well as scholars such as Albert Outler, Kevin Watson, Howard Snyder, Henry Knight, Winfield Bevins, and Robert Coleman. The research focused on the use of the means of grace toward the end of a growing personal and public holiness or Christian Perfection.

Spiritual formation was another area in which scholars were engaged on the use of the means of grace. Dallas Willard, who was a leader in the discipline of spiritual formation, was the primary source in this area of study. In addition, scholars, such as

Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and Ken Boa, were consulted for their emphasis on prayer and the use of spiritual disciplines.

The final area of research was to evaluate Wesley's methodology of discipleship and its emphasis on community. The goal was to discover in what ways did Wesley utilized community as a learning laboratory to advance both personal and public holiness, specifically through the use of bands. The research also sought to discover how bands also served as the context for living out one's holiness. The aim was to describe Wesley's model of communal discipleship and the resulting holiness among band members.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Type of Research**

This study utilized intervention methodology comprised of a pre-test and post-test, Likert scale surveys, and a focus group. The format for evaluating the attitude, knowledge, and practice of spiritual formation through the means of grace toward a growing personal and public holiness was a six-week seminar entitled "A Heart Perfected in Love." The seminar included the following sessions: The Aim of Discipleship: Christian Perfection, Love and Holiness, General Means of Grace (Inward), Particular Means of Grace (Upward), Prudential Means of Grace (Outward), and becoming Prayer Book People: Community the Soil for Holiness (Together).

#### **Participants**

The participants were fifteen members of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who were selected to participate in a six-session course on spiritual formation entitled "A Heart Perfected in Love." They were chosen to reflect a cross section of Christ Church including age and length of time as an Anglican.

**Instrumentation**

Data was collected through the Means of Grace pre-test Likert scale survey (RQ1) and post-test (RQ2) survey as quantitative measures of the participants attitude, knowledge, and practice of spiritual formation using the means of grace toward a growing personal and public holiness. In addition, a focus group (RQ3) served to give great qualitative insights from the participants following their participation in the seminar.

**Data Collection**

The researcher compiled demographic data and baseline measurements of participants attitude, knowledge, and practice of the means of grace for the purpose of spiritual formation moving toward greater personal and public holiness. Following the seminar, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, the participants completed the same survey and responses were measured against those of the initial survey to determine changes in attitude, knowledge, and practice of the means of grace for the purpose of spiritual formation leading toward greater personal and public holiness. Finally, the researcher engaged some participants in a focus group to assess which parts of the seminar had the greatest impact for change as well as the elements of the seminar that could be improved for greater impact.

**Data Analysis**

The quantitative data collected through the both the pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys. The researcher then used the measures of central tendency to compare and interpret the data in order to understand the attitude, knowledge, and practice of the

means of grace. The qualitative data was collected and interpreted, then sorted into themes that would allow for the greatest insight and adjustment.

### **Generalizability**

The project has a high level of generalizability for Anglicans and other liturgical traditions. The research presupposed catechetical, creedal, and liturgical rhythms that are not common among low-church denominations. This reality will limit the generalizability of the study in those contexts. However, the means of grace were given by God to enable all who would follow Christ to be formed to love God and love neighbor. Those who participate in the seminar, regardless of tradition, will have greater exposure and understanding of the means of grace. This exposure will result in a change in attitude, knowledge, and practice.

### **Project Overview**

This project sought knowledge, attitude, and practice of the means of grace in the pursuit of spiritual formation and the resulting personal and public holiness among members of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. Chapter Two reviews John Wesley's practices of spiritual formation, focusing on the use of the means of grace and how they resulted in a growing personal and public holiness. Chapter Three outlines the various ways the researcher will evaluate and inform the knowledge, attitude, and practice of the means of grace in pursuit of spiritual formation by members Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. Chapter Four analyzes the findings that result from the quantitative methods of a survey, pre-seminar and post-seminar surveys along with qualitative data from the focus group. Chapter Five reviews the study as well as sets forth strategies for engaging the means of grace toward a growing personal and public holiness.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to engage with biblical, theological, and scholarly texts in order to understand the principles and practices of spiritual formation within the Anglican Church during the ministry of John Wesley. Anglicans pray each morning, in the morning office, the following: “We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and the hope of glory” (Book of Common Prayer 2019 25). The aim of daily life is to be progressively transformed by grace into the likeness of Christ. “And we pray give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days...” (Book of Common Prayer 2019 25). The fruit of inward transformation is a life of service to the glory of God and for the good of others. This transformation is a wholistic process that understands Christians are much more than, “as Descartes described us to be: thinking things” (Smith *You Are What You Love* 3). Christians are invited to fall in love with God and with one another. This love reorients our habits, our hearts, and our heads. The process is rooted in the biblical command, theological context, and practical rhythms described in the following pages.

The biblical foundation rests upon the command to love God and love neighbor as the highest aim of the disciple. John Wesley, an eighteenth-century Anglican clergyman, described the pattern of loving God fully and neighbor rightly as “Christian perfection.”



This dogma will be examined as the aim of all spiritual formation. Finally, the use of the means of grace, those practices commended by the Lord and Scripture, as the tools for transforming lives and cultures.

### **Biblical Foundations**

#### **Greatest Commandment**

The narrative of Luke 10.25-37 is commonly called the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, the story is precipitated by a question of eternal significance for all humankind. The question is asked by a lawyer and rooted in the Law. This question is posed to Jesus, one supposed to be a Rabbi at the least and perhaps even Messiah. The question was a test to see what he knew of the Law and to see if he could he really be the Messiah. The question was a question asked by one man yet is the one question that must be asked by every human being. That question is: “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10.25).

Christ, in the likeness of a lawyer, answers the question with a question: “How do you read it? The lawyer answers “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10.26-27). This is, and has always been, the call of God for all humankind. People are to give themselves in love, wholly to a Holy God. However, as one loves God, one will then grow to love others as you naturally love yourself.

The declaration of Christ is a call to radical transformation. One can imagine that those present would be shaken to hear that entrance into eternal life was not first about adherence to the Law, the result of learning, or having the right lineage but rather a radical giving of oneself to loving God and others. Love is ultimate for those belonging to

God while obedience and good works are the overflow of a heart given in love to God. Obedience to the Law can be accomplished without ever giving oneself in love to God. This type of adherence to the Law would not lead to eternal life but rather the death of legalism. The lawyer is the personification of this kind of person, one who knows the Law. He has even rightly summarized the Law, yet his heart is not moved to love God and others. In the following verses, the lawyer seeks to justify himself for not loving others rather than receiving Christ's call. The seduction of rule keeping, which often results in pride, has been a trap for all who would follow Christ. This story shows that course has never been acceptable, as God wants a transformed heart set on loving him and others. So, the lawyer asks, "who is my neighbor?"

The answer to this question comes in the form of a parable. The story of the Good Samaritan is told to demonstrate just how radical a transformation is required to inherit eternal life. Human nature, for all born of the line of Adam, longs to be God and to love only self. The Jews could perhaps imagine a command to love God and other Jews. However, the story of the Good Samaritan, a phrase that would seem to be an oxymoron to any devout Jew, is one that shatters racial, cultural, and religious norms. This story declares that the neighborhood is much bigger than the Jewish listeners had ever conceived as possible.

The story begins with a traveler making his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. One would assume this traveler was a Jew. This man is robbed, beaten, and left to die. Then a priest and a Levite pass by; these would be leaders held in the highest esteem among Jews. Neither of them stopped to render aid to the wounded man. Then a Samaritan, a half-breed hated by all Jews, stops and cares for the man at great expense to himself.

Jesus portrays this man, who to the minds of the Jews was never going to be part of God's Kingdom, as the very one who does that which is necessary to gain eternal life.

The story ends with Jesus calling the Jewish listeners to go and live like the hero, the Samaritan. An audible gasp, a cry of disbelief, must have occurred among those listening to Jesus. The call to follow Christ turns the world upside down. With each reading of this text, one is reminded of how counter cultural following Christ truly is. Following Christ is counter not only to the secular culture but also the religious culture today just as it was in the day this story was first told. When one loves God, the result is loving one's enemy. This love cannot be achieved through human effort alone. The source of this life transforming kind of love is the Trinity. "God's love for human beings and creation is rooted, in turn, in the other-centered, ecstatic, perichoretic, love that constitutes God's triune being and reflects the fulness and overflowing quality of the divine life" (Franklin 79). The love that exists within the Godhead overflows and springs forth in the love of God and of neighbor. The love of God will cause one to see those who are suffering and have compassion. "Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is a mission because God loves people" (Bosch 402). Therefore, the receiving and responding to the love of God declares that you sacrifice yourself and your treasure to care for those in need around you. Finally, life will be spent loving God and loving others, so the parable calls one to live today and every day like you will for all eternity. Just as God created individual human beings in the divine image to be other-centered and to find their fulfillment with God and other human beings, so now God redeems and transforms human beings to cultivate relational fulfillment with

God and others in the church community (though complete fulfillment awaits eschatological consummation) (Franklin 86). In eternity, believers will be fully engulfed in the love of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) and in love for one another, united in holiness.

### **Segment Study**

The context of this story is the time period immediately following the return of the seventy-two disciples that had been sent out two by two into what Jesus called a plentiful harvest. He had previously sent out the Apostles, the twelve, with authority over all demons to cure diseases and declare the Kingdom of God (Luke 9.1-6). Like the Apostles before them, the seventy-two had gone and seen the miraculous power of God at work. They had come home with stories of demons cast out, diseases healed, and those who had been dead in sins made alive. The fruit of the gospel was found in every place the gospel was proclaimed.

The harvest was one of souls who go from death to life, from chaff to wheat. The disciples were sent out with nothing except the message of grace. One can only imagine what it was like as the disciples recounted the scenes and the crowd resounded with shouts of joy and amazement. The power of God was on display and with each detail the crowds must have cheered. All, including the seventy-two, were amazed at what the Lord had done during their journey. Christ offers a caution that they should not be so amazed by the healing and casting out of demons but rather that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10.20). In that day, as today, the temptation to marvel in the work of God rather than in God himself was ever present for those who would follow Christ.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is followed by the story of Mary and Martha. Martha is doing as tradition would demand and is busy serving. Mary on the other hand has broken all norms and is gathered with others listening to the teaching of Jesus. Martha, who is understandably upset, asks Jesus to instruct Mary to do her duty. However, Christ instead commends Mary's choice. Into the stories of kingdom power and priorities comes the question from a lawyer; "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10.25).

### **Book Context**

The Gospel of Luke is the first of a two-volume work written by Luke. The writings of Luke focus on the presentation of a detailed and orderly account of the earthly ministry of Jesus. According to Stott, the book of Acts focuses on the ongoing ministry of Jesus as his disciples, full of the Spirit, continue the mission of advancing the Gospel (Stott; *The Message of Acts*). The author does not give us details as to his identity in the opening verses but rather gives us insight into his aim in writing. Luke sets out to record the things shared with him by eyewitnesses concerning Jesus' teaching. He is writing to a man named Theophilus, which translated from Greek means lover of God. The account is orderly and based on well documented sources and is given to strengthen the faith and resolve of those who read it.

The Gospel of Luke has five major divisions. First, Luke 1-4.15 is the section focused on the incarnation and childhood of Jesus. This section describes the miraculous birth and early years of Jesus' life. The section gives a glimpse both of his divinity and humanity. While he was conceived by the Holy Spirit (divinity), he is also fully man as he grows and obeys his parents. This section concludes with Jesus' baptism and

temptation in the wilderness. These events show his divine mandate and his entering into the suffering of the Fall without sin. Second, is the section covering his ministry in Galilee from Luke 4.16-9.50 in which Jesus chooses his disciples and teaches them the truth of the Gospel. He then commissions and gives authority to the twelve to carry on his mission. They go out and see the power of God through the proclamation of the Gospel over demons, disease, and the death of sin.

Third is the section concerning his journey toward Jerusalem in Luke 9.51-19.27 when Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem and the ultimate end of his mission. This section is the section of the book in which this project's pericope is found. Jesus, as he moves toward the Cross, is instructing and incarnating both the cost and the power of the Gospel. He calls his disciples to count the cost of following him on mission. This project's pericope is one that contains Christ's call to love God and neighbor radically. If one is to follow him, the cost will be to give of oneself and one's treasure to love enemies. This message is a hard teaching but is at the heart of the calling to be his disciples. The text continues as he gives warnings of the dangers and difficulties that are sure to come. He instructs them on the radical nature of the calling. However, all along the way Jesus demonstrates through signs and miracles the power of the Gospel, which had to give the disciples hope.

Fourth, is the section from Luke 19.28–21.38, which focuses on his Jerusalem ministry. This section begins with the triumphal entry as crowds line the streets shouting Hosanna! However, this story stands in stark contrast to the following realities of his weeping over the city of Jerusalem and the pain that follows. In this section of the book Jesus enters the Temple and casts out the money changers and those defiling the Temple

for material gain. He rebukes the religious leaders who have set their hearts on earthly gain and in so many ways have forsaken the trust given them to shepherd the people of God.

Finally, the narrative reaches the section from Luke 22.1–24.53, which contains the events from Passover to the empty tomb. This section begins with the preparation for the Passover meal. As the disciples celebrate this historic feast, the Savior begins to transform its meaning. He declares that the bread is his body and the wine his blood. He then states that as often as they eat this meal, they are to remember him. One can only imagine the confusion that the disciples felt. They were looking for Jesus to inaugurate an earthly Kingdom. They had witnessed the shouts of Hosanna, a greeting for Messiah. They had to believe that the time was short now for the coming of the long-awaited Jewish kingdom. However, the shouts of Hosanna quickly turn to those of crucify him. The hope of the kingdom seems to be shattered with every blow of the whip as Jesus is beaten. The crucifixion and death of Jesus leaves the disciples crushed and confused. Then comes the third day when the tomb is found empty by some of the women. The road to Emmaus story follows in which Jesus walks with Cleopas and another disciple who are heartbroken by the events of the crucifixion and confounded by the reports of the empty tomb. Then Jesus opens to them all the promises concerning himself beginning with the words of the Pentateuch. They do not realize who they are walking and talking with until the breaking of the bread when their eyes are opened to see Jesus. The book concludes with Jesus appearing to the disciples and offering them peace followed by his ascension into heaven.

The Gospel of Luke offers a detailed account for all of the life of Christ from his birth through his ascension. The goal of the book was to establish for all the record of Jesus' life and earthly ministry. As stated earlier, this book is the first volume as Luke and Acts form a set of books written by Luke. The second volume resumes the narrative at the Ascension and shows the coming of the Spirit and the advance of the Kingdom on earth.

### **Canonical Exploration**

The book of Luke and its place within the Canon can be viewed through the following lenses. First, let us consider the lens of Covenant. God is a covenant keeping God. He has structured his relationship with mankind in the form of covenant beginning in the book of Genesis with the Adamic covenant. This covenant has two parts that span the time of innocence prior to the Fall and then the post-Fall hope offered even in the midst of the curse.

First, in Genesis 1.26-30, one finds God's creation, call, and command to Adam. God created Adam in his image and likeness. Then God gave Adam dominion over all that was created. Finally, he commanded Adam to be fruitful and to multiply and fill the earth. Following the Fall, God extends to Adam and his race the promise of redemption even in the midst of the curse. Genesis 3.15 contains the first glimpse of the hope of the Gospel. "I will put enmity between you [serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3.15). The serpent, Satan, will bruise the heel of the Savior, Jesus, at the Cross. However, the grave cannot hold Jesus, and Satan will be cast into hell for all eternity and thus defeated. Christ was in the grave for three days, but through this bruise all mankind



will be redeemed and Satan destroyed! This is the covenant promise to Adam. Jesus in Luke has come to fulfill that promise. Luke is a detailed account of how Jesus comes and keeps the Law, endures the Cross, and rises victoriously over the grave. God is a covenant keeping God.

Second, God commands that Adam go and be fruitful and multiply. The covenant promises are for him but not for him alone. He is to fill the earth with those who know and love God. He is to steward all of creation in such a way that it bears fruit and brings glory to God. Likewise, the story of the Good Samaritan calls the Jewish hearer to multiply the love of God through loving their enemies. They are called to steward all that God has entrusted to them for the good of others that his glory might be known to the ends of the earth.

The second lens for considering the pericope is that of mission. The Good Samaritan story is one that calls those that received the story from Jesus and all who come after them to mission. The concluding command to “You go and do likewise” is one of mission. You, all who hear this story, go and love those who are beaten, bereft, and left for dead in this world. Love them even though they may hate you and call you their enemy. Sacrifice for them at great cost to yourself that they might know how much they are loved by God. The mission of God is not merely for the Jews to be his people but rather for all people to know his love and saving grace. This knowing only comes as his people go, serve, and sacrifice for others. This calling is the mission to which the story endeavors all who hear it.

The final lens is that mission is love. The Jews understood the command to love God, which they knew from the Shema found in Deuteronomy 6.5, “You shall love the

LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” They also understood their responsibility to love one another as God’s chosen people.

However, Jesus, in this story, calls them to a much more radical form of love.

If the story was the parable of the Good Jew, all would have been well. However, the story is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were hated by the Jews, and the Jews by the Samaritans, yet this hated enemy stops to love the one left for dead. The lawyer’s question as to the identity of his neighbor came with the expectation that the neighbor would be the Jews, but instead Jesus said your neighbor is your enemy. He gives of himself, his treasure, and his time for the good of another. That giving is the incarnation of love.

Through these lens (covenant, mission, and love), the parable of the Good Samaritan serves as a call to a radical new way of living. This story is told as Jesus is making his way toward Jerusalem where he will be crucified. The Cross is the place where God’s covenant promises find their ultimate fulfillment. At the Cross Christ fulfills his mission and calls believers to take up their cross daily. At Calvary the love for those who hate you is clearly lived out. “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (1 John 3.16). So, humankind must now go and do likewise!

### **Consultation**

Two main divisions of the text exist as treated by the scholars. First is the question of the lawyer concerning the pathway to eternal life. Second is the parable of the Good Samaritan. The lawyer’s question is one concerned with orthodoxy, but the parable is a story focused on orthopraxy. Jesus’ focus is that of a lived faith.

The first section is concerned with a dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer. This section begins with the question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? The goal is to gain eternal life. “Eternal life (*zoe aionion*) is a technical expression for the eschatological blessing of the righteous as opposed to the rejection of the unrighteous (the allusion to eternal life probably goes back to the image of resurrection in Dan. 12:2)” (Bock 1023). The opening scene of this pericope has a lawyer, a man who is an expert in the law, asking the key soteriological question. The question from the lawyer is one that should be asked by all of humankind. “The lawyer’s question is really this: What must I do to share in the resurrection of the righteous at the end?” (Bock 1023).

While the question was a good question, the aim of the questioner is questionable. “The man’s motives were clearly not good. He stood up to test Jesus. He wanted to provoke Jesus into saying something which his enemies could latch onto and hold against him” (Ryle 144). The Savior, knowing that this was a test, answers the question with a question. “The second question, ‘How do you read?’ might be an allusion to reciting the Shema” (Bock 1024). At a minimum, the question of the Lord called for the man to offer support from the Law for his answer.

The lawyer’s answer to the question is to recite two Old Testament passages, not found in the same book, as a singular answer. These texts are found in Deuteronomy 6.5 and Leviticus 19.18. “The lawyer seems to be expressing a view commonly held at the time amongst rabbinic scholars namely, that these two laws distill the essence of the law of love” (Mason 157). Jesus affirms the lawyer’s response as a correct reading of the Law.

The lawyer, in an attempt to justify himself, asks yet another question, “Who is my neighbor?” “Jesus’ answer cornered him (the lawyer), and he now tries to find a way out in order to still the voice of conscience. He is looking for an excuse for not having to treat all people alike with love” (Geldenhuys 311). The Greek word translated “to justify” is *dikaioo* and means to vindicate (Bock 1027). The answer Jesus gives the lawyer causes the lawyer to desire to prove that he has loved his neighbor. Real responsibilities to one’s neighbor exist according to the Law. “Substantival uses of *plesion* in contexts similar to Luke 10:25-37 always designate the sort of person with whom one shares a reciprocal relationship of entitlement; that is, ‘neighbor’ is someone whose welfare one is obliged to promote and from whom one can reasonably expect similar treatment” (Proctor 212). The term is further defined: “Pauline texts repeatedly use the same word in this parable (*plesion*) to summarize proper human relations ordered by love, truth and humble service beyond self” (Weeldreyer 167). “According to Johannes Fichtner, the command of Lev. 19:18 applies unequivocally toward members of the covenant of Yahweh and not self-evidently towards all men” (Proctor 212). Therefore, in the mind of the lawyer, his neighbor was one with whom he shared a covenant relationship and to whom he owed, and would receive, familial loyalty. “The two realities of neighborliness and hospitality carry with them a sacred duty. The friend as neighbor and host must be available for a friend...Friendship means service, concern, and sacrifice even to the point of life itself...Whether in term of hospitality or of neighborliness, the friend can expect help from his friend even when it is inconvenient” (Proctor 215). Thus, the lawyer understood that the person identified as his neighbor was one for whom he must sacrifice, serve, and support.

The first section of the pericope has confronted matters of orthodoxy including What must one do to inherit eternal life? What does the Law require? Who is my neighbor? These are important questions. However, these questions have to move from the realm of information to that of transformation. The lawyer clearly understood the Law. In addition, he understood the responsibilities that accompanied the Law. What remains is whether or not the lawyer will be transformed by the truth.

This transition moves into the second section of the exegesis. The focus now turns from matters of orthodoxy to those of orthopraxy. Jesus moves from the letter of the Law to living out the Law as God has intended. In order to accomplish this living out of the Law, Jesus does not offer a direct answer to the lawyer but rather begins to tell a story, one that has come to be known as the parable of the Good Samaritan. “We are taught in this parable how rare true brotherly love is. This is the obvious lesson from the parable” (Ryle 146). Brotherly love is how one’s faith becomes more than a set of intellectual facts but rather becomes the incarnation of grace.

The parable begins with a man, most likely a Jew, traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. This is a journey that many hearing the parable would have taken themselves. The man falls prey to robber and is beaten and left to die. “Jerome says, it was called the bloody way” (Ryle 147). “Herod had built New Testament Jericho as his winter palace on the same spot Hasmonean rulers had earlier built their palace. Herod included three palaces, a swimming pool, and a sunken garden. Thus, government officials frequently made the trip from Jerusalem to Jericho as did Jewish religious and political leaders” (Butler 172).

Then two strangers, a priest and a Levite, in succession see the man and pass by without offering aid. Priests and Levites would often travel this road. “Jericho was a city specifically appointed for the residence of priests and Levites. No less than 12,000 of them, according to Lightfoot, lived there. They had to attend temple in Jerusalem on monthly rotations” (Ryle 147). These men were religious leaders, respected Jews, yet they left their “neighbor” to suffer. Keener states that both the priest and the Levite could have avoided contact with the man believing he was dead, and thus wanted to avoid becoming unclean themselves (Keener 207-08). “In Martin Luther King, Jr’s book, *Strength to Love*, the great preacher and civil rights leader offers other insights into this powerful lesson. He suggests that one reason for the religious leaders’ failure to act was their fear of harm; they many have said to themselves: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’” (Burris 459). So, whether their failure to act was out of a desire for ritual purity or self-preservation, they loved self and not neighbor.

The third person to pass the way of this bruised and beaten traveler was a Samaritan. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews and would not have been considered among those who would be a “neighbor.” “The Samaritans enjoyed the lowest rung on the social ladder follow after the despised trades, Jewish slaves, Israelites with a slight blemish, Israelites with a grave blemish, and Gentile slaves” (Jones 232). Yet this enemy of the Jews sees the man and has compassion on him. The man stops and offers medical aid, as he binds up the man’s wounds and applies oil and wine to ease his pain (Luke 10.34). He then goes even further to care for the man. He put the wounded man on his animal and took him to the inn. He paid for his lodging and care. Finally, he guarantees

the payment of any other expenses incurred by the innkeeper in caring for the wounded traveler. He does all of these things for a man who was his enemy.

The parable concludes with Jesus asking the lawyer; Who proved to be a neighbor? (Luke 10.36). The lawyer, in what must have been a painful admission, declared the Samaritan was the true neighbor. The resulting command was now you go and do likewise. The parable was told to elucidate to all who heard that being a neighbor is not about social status but rather a spiritual response. One must remember that this narrative occurs as Jesus is traveling toward Jerusalem. He, at great cost to himself, is going to meet the greatest need of humankind. He will there pay the sin debt owed by all Adam's race and make a way for all to be restored to a right relationship with a holy God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send him into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3.16-17).

### **Interpretive Summary**

In order to understand and apply this passage, three worlds will be considered, as Richard Pratt suggests, to serve as lens interpretation: that world, their world, and our world (Pratt *He Gave Us Stories*).

**That world.** The story is told in the context of a world in which the Jews, those who had inherited the covenant promises of God, were a people without a home, power, or a king. They had received the Covenant and were looking for the promised Messiah. Many hoped that Jesus was in fact that fulfillment of those promises. Thus, the lawyer sought to verify Jesus' identity.

**Their World.** The hearers of the story were Jews who believed that with the coming of Messiah, a socio-political kingdom would be born in which they would rule. A deep sense of Jewish pride as the people of God existed. Though they were currently subject to Roman rule, they saw themselves as set apart and superior to others. Therefore, Jesus tells this parable to call his Jewish hearer, and all who would follow him, to a right understanding of self, Savior, and servanthood.

The Jews were God's chosen people. However, they had been chosen to share with the nations grace, love, and hope of redemption. This state of being chosen is seen in the Abrahamic Covenant as God tells Abraham: "...And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12.2-3). So, this parable calls the Jews to a selfless love of others, especially their enemies.

**Our World.** As this text is read in the twenty-first century, Christians must remember they have been sent into the world not to establish a Christian culture but a divine Kingdom. Christians must understand themselves as sinners who have been redeemed at great cost. Then Christians must understand that the Savior who gave himself for them is calling them to give themselves for the good of others. Christians must sacrificially love their neighbors, especially when they look like our enemies.

### **Reflections on Application**

The parable is a call not for information transfer but to incarnation and transformation. This transformation will require that the reader begin to live differently as



this passage is applied to daily living. In applying this message, one will need to think differently, to have one's heart changed, and thus begin to love in new ways.

The parable demands that one considers what loving God and loving others means. If one comes to understand the radical love of God toward mankind, then one cannot look at those whom God loves with hatred. God created mankind in his image. God gave his Son to redeem mankind from their sin. These realities are motivated by love. Therefore, as those who have been loved by God, Christians are called upon to love, which means both new affections and new actions.

Love of God creates within the heart of the disciple a love of others. Sin deserves the wrath of God, yet God instead offers grace. His heart toward Christians is for our good. If God can love this way, Christians too must seek to offer this same sacrificial love to others. Christians' hearts toward others must be shaped by the truth that our sin was met with grace, so we too must offer ourselves as instruments of that grace to others.

Finally, the parable demands that our actions be transformed. Love is not merely an intellectual construct, or an emotional response, but rather a way of serving and caring for others in word and deed. The Samaritan gave of himself, his resources, and his treasure to meet the needs of his beaten enemy. Christians too are called to enter the world to speak and serve those who others have left bereft and bruised along the way.

### **Theological Foundations**

The Great Commandment to love God and love neighbor is rooted in nature of the Trinity itself. The Great Commandment is the doctrine of the Trinity that serves as the foundation for this life of love. Love motivates God's love of humanity and only love remakes humankind to love God and others. John Wesley often reminded his followers

that “God is love” and that the end of discipleship, which is Christian perfection, could also be summed up in the word love (Wesley, *Works* 3:74).

According to Wesley, the love of God and neighbor was not merely a feeling of warm affection but rather an incarnational way of life enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Love motivates one to reorder all of life. “Real Christian experience is quite simply falling in love with God. And when we do that, we are never more rational, never more truly human, never more spiritually and intellectually awakened, never more at our best” (Noble 17). Wesley longed to see mankind captivated by the love of God and thereby remade to be all they were created to be for God’s glory.

This vision of a religion marked by love stood in stark contrast to the lifeless formalism that surrounded Wesley in his day. He sought to convince the people of his day that:

there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of God that gave it. And this we conceived to be no other than love: the love of God and of all mankind; the loving of God with all our heart and soul and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. (Jackson)

Wesley sought to hold out this religion springing forth from the love of God and then replicated in a real love of God and a robust love of neighbor. “Indeed, the *telos* for Christians is Christ: Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of what we’re made for, of the end to which we are called. This is why Paul’s exhortation is to ‘put on love’ (Col. 3:14) is equivalent to the exhortation to ‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Romans 13:14)” (Smith

*You Are What You Love* 90). His aim was greater than an intellectual knowledge of history and doctrine. He desired a holiness of life as the proper response and fulfillment of love which he called Christian Perfection.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection was the aim of the Christian life for Wesley and his followers. This doctrine springs from the words of Jesus found in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5.48). Christian Perfection is marked by both the restoration of the *imago dei*, which was corrupted at the Fall, as well as the renewed ability not to yield to outward sinful act or inward sinful intentions but rather to choose love. This goal remains, in the Wesleyan tradition, the aim and measure of pastors and their ministry even to our day, as there are two questions asked of all who are seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church which are; “‘Are you going on to perfection?’ and ‘Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?’” (The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 214). The expected answer to both of these questions is yes. The clergy person’s aim and expectation are that they will be made perfect in love of God and neighbor by grace in this life. The life of the clergy person is to serve as an incarnational invitation to those whom they shepherd to follow in the same expectant hope of Christian Perfection. “The content of grace is the love of God, which was manifest in Jesus Christ, is presently exhibited through word and sacrament, and is presently applied by the Spirit to each human life” (Knight 9). Therefore, affirmative answer is rooted both in a recognition of the need of grace as well as the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, not merely human effort. These affirmations are not merely a personal resolution of the pastor but the shape of the ministry that flows from the life of one pursuing perfection. The aim is to shepherd

a growing flock of persons growing in love and moving toward Christian Perfection. In light of these significant implications, it is important that one understands how Wesley defined the doctrine of Christian Perfection.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection has been the source of much confusion and debate both in Wesley's day and in our own day. The conflict arises from the use of the word perfection. The Greek word translated perfect is *teleios*, which is best translated as complete, perfect, whole, full-grown, or mature (Summers 166). The word perfection in English carries the meaning of "being entirely without fault or defect: flawless" (MiriamWebster.com). The doctrine of Christian Perfection as taught by Wesley was not an attempt to say that man was without flaw but rather was by grace moving toward loving God fully and neighbor rightly. Mr. Wesley stated:

It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies. The being cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being so renewed in the image of our mind as to be perfect as our Father is perfect.

*(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection 35)*

Mr. Wesley had a robust faith in the power of grace as proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was convinced by Scripture and experience that one could move toward perfection, and this course was the necessary course for all followers of Christ. One could not follow Christ in half measures but with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. This radical transformation of life was totally a work of grace and was marked by obedience springing from a love of God and neighbor. "At its core, Wesley's doctrine

of Christian perfection is rooted in a deep optimism about the power of the Triune God of the gospel to transform human life” (Colyer 180). Christian Perfection was not the result of one’s works but the result of faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as justification is by faith, so too is perfection by faith and fully a work of God.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection is not an attempt by Mr. Wesley to argue for absolute perfection. “So, that how much soever any man hath attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to grow in grace, and daily advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior” (*Works*). Mr. Wesley understands and teaches that real and significant ways exist in which humankind will fall short of absolute perfection. Four universal deficiencies faced by all who seek to follow Christ are identified by Mr. Wesley. He states that no one is perfect in knowledge, free from ignorance, free from infirmities, nor free from temptation (*Works*). These are real and ongoing battles during this earthly life.

A recognition exists that human cognition is incomplete and finite. Therefore, the doctrine of Christian Perfection is not an argument for infallible thought nor an inerrant comprehension of information. While humankind has been given knowledge and understanding as one created in the image of God, this knowledge is limited by the finite nature of the human mind and the fallen nature which limits one’s ability to rightly understand the facts presented. Thus, humankind can understand and know, but that is a limited ability and not a perfect one.

A second limitation of humankind in reference to Christian Perfection is that of ignorance which deals with things not known rather than not understood. The limitation of ignorance acknowledges that even as a disciple receives the gift of Christian

Perfection, many things are not known and cannot be known. The reasons for ignorance are both natural and supernatural in nature. The natural reasons for ignorance are simply that humankind has not discovered all that there is to know about this world. “For we cannot now think at all, but by the mediation of those bodily organs which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame” (Wesley, *The Plain Account* 82). Thus, humankind lives in a state of fallenness but also a state of grace. Amazing discoveries and advances have been made in almost every field of learning, yet limits exist in our ability to know and understand that have not been overcome as well. Therefore, humankind is still seeking to explore and understand our world, as with each advance comes the realization of how much more there is to know about the world in which we live. This pursuit of understanding is not over when one receives Christian Perfection as our love for God and neighbor is perfected, not our knowledge of this world.

In addition, humankind cannot know things that are spiritually perceived or supernatural in nature. Humankind cannot know the mind of God or the means of God’s work in creating, healing, or redemption. Much is just beyond the realm of our spiritual, mental, and physical ability to know. These inabilities do not negate one’s progress in Christian Perfection as the doctrine does not require one to know all. However, Christians can know what God has revealed and must steward these truths as made known both through Scripture and study.

Third is the limitation of humankind being that of infirmities. Humans are fallen beings, and as such, existence is marked by sickness, broken hearts, and other incapacities of body and mind. No one makes it through this life without knowing sickness and sorrow. Christian Perfection is not a state where these realities are removed

from one's experience. "If a Christian gets cancer, that does not invalidate the maturity of their faith or the depth of their commitment to Jesus. Those who have experienced full salvation will still be subject to the same frailties in this world as anyone else." (Watson, *Perfect Love* 86). Christian Perfection changes one's heart but does not guarantee one's health.

Fourth, Christian Perfection does not make one free of temptations. The common experience of humankind is one of facing temptations. Temptations began in the Garden of Eden with our parents, Adam and Eve, as they were tempted and disobeyed God. Since that day in the Garden, all who have been born of Adam have faced temptation in one form or another. A common experience of humankind is that each person has a habitual or besetting temptation that one struggles against in life. For some, this struggle is against lust, anger, or pride which are internal struggles. For others, an external battle exists with substances such as drugs, alcohol, or the addition to gambling. Whether internal or external, being delivered from the grip of these sins in an instance as one receives Christian Perfection is possible. However, the deliverance from control of these sins does not remove the temptations. As Kevin Watson states, "One who is entirely sanctified experiences a new depth of power over sin and restoration of their will so that they can once again exercise their will to choose obedience and faithfulness to God over the ways of sin and death" (Watson, *Perfect Love* 88).

Finally, Christian Perfection is not a static state that once achieved is forever maintained. Rather, Christian Perfection is a dynamic state of consistent conformity to God's will and way out of the heart of love for God and neighbor. One maintains the freedom to choose to obey God or the flesh. Some have chosen to once again run after the

flesh and turn from the grace of Christian Perfection. Some have even denied the faith after claiming the gift of Christian Perfection. The dynamic nature of Wesleyan discipleship allows that one may fall but that they may also return to the path of perfection. “A person who sins after experiencing entire sanctification needs to do the same thing that any Christian who falls into sin needs to do: confess their sin and repent.” (Watson, *Perfect Love* 89). However, Christian Perfection brings with it a greater freedom to choose to obey God as one’s heart is filled with the love of God and enabled to love God and neighbor through the work of grace. This dynamic reality calls on all who believe in the doctrine of Christian Perfection and who are on the journey to herald its truth and live out its fruit for all to hear and see.

Christian Perfection is the purpose of the Christian life. “John Wesley argued for and preached on entire sanctification throughout his ministry. He understood holiness as religion itself” (Watson, *Perfected Love* 72). His aim was that all Methodists would be changed, remade, and would “go on to perfection” by grace to love God and love neighbor. He believed the following was the command and promise of God; *to be holy as I am holy* and called on all to have faith to believe God to do this work in them. Wesley outlines four foundational beliefs concerning the faith that will bring about Christian Perfection: “1. God hath promised it in Holy Scripture, 2. What God hath promised he is able to perform, 3. A divine evidence and conviction that he is able and willing to do it now, 4. A divine evidence and conviction that he doth it” (Outler and Heitzenrater 378-79). Wesley believed and proclaimed to all that God was about the work of making them holy and called them to believe it too.



The doctrine of Christian Perfection, to borrow the words of G.K Chesterton, has not been tried and found lacking, but found difficult and thus not tried (Chesterton 39). The mention of this doctrine brings the reminders that “all sin and fall short of the glory of sin” or “there is none righteous, not one.” However, Wesley, in his sermon Christian Perfection, counters with the reminder that “[w]e know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom. 6.6). Wesley’s fundamental belief was that grace was greater than sin. That grace would in fact free us from our enslavement to sin and allow us to live a life of holiness. This is the message of all who follow in the Wesleyan tradition and must again become the focus of our preaching and practice.

This doctrinal heritage of Christian Perfection has been abandoned. “Methodism [and Anglicanism] is in the midst of an identity crisis. We have forgotten who we are” (Watson, *Perfect Love* 28). The failure to proclaim this doctrine is of grave concern not only for the people called Methodists but for all who call themselves Christian. The Church cannot fail to proclaim and call forth disciples to holiness, otherwise one is left with a gospel that is less than that which is declared in the Scripture. Wesley believed salvation to be much more.

By salvation I mean, not barely (according to the vulgar notion) deliverance from hell or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity, a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness, and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.  
(Wesley, *Works* 11:106)

The responsibility of those who have inherited this doctrine is to pass it along through word and witness to the next generation. Wesley envisioned a salvation that would truly transform both the individual and the culture.

The unique calling of Wesley's disciples was to declare and display this understand of the doctrine of salvation for the whole Church. Kevin Watson states, "above all else, God raised up the people called Methodists to preach, teach, and experience one core doctrine [Christian Perfection]. This doctrine is Methodism's reason for existence" (Watson, *Perfect Love* 28). The Church must have a renewed witness to this doctrine for the sake of the gospel and the Kingdom.

The renewal of this doctrine must be built upon a hope in the efficacy and power of grace to overcome sin. "Entire sanctification [Christian Perfection] is the doctrine that defines Methodism's audacious optimism that the grace of God saves us entirely, to the uttermost" (28). Grace is able to accomplish much more than a future hope of heaven, being the current hope of being made like Christ. Grace can open one's eyes to sin and set one free from falling prey to it. Grace can birth within one's heart a new and passionate love for God resulting in praise and worship. Grace can incline the will to obedience to the Word and will of the Father. Grace will fill the heart with gifts to build up the church and display the glory of God. Grace can turn one's heart to love humankind as Christ loved them. This is a love that overcomes hurt and harm from others to show mercy and forgiveness. This love sees beyond the brokenness of another to the see promise of the *Imago Dei* in all. This love is the grace that changes today and all eternity. Grace moved the pen of Charles Wesley to write these words:

Come, Almighty to deliver, let us all they life receive; suddenly return and  
 never, never more thy temples leave. There we would be always blessing,  
 serve thee as thy hosts above, pray and praise thee without ceasing, glory  
 in thy perfect love. (C. Wesley, *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*)

Wesley here displays a vision of grace that is more than the hope of making it to heaven someday. He sees grace as the transformational power of God to change the heart and the nations.

The hope of all who would follow Christ is to experience this grace of Christ's perfect love. The reality is that this grace is a pure gift, not earned, that is given by God alone. However, one can seek such grace through what the Church has called the "means of grace." Kevin Watson focuses more on the recovery of hope and the expectation of grace, but the means of grace have been the tools of the Spirit to effect Christian Perfection throughout history (Watson, *Perfect Love*). The means of grace are not the deposit of Methodism but rather are gifts to the "one holy, catholic and apostolic church" (Burn *The Nicene Creed*). They are the guideposts that place us on the path of grace. The use of the means of grace does not guarantee that one will move on to Christian Perfection. However, the neglect of the means of grace will certainly diminish the likelihood of one's total sanctification.

The theological foundation of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection grounds our quest for a spiritual formation that ends in personal and public holiness. However, the quest now must turn from the doctrinal "what" of Christian Perfection to the practical "how" of the means of grace. The means of grace will guide us on a journey

to explore our inward sanctification, our upward love of God, and our outward love of neighbor.

### **Growing In Holiness: Moving on in Perfection**

#### **Means of Grace**

John Wesley's chief concern was that those under his care were journeying toward a growing holiness with the end being Christian Perfection. He wanted to see people renewed and remade by the grace of God and made holy. "We cannot properly evaluate Wesley's understanding of the Christian life – and his call to Christian perfection – if we examine it outside the liturgical, communal, and devotional contexts within which Wesley himself understood it" (Knight 2). This context was that of the Church of England, a tradition rooted in Scripture, sacramental worship, and the practice of common prayer. In addition, Wesley was living within the disciplines of the Methodist movement of his day. "Wesley was not offering a vision of the Christian life which could be reasonably sought in any church and under any conditions, but one which could be sought within the structures and discipline of the Methodist movement in the Church of England" (Knight 2). In this context, men and women from the Church of England, Anglicans, who were growing in holiness together through common disciplines and practices. These practices were commonly called the means of grace as they were the vehicles through which the Holy Spirit imparted grace and moved one on in the journey of holiness.

The modern evangelical church seems to have lost its focus on spiritual transformation and Christian Perfection, rather settling for a transactional exchange. While the Church has seen the rise of the mega-Church and the superstar pastors, a

corresponding impact on the culture has not been observed. Likewise, the explosion of Christian literature has not seemed to result in the expansion of the Kingdom.

In 1994 Keith Drury had the courage to say publicly what many other insiders have sensed for some time – that the (North American) holiness movement is dead! The movement originally gathered around a distinctive emphasis on holiness of heart and life as the goal for all Christians. The member denominations now focus on church growth and on being assimilated into respectable generic American evangelicalism. Drury suggests that any expectation of regenerating transformation in the Christian life (i.e., initial sanctification) is becoming increasingly rare.

(Maddox 29)

Having more than intellectual assent and church membership is key. The answer to the current lack of regenerating transformation and holiness, according to Maddox, is a renewed emphasis on the means of grace.

The means of grace are activities which form and shape the disciple both in their relationship with God and with humankind. Wesley states, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (*Works*, 1:381). These practices were the context through which one encountered grace, and the resulting fruit of the means of grace is that one will love God and will love neighbor and thus fulfill the call to be holy as God is holy. Wesley is quick to clarify that while the means are the ordinary instruments to convey the grace of God, God is not constrained by them. God is the giver of all grace. The means of grace have

been given to provide a context in which humankind can put themselves in the way of grace.

Wesley divided these activities into three categories: general means of grace, particular (or instituted) means of grace, and prudential means of grace.

The general means denote certain attitudes and practices which pervade the Christian life: keeping the commandments, self-denial, and taking up our cross daily. The particular means are more specific acts of worship and discipline: prayer, fasting, the Lord's Supper, searching the scriptures.

In contrast, the prudential means of grace vary from age to age, culture to culture, and person to person; they reflect God's ability to use any means in addition to those instituted in accordance with different times and circumstances. (Knight 3)

In terms of one's growth in holiness, thinking in terms of the general means as developing an inward holiness, the particular means focusing on upward relationship with a holy God, and the prudential means aiding in public holiness as one lives out the love of God in the context of the fallen world is helpful. The following examines Wesley's typologies for the means of grace and defines and discusses both the practice of the means as well as the corresponding fruit of their practice in the life of the disciple. One must remember that the means do not in and of themselves convey grace. God is the conveyer of grace, and the means are the ordinary context for encountering that grace. "All means of grace have as their end the life of love, the Christian life" (Knight 4).

Therefore, the common need of grace and the journey toward Christian perfection is a

call for all who follow Christ to discipline their lives in the practice of the general, particular, and prudential means of grace with a heart set on loving God and others.

### **General Means of Grace: The Heart of Holiness**

The first of Wesley's typologies is that of the general means of grace. "Meeting in Conference in 1745, John Wesley introduced a concept to the people called Methodists that has been overlooked ever since: the general means of grace" (Thompson, *The General Means of Grace* 249). The general means of grace are not practices in the outward sense, but rather inward practices or disciplines comprised of attitudes or desires which fuel all other means of grace. "They are – in the phrase of Henry Knight – 'graced responses to grace received' that collectively constitute a kind of faithful disposition toward all that one does in the pursuit of sanctification" (Thompson, *The General Means of Grace* 250). Likewise, "General means...refer less to discrete practices and more to broad approaches to the practice of the faith that require intentional awareness of one's motivations in thought, word, and action" (Thompson *The General Means of Grace* 250). The general means of grace are attitudes and inclinations that allow one to both receive grace and respond to grace in love. They are the substance of the heart longing for grace and then living out the grace that they receive in love for God and neighbor.

The general means of grace do not receive the level of development and discussion in Wesley's writings as do the particular means and the prudential means. Andrew Thompson has compiled a list of the general means from across Wesley's writings which includes watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, exercise the presence of God" (Thompson *The General Means* 251). This list will be the list used here to discuss the general means of grace. The fact that they are not as often discussed

does not diminish the importance of the general means of grace within the Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection or entire sanctification. In the Large Minutes of 1780, 1789, Wesley highlights their essential nature. "They are distinguished from all other means of grace in that, while the others may be used without fruit, one can never use these means, but blessing will ensue" (Wesley, *Works* 10:929). Having the heart and mind of Jesus are essential in living out the life of Christ for the glory of the God. Therefore, the understanding and practice of the general means of grace is foundational to the whole of one's spiritual formation.

The practice of the general means of grace is heart work. Wesley includes in the Large Minutes questions meant for use in self-examination concerning the general means as he knows that one must not merely look at outward works, but rather know the heart in order to move on toward perfection. Wesley believed that without the proper use of the general means of grace one would not move on to Christian perfection, but with their use, one could be assured of the ongoing work of sanctification. He holds out as essential the use of the general means to both avoid dead formalism and prideful arrogance as one grows in grace. All means of grace, general, particular, and prudential, come with the hope of spiritual transformation. However, Wesley knew that the particular and prudential means of grace had been exercised with habitual deadness. One could do works of piety and works of mercy from a dead heart. However, if the heart was fixed upon God, the Spirit would work to transform both the believer and those around them. Therefore, the focus must turn to the definitions and demarcations of the inward practices: watchfulness, self-denial, cross bearing, and exercise of the presence of God.



The practice of watchfulness is both to stand watch against the devil, the world, and sin as well as to stand watch to know and do the will of God (Knight 122-23). The disciple must recognize that a spiritual battle is afoot and must act as though he is in the battle. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6.12). As this battle becomes a reality in the heart and mind of the believer, then watchfulness will be an urgent pursuit. Likewise, the hope that God has a plan and purpose for each and every moment in life calls one to look for how God is at work in both the darkness and the light. This hope changes everything as one is no longer a slave to circumstance but set free to live for God in each and every moment. The expectation of God’s nearness will then lead one to look inward and discover the means of self-denial.

Self-denial is defined as “a deliberate turning from a way of life contrary to God or which leads away from God” (Knight 124). The disciple is regularly examining and evaluating the content of his heart and the direction of his life to insure it is in step with the will of God. The Lord Jesus is the prime example of this as he emptied himself and took on the form of a servant (Phil. 2.7). Following the example of Christ, the disciple will set aside his will, the claim to his rights, and the pursuit of his pleasure to follow the will of God. Self-denial also involves turning away from things in this world that would not honor God, including the proactive avoidance of places, people, or practices that would dishonor God and rather pursuing conformity to the will of God.

The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man which once ran parallel with it is now another path, not only different from it, but

in our present state directly contrary to it. It leads from God; if therefore we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. (Wesley, *Works* 2:242)

The practice of self-denial is the pursuit of a heart yielded to the will of God and a life lived habitually for the glory of God. One must note that this is a direct reversal of the disposition of our first parents at the Fall.

The practice of self-denial is an essential undoing of the Adamic nature so that the life of Christ might be lived here and now in this fallen world. The epistemological foundation changed in the fall from the Word of God to the will of humankind based on what was seen. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate” (Gen. 3.6). Since that fateful moment, the battle ground has been to deny self and yield to the word and will of God.

The daily taking up of one’s cross is the next of the general means of grace. The putting off of one’s selfish will is then turned to the taking up of one’s cross. “A cross is anything contrary to our will, anything displeasing our nature” (Wesley, *Works* 2:242). Wesley is quick to point out he is not advocating self-discipline in the form of self-harm but rather the willingness to walk in the will of God even when doing so is at great cost. Wesley perceived a direct linkage between one’s willingness to follow Christ down the hard path and the genuineness of one’s status as a true disciple. At the point when one must choose to follow Christ down the path of suffering is when His lordship is clearly

established. In order to deny self and daily take up the cross, a disciple must also exercise the presence of God which is the last of the general means under consideration here.

The exercise of the presence of God is described by Wesley as setting God as always before you and having his eye fixed upon you (*Works* 10:929). This exercise is an inward discipline that sets the reality of God being present in every circumstance of life. The discipline calls one to believe that not only is God aware of what is happening but also that God is at work in every circumstance of life. St. Paul reminds us: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8.28). Therefore, the disciple who is seeking to move on in Christian perfection will practice the presence of God knowing that it is God who is guiding, guarding, and redeeming every circumstance of life.

The general means of grace serve to guard the disciple from falling into the dead formalism or the unholy pattern of enthusiasm that Wesley saw around him. In order to move on toward Christian perfection, one must have a heart surrendered to God as well as a mind and body. Out of the heart flows the faith and faithfulness needed to follow Christ fully, thus for Wesley, perfection begins as one’s heart is set on Christ. “Without the general means of grace, there is increasing dissipation, and faith is supplanted by formal religion” (Knight 125).

The practice of the general means of grace is enabled by the Holy Spirit. Grace enables the disciple to practice the means and grace that their practice bears fruit. All is grace from beginning to end. However, the disciple must respond to grace and discipline himself to engage his heart with watching, denying ourselves, daily taking up our cross, and exercising the presence of God in every circumstance of life. These inward

disciplines will give way to the practice and blessing of outward means of grace known as the particular means of grace, or as works of piety, and the prudential means of grace, also known as works of mercy. The particular means of grace, those that display our love of God, will now be addressed.

### **Particular Means of Grace: Love of God**

The particular means of grace are those practices common to the exercise of faith within the context of the Church. Each of these practices is rooted in Scripture and the life of Christ, has been essential to the historic practice of Wesleyan spiritual formation, and are practices intended to lead one on to holiness. They include prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord's supper, fasting, and Christian conferencing (Knight 5). Some within the Church mistakenly believed the practice of these disciplines to be the aim of discipleship not the means to holiness of life. Wesley declared, "Now use all outward things; but use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness" (*Works* 1:545). Wesley's aim was to bring a renewal to the Church through the right use of these means, not the rejection of them. He intended that they be used in faith which was enlivened by grace. This view was the context through which the disciple was moved on in Christian perfection as he received and reciprocated the love of God. "The experience is transformative because it is an experience of the identity of God. As God is remembered and as the promises of God are renewed, the Christian affections are formed and shaped" (Knight 129). The one who loves God will seek his love through the practice of the means of grace. In the following pages, each of the practices as described in Scripture, displayed in our common Wesleyan history, and deployed in the path toward holiness will be discussed.

**Prayer and Fasting.** The first of the means under consideration is that of prayer. “Prayer is the act of lifting up our thoughts, words, and affections to God” (Thompson, *The Means of Grace*). The Scripture is replete with examples of prayer. The followers of Christ are to be a people marked by regular and ongoing prayer. Prayer is an invitation to personal relationship as well as the power for transforming us and the world. “Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father” (Foster). St. Paul, in his first letter to the Church at Thessalonica, commands that they should “pray without ceasing” (1Thess. 5.17). In addition to the command to pray, the Lord provides a model prayer. He instructs his disciples when you pray...pray like this:

Our Father in heaven hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. (Matt. 5.9-13)

This model prayer gives us insight into both the opportunities and modalities of prayer.

The Lord’s prayer shows us three opportunities to grow in grace: as sons and daughters, as servants of the King, and as shining lights in this fallen world. The prayer opens with the assertion that God is our Father. Therefore, prayer is an opportunity for personal interaction with the Divine as one who loves and whom one loves. This love gives rise to the desire to hear from one another. Christians long to hear the voice of the Father and know his will. He longs to hear from Christians all the many questions and concerns that they have from day to day. The discipline of prayer is the delight of communion with our Holy Father.

In addition, to the opportunity for relationship with the Father as sons and daughters, the opportunity exists in prayer for our growth in grace to follow him as servants. The Kingdom of God comes here on earth as we come to know God's will and have grace to follow him. Believers must wait on the Lord to show them and enable them to live out the Kingdom plan. "And first, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer" (Wesley, *Works* 1:381). Waiting in prayer was not meant to be passive but rather an active engagement in the practice of prayer to enable one to know and do God's will. The context of prayer is that one seeks grace to live out the Great Commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength as they acknowledge their needs and inabilities. The seeking of God's grace in prayer is not only active but also a persistent practice of the disciple. The Lord in his teaching on prayer reminds believers that when they come to the Father in prayer seeking his wisdom, provision, and will, he gladly answer them just as an earthly father will respond to the request of a child. "If you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt. 7.11). Therefore, believers wait in persistent prayer as the Lord reveals his will and gifts us by grace to see his kingdom coming here on earth.

The third opportunity of prayer highlighted in the Lord's prayer is a lived faith as shining lights in a fallen world for his disciples. In prayer, believers seek God's grace for their daily provision, practice of forgiveness, and protection from evil. This seeking is contrary to the ways of the culture. The disciple trusts God to provide for our needs according to his riches which also allows one to give to others generously. The greatest need of all is that of forgiveness. The disciple knows firsthand that the forgiveness of

one's sins is a much greater act of mercy than our forgiveness of one another. Therefore, believers show forth the grace God's forgiveness as they forgive others. The light of Christ shines brightly as the disciple seeks to walk in the path of righteousness, the narrow way, by avoiding temptation and evil. In prayer, one is enabled to shine the grace of the gospel for all the world to see, to be a servant through which the Kingdom is coming on earth, and know the joy of being the child of God.

The modalities of prayer include prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplications. The practice of private prayer and public prayer includes these forms of communication with the Father. The Book of Common Prayer includes each of these modes in both the prayers of the daily office as well as in the Eucharistic liturgy. Wesley, being an Anglican clergyman, would have been rooted in these modes of prayer from childhood. One of the most beautiful prayers in the morning office is that of the Venite which declares the glory of God as creator and sustainer of all things. The beginning of each day is marked by the recognition of the majesty and power of the living God. This prayer is one example of the adoration which serves as the foundation of all prayer. Christians pray believing because of who God is, what he has done, and the hope of what he will yet do. When recounting the wonder of God, one is certainly put in remembrance of one's own sinfulness, failure, and the need of confession.

Confession is the practice of agreeing with God about our sin. Christians confess the rightness of God's holy Law and their failure to live according to it's just requirements. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1.9). For Wesley, as for all Anglicans, a rhythm and habit of confession is woven into each day through the prayers of the Book of Common Prayer. In

addition, each worship service would be shaped by a liturgy that had confession and absolution as a necessary part of the service. When one examines heart, mind, and actions against the truth of Scripture, then confession is a natural response. The act of confession, acknowledging sin and the need of grace, brings with it the assurance of forgiveness from the Holy Spirit resulting from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This acknowledgement of guilt practiced within the context of grace brings with it both freedom and forgiveness. One is set forgiven of sin and pardoned from guilt, bringing a freedom to love God and love others. The separation from God is done away with, so that one can then exercise that same gift of forgiveness with others. When grace replaces guilt and sin is replaced with the righteousness of Christ, thanksgiving is the result.

The third mode of prayer is that of thanksgiving. Morning and Evening Prayer as found in the Book of Common Prayer includes a prayer call the General Thanksgiving. This prayer is the prayer that draws together all that has come before and gives thanks to the Lord. Wesley would, through this prayer, daily thank the Lord for mercy, goodness, and loving kindness as well as creation, love, and the gift of grace. He would ask that his heart be kept aware of mercy and his lips and life be used to bring glory to God (Book of Common Prayer 25). This pattern of prayer went beyond the praying of the daily office as Wesley would often give thanks as he saw the hand of the Lord at work around him. “Through thanksgiving the Christian life also takes shape before God: the one who prays is the joyful recipient of a gift; God is the one who has given freely in love” (Knight 119). This recognition of God’s past mercies would give boldness to trust God for future grace.



The fourth mode of prayer under consideration was that of supplication. These were prayers offered on behalf of others in need of healing, help, hope, or salvation. The context of these prayers would be the relationships formed with others, our neighbors, who need grace and mercy. One must be involved in the lives of others to come in contact with these needs and be moved by love to pray. The supplications are the overflow of a life of faith that is being lived in public and a heart of love toward others. The heart motivated by the love of God is moved to love others in need. A recognition exists that all come to God in need and only by grace one can be saved from our sin, struggle, suffering, and sickness. Therefore, Christians pray to the Lord for grace and mercy to meet not only their needs but the needs of their neighbors.

The practice of prayer is often accompanied by fasting. The Lord in his Sermon on the Mount assumed that all who follow him would fast, pray, and give alms. “As to the nature of it, all the inspired writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word fast in one single sense, not to eat, to abstain from food” (Wesley, *Works* 1:594). The practice was to abstain from food to free more time and space for prayer, to deny bodily desires in order to pursue spiritual needs in prayer. Fasting was a lived recognition of what Christ declared to Satan in his wilderness temptation. “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of LORD” (Deut. 8.3). The natural impulse for humankind is to meet the needs and desires of the flesh. When one is hungry, they eat. Yet fasting gives the opportunity to choose to set one’s affections upon the Lord. Wesley identifies four grounds for fasting in addition to the aid of prayer. These grounds are sorrow for sin,

bodily health, avoidance of excessive consumption, and self-punishment (Wesley, *Works* 1:597-601). Each of these grounds is an active choice to love God and to turn to him.

Throughout the history of the Church, a regular and rhythmic practice of fasting has occurred. The Jewish people had regular days and season of fasting. Likewise, the early Church would have appointed days of fasting. During seasons, such as Lent, often Christians would fast every Friday either from all food or from meat in order to put themselves in a position to pray. “Taking the step of saying that we will deny ourselves food so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit could be a practice that serves to jar us out of the worst of our consumerist idolatries” (Thompson *The Means of Grace: Traditioned Practice in Today’s World*). These practices call one to trust God and his promises. “It’s fairly well known that Wesley would not ordain anyone to the Methodist ministry who was unwilling to fast each Friday... Wesley usually began a Friday fast at sundown on Thursday and ended it at 3:00 pm on Friday” (*The Wesley Fast*). The ability to trust God requires that one knows what God has said which means one must search the Scriptures, the inspired and infallible repository of God’s word.

**Searching the Scriptures.** Wesley calls us to the means of grace called “searching the Scriptures,” not merely read them. Wesley holds out his firm belief that the Scriptures will be the guide to life and the way to heaven through the application of the truth in daily life.

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven – how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself condescended to teach the way: for this very end came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that

book! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. (*Works* 1:105)

Wesley was a man of one Book. Through the searching of the Scriptures, Christians come to know God and how they are to live for his glory. “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me...” (John 5.39). Jesus wanted those who would call themselves disciples to order their lives according to what the Scripture said. One “searches the Scriptures,” according to Wesley, through the modes of reading, hearing, and meditating upon the Scripture then practicing what is contain in the text (*Works* 1:387).

Reading the text is the daily practice of opening the Scripture and reading. As an Anglican, Wesley would have ordered his day around the Daily Office. He would begin each day with prayer and the reading of Scripture. The goal of the reading was not the accumulation of more facts or interesting information. Wesley read in order to be transformed by the content of the Scripture. As Kevin Vanhoozer states: “Good theological judgement is largely, though not exclusively, a matter of being apprenticed to the canon: of having one’s capacity for judging (a capacity that involves imagination, reason, emotion, and volition alike) formed and transformed by the ensemble of canonical practices that constitute the Scripture” (Vanhoozer 331). When reading, a desire was present to examine heart and life to see if he was in fact walking according to the will of God.

Hearing the Scripture was the regular practice of attending the preaching of God’s word in the context of worship. Wesley called up all who would preach the Scripture to be mindful that preaching was to call the hearers to faith. “The best general method of

preaching, he said, was (1) to invite. (2) To convince. (3) To offer Christ. (4) To build up; and to do this in some measure every sermon” (Wesley, qtd in Knight 156). The faith proclaimed was not just the subject of sermons, but the substance of daily conversations. Brothers and sisters were talking, reasoning together about what they had heard, and discussing how they might live accordingly. The Divine author is using human authors and the preached word to communicate truth. “Luther insisted that his desire was for the Scripture to be interpreted neither by his own spirit nor by any human spirit but *suo spiritu* – by its own spirit...” (Starling 9).

Meditating on Scripture was the practice of a prolonged reflection upon a passage. Wesley gave himself to the practice of setting aside time for meditation. He described his practice, “I meditate thereon, with all attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable” (*Works* 1:106). In Wesley’s journals and letters, evidence exists showing that he deeply thought about the words of Scripture and sought to apply it to his life and to the help of those whom he encountered.

Searching the Scripture is a daily and life-long journey in the life of the disciple. The practice of searching the Scripture is in need of renewed emphasis in the American Church. “According to a recent study by the Pew Research Institute, even though American Christians voice assertion of the authority of the Bible, in recent years the use of the Bible has declined in the church and in its formative practices such as worship and discipleship. Forty-five percent of Christians seldom or have never read the Bible” (Maddix 34-35). Formation by the Scripture cannot happen if you do not read, mark, and inwardly digest the Scripture. One can hear in the words of St. Paul to Timothy that the journey that begins as a child of hearing the Scripture is the substance of life in Christ.

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3.14-15). The gospel truth revealed in the Scripture is made present to those who follow Christ in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, also known as the Eucharist.

**Lord’s Supper.** The Lord’s Supper is the invitation to come and receive, in a mysterious way, the grace of God in the elements of bread and wine.

Although Wesley’s position on the sacraments is in some ways unique, on a more general level it is a variation of the Reformed doctrine of virtualism, mediated through Anglicanism. Virtualism holds that the elements remain unchanged, but Christ is nonetheless present through the Holy Spirit, using the elements as a means of grace. (Knight 131)

The mystery is that one takes bread and wine but receives the real body and blood of Jesus by faith. This sacrament is a real “communion” with our Lord Jesus Christ. The Anglican Church calls this understanding the doctrine of real presence, denoting that Christ is present to those who receive the meal in faith (Cranmer). The bread and wine are the outward signs of the inward grace of Christ’s presence, and thus the Lord’s Supper is called a Sacrament. Borgen states,

Christ is present in the sacrament in His divinity, applying the merits of the great Atonement to the believer. Wesley holds a view of the Real Presence of Christ, which may properly be called dynamic or living Presence. Where God acts, there He is. (66)

The invitation of the Lord's Supper is more than a remembering of the past but rather a fresh encounter with the Lord, his grace, and a feasting on his presence. The Lord's Supper is the satisfaction of our deepest longing. "Man is a hungry being...behind all the hunger of our life is God. All desire is finally a desire for Him" (Schmemmann 14). Just as human bodies are hungry each day for food, humans also hunger daily for the presence of God.

The receiving of the Lord's Supper should be the regular practice of all who place their faith in Jesus. Wesley says, "I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can" (*Works* 3:428). Wesley, like most Anglicans of his day, would have seen daily communion as the preferred frequency for receiving the Sacrament. Wesley was motivated to receive the Lord's Supper by his desire to obey God's command as well as his recognition of his desperate need.

First, Christ commanded that the believer "do this in remembrance of me." The night before Christ was to go to the Cross, he broke bread and drank wine with his disciples. In this context, he called them to continue this meal in remembrance of his love for them. This is more than mere remembrance as during the meal the past, present, and future all find their meaning in Jesus. As N.T. Wright states:

Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, says Paul, you announce the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26) The present moment (whenever) somehow holds together the one-off past event (The Lord's death) and the great future when God's world will be remade under Jesus' loving rule (until he comes). Past and future come rushing together into

the present, pouring an ocean of meaning into the bottle of now. (Wright 50)

Christians find hope in the meal, but is Christians are bound together through the meal.

Jesus also commanded them to “love one another.” The Lord’s Supper puts Christians in remembrance of Christ’s love for them and their call to love others. “The skills have been lost of being present for and in another, and what remains is mistrust and violence” (Williams 175). The answer to overcoming the divisions of our day must begin with knowing one another. One way to begin this task is to break bread together. “Not knowing or loving where we are and who we are with, we don’t know how to live in ways that foster mutual flourishing and delight” (Wirzba 71). In sharing a meal, believers are confronted with the reality that they need each other and that this life they share is a costly gift. “For us to live (and eat) well, we need to know what death is..., we can only know death properly when it is placed in a Trinitarian perspective. In the temporal and mortal flesh of Jesus Christ, God’s communion life is revealed as life that offers itself completely” (Wirzba 111). This is the heart of our faith and he commanded that Christians eat the meal so that they would not forget that he gave himself that they might live.

Second, Wesley called to mind the benefits of “the forgiveness of our past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls” (*Works* 3:429). The liturgy of the Lord’s Supper calls on those who are to come to the table to examine their hearts, to confess their sins, and to have the priest of pronounce absolution for all confessed sins. St. Paul warns that those who eat the meal without confession and repentance are

bringing upon themselves condemnation (1 Cor. 11.23-30). Therefore, one should truly prepare the heart to receive the meal.

The confession of sin is followed by the partaking of the meal, bread and wine, body and blood, being the sacrifice offered for our sin. “The wages of our sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6.23). All deserve the death penalty but can receive the gift of life for those who believe. Christians exchange their guilt for grace as they partake of this meal.

Another grace received at the meal is the strengthen of the soul for present mission and ministry. The spiritual food of the Lord’s Supper gives the recipient the grace to face the real struggles and challenges of life in the fallen world. “This is the food of our souls: this gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection” (*Works 3:429*). Christ took on flesh to save us from our sins, and Christians receive the gift of his flesh and blood to enable them to move on to Christian perfection.

The Lord’s Supper is a family meal taken in the context of community. The Christian life is one that is lived in the context of community. God exists in the persons of the Trinity, one God in three persons. “The ultimate goal of the sacraments is union with Christ and other believers, a communion which is cultivated in the Eucharist as personal and corporate holiness of heart and life, the defining characteristic of which is love” (Martin 26). The Church exists as many members that make up the one body of Christ. The communal nature of the Church and our need of one another is seen in the last of the particular means of grace, Christian conferencing.

**Christian Conferencing.** The first negative statement in the Bible is “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2.18). All that God created is good, but man



being alone is not good. This runs counter to the current culture which evaluates the ideas of autonomy and individualism. These priorities have affected the Church as congregants have become consumers, picking and choosing according to their felt needs. The priorities of community and fellowship have been replaced by Facebook groups and online courses. The COVID pandemic accelerated these trends as churches were forced to close their doors and offer services and studies remotely. As an example of this, the attendance at Christ Church Vero Beach Florida averaged 225 per Sunday prior to the COVID pandemic, and two years later the attendance is now 140 (CCVB attendance records). The attendance in Community Groups and Bible Studies has also decreased.

Wesley knew that man being alone was not good and that in fact grace exists in the presence of brothers and sisters who gather for fellowship and encouragement. “He organized to beat the devil – not to make converts but to converts into saints. Wesley would have nothing of ‘solitary religion,’ secret Christians, for faith without works” (Snyder). The remedy was an emphasis on Christian Conferencing or the practice of intentional community and accountability. Andrew Thompson provides three key realities concerning Christian Conferencing, also called Christian fellowship:

Real Christian fellowship is a means of grace, and the promise it holds for us can be summed up with three simple statements about discipleship.

First, we can never do it on our own. Second, God doesn’t intend for us to do it on our own. And third, when we experience the power of deep Christian fellowship, we find that we would never want to do it on our own.

The type of fellowship which Wesley calls Christian Conferencing was more than just being together. Fellowship was a mindful presence with one another which would seek to encourage and enliven one's faith. He would describe it as "watching over one another in love" (*Works* 9:256). The aim of watching over one another was a growing love for God and for others. The evidence of such a growing love would be the presence of the fruit of the Spirit. Wesley describes it this way,

They began to bear one's burdens, and naturally care for each other. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had more endeared affection for each other. And speaking the truth in love, they grew up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. (*Works* 9:262)

The pursuit of Christian perfection requires that a person has others watching their life in love. "The emphasis of Wesley's groups were spiritual renewal, mutual responsibility, and Christian practice in the world" (Blevins 77). This type of fellowship must be the regular pattern of life lest one fall prey to the schemes of the devil.

The reality that discipleship cannot be pursued alone gives way to the fact that grace is meant to be shared beyond the context of the Church. This is not a program, but rather organic discipleship. "It [Organic Discipleship] is about learning the natural rhythms of discipleship within your church context, the circumstances, and relationships in which the Holy Spirit is working to bring life and growth" (Bevins *Marks of A Movement* 99). Grace is a gift to be shared with the world. As disciples are lavished in the love of God, their hearts overflow with this love for others. One recognizes that "none is righteous, no not one". (Rom. 3.10). Apart from grace, all would be rightly condemned to

judgement. However, God has poured out his grace which is meant to be shared. One who knows the love of God is to share the love of God.

### **Prudential Means of Grace: Love of Neighbor — Holy Love Leads to a Holy Life**

The particular means of grace describe how one receives grace, while the prudential means of grace show how grace is shared with others. The particular means of grace, also called the instituted means, were established by Christ in the Scripture. The prudential means are encounters with grace that happen in the ordinary things of life. “Prudence is the kind of wisdom you gain through maturity and the experience of daily life” (Thompson). The prudential means are encountered as one meets someone who is living a holiness of life and incarnating the love of God here in this fallen world. Unlike the particular means of grace, a finite list of prudential means does not exist as they were contextual. These were encounters with grace at the place of greatest need. They were demonstrations of the dynamic nature of grace. However, some are commonly experienced.

The prudential means include:

1. Particular rules or acts of holy living
2. Class and Band Meetings
3. Prayer meetings, covenant services, watch night services, love feasts.
4. Visiting the sick.
5. Doing all the good one can, doing no harm.
6. Reading devotional classics and all edifying literature. (Knight 5)

The aim of the Christian life was that of Christian perfection. Wesley emphasized that the practice of the means of grace was to result in a life marked by holiness. However, the end was not personal holiness but rather that holiness be multiplied to others.

Discipleship is the essential bridge between missiology and ecclesiology.

Mission-shaped disciples are those who intentionally pursue this mission spirituality as a way of life; by seeking growth in God's love through spiritual discipline and small group accountability and sharing that love with others in the ordinary flow of everyday life. (Meadows 1)

This mission is seen in the last of the particular means being Christian Conferencing and in Classes and Bands which marks some of the key prudential means of grace.

**Societies, Classes, and Bands.** The shallow nature of spiritual formation today is due to a fundamental misunderstanding of what being a disciple means. The modern evangelical focus is largely on making a decision to "believe" in Christ, not surrendering one's life to become more like Christ.

One reason is that for many Christians the gospel is a one-time transaction where you put your faith in Jesus, and he rewards you by forgiving you and giving you a ticket to heaven. This account has often resulted in a distortion of the gospel, where people are forgiven but otherwise unchanged, continuing to love and serve the ways of sin and death instead of being transformed by God's love and learning to love God. (Watson and Kisker, *Band Meeting* 21)

This misconception of the gospel leads to the false assumption that how one lives now has no impact upon where one will spend eternity. In order to change course and sound

the clarion call to holiness, a reorientation of discipleship from merely believing in Jesus to becoming like Jesus must occur. The process of becoming, or Christian Perfection, will require the whole Church in community.

Personal holiness and public holiness are rooted in the communal nature of the Church. “Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in peoples’ belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured” thus the formation of societies, classes, and bands (Gladwell 173). Those who wanted to be a part of a Society, Class, or Band had to be committed to the pursuit of a holy life. “There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into societies, as desire to flee the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins” (*Works* 9:256-257). One cannot love God rightly, nor share the love of God robustly without the context of community.

If I cannot find God in the middle of my work – where my concerns and worries, pains, and joys are – it does not make sense to try to find him in the hours set free at the periphery of my life. If spiritual life cannot grow and deepen in the midst of ministry, how will it ever grow on the edges.

(Nouwen xvii)

The power of the gospel must be an earthy and daily experience. Our lives are lived in relationship to others, so the participation in societies and bands was essential.

These groups were voluntary and sought to provide the soil for a growing holiness. The three key endeavors of the societies and bands were: (1) Do not harm by avoiding every kind of evil; (2) By doing good, by being in every kind merciful in their

power... and (3) By attending upon all the ordinances of God (Works 9:257). While both societies and bands shared these overarching goals, distinctions existed in their missions.

John Drakeford outlines the groups and their aims as follows:

1. The Society – Associational: primarily for fellowship and encouragement, including non-believers;
2. The Class – Behavioral: primarily for examining the behavior of Christians and providing encouragement and correction;
3. The Band – Motivational: extended examination beyond behavior to the very intent of the Christian;
4. The Select Society – Aspirational: for the most enthusiastic member, seeking as full a Christian life as possible;
5. The Penitent Band – Reclamation: for those who had failed in other groups but were willing to attempt to return. (Blevins 78)

One can see that Wesley believed in grace and the shared journey of faith. Societies welcomed non-believers so that they could regularly put themselves in the way of grace and examine their lives with others and be saved. Societies gave context for Christian fellowship as an alternative to the worldly pursuits of the culture. Classes were groups of twelve members who professed faith in Christ and sought to form and shape members to live out their identity in Christ. They were saved and the class sought to form them so that they lived like it. Bands were designed to give deep examination and reflection upon the one's lived holiness. The band would speak truth to one another and spur one another on to faith and holiness. The four "alls" of salvation in the Wesleyan tradition are seen in this way of discipleship. "All need to be saved, all can be saved, all can know they are

saved, and all can be saved to the uttermost” (Watson and Kisker 67). Participation in these groups gave a context for ongoing growth in holiness.

Wesley was seeking to overcome the human tendency which is to hide one’s imperfections and failures. The temptation is to create an image, a false perception, that shows one has it all together. One is sure to recognize that this is the same response to the guilt of sin experienced by our parents, Adam and Eve, as they hid in the garden. When one seeks to hide sin, sin takes root and multiplies. However, when “we confess we have sinned by what we have done and what we have left undone” one finds that grace is greater than sin (Book of Common Prayer 130). The light of confession and community shines on sin and darkness cannot remain in the light.

In addition to overcoming sin, these groups motivated and shaped members for holiness. The expectation was that each person would use the blessing of God in their life to help others day by day and week by week. They not only would help those in the church who had needs, but they would look to their neighbors and seek to bless the suffering. These acts of love were contagious as kindness begets more kindness. In this context, grace was encountered. These gatherings were holy moments when the ordinary coming together of brothers and sisters led to grace being multiplied to them all. These brothers and sisters ruthlessly sought to deal with sin so that they could radically display the grace and love of Christ in the world. They were both chisels sharpening the iron of faith for one another as well as companions in the pursuit of public holiness lived out in the culture. Together they journeyed toward Christian perfection looking for encounters with grace in the ordinary things of life.

The prudential means of grace vary from place to place and generation to generation. The context of the twenty-first century in North America affords different encounters with grace than did the eighteenth century in England. What does not change is that God's grace is manifest daily in the ordinary occurrences of life. Visiting the sick is an opportunity to see God either bring healing to the body or hope to the dying. Feeding the hungry is an opportunity to be a part of God's grace providing daily bread. When one receives a blessing, the opportunity is given to ask if the blessing is for us or for us to share. Another opportunity to encounter grace is when reading Christian literature which is meant to strengthen faith. When reading, one can find a correction for sin, a comfort for sorrow, and a challenge for growth, each a grace gift to us.

Prudential means of grace find their context in the shared life of disciples. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2.42). This way of living is the intentional life of doing good, doing no harm, and attending to the ordinances. In this soil grows the seeds of Christian perfection. The outworking of this way of living is the daily expectation and encounter with grace. Through the practice of the means of grace, individuals are continuously being transformed and reminded of the purpose of Christian discipleship, being participation in the kingdom of God through local communities of faith as the Church in the world. "Christian discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition consists of both personal and social holiness" (Warner 171). Grace redeems the lost, heals the sick, comforts the suffering, and consoles the dying. This way of life is a life worth living.

### **Research Design Literature**



The research leads one to ask how does the Church in this day, living in this cultural milieu, understand and apply the pursuit of holiness. The research method chosen to answer those questions is an intervention project utilizing a mixed method approach to data collection. The intervention research project seeks to address a need through action and then to evaluate the results.

Within the context the pastor-student identifies a particular problem that needs addressing. An action, an intervention, is taken to address the problem. Data is collected and analyzed to discern whether the intervention accomplished its purpose. Conclusions are drawn about the feasibility and sustainability of the intervention in the future life of the context. (Sensing 64)

The concern identified is the evaluation of the use of the means of grace for the purpose of spiritual formation that leads to holiness. The intervention will be a six-week seminar entitled *A Heart Perfected in Love* which will be developed and taught by the researcher.

The data collection will be accomplished through both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method will be a pre-seminar survey and a post-seminar survey to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, and practice of the means of grace in pursuit of holiness which will be reported using descriptive statistics. The qualitative method will be focus groups which will allow the participants to describe their experience during the seminar and their subsequent application of things learned.

The conclusions will give information needed to improve the discipleship process at Christ Church Vero Beach. The goal of the project is to integrate the means of grace

more fully into the daily practice of spiritual formation. The desired long-term fruit is an increased personal and public holiness for those being disciplined at Christ Church.

### **Summary of Literature**

The Fall in Genesis 3 leaves all humankind disordered and disconnected from the creation purpose and plans of God. The great needs from the moment of the Fall to today are that of reconciliation of relationship with God, redemption from sin, and restoration to our created design. Apart from being reconciled, redeemed, and restored, one has only judgement ahead as a Holy God must judge sin. The proclamation of the gospel and the pursuit of holiness known as spiritual formation are key elements to undoing these effects of the Fall. Dallas Willard defines spiritual formation as “the Spirit driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself” (VII). The reality of the Fall demands either judgement or justification. The path toward undoing the Fall is found in the Scriptural command to love, the Wesleyan theological dogma known as Christian perfection, and the use of the means of grace.

The Lord set apart spiritual leaders to guide the Church and lead them from the Fallen state inherited from Adam into a new life of holiness. “The pastor’s job was the cure and care of souls: to function as a shepherd for the soul on its journey to healing and life through union with God – what Jesus called “eternal life” (Willard VIII). This call to tend souls was a wholistic pursuit to set right the heart, mind, and soul. However, during the period of the Enlightenment during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the pastoral charge was reduced to the spiritual concerns.

Centuries of separation and suspicion between spirituality and psychology have left us with a generation of churches who know how to teach the Bible but not how to live it. And the farming out of the soul expertise to professionals who don't even believe in the soul's Creator has left us with a culture devoid of the necessary resources to see Christ formed in each person according to the Creator's loving design. (Willard VIII)

The truth claims of the Bible, as a result of the Enlightenment, have been reduced to stories with spiritual but not practical implication for daily living.

John Wesley, who lived during the Enlightenment period, demonstrated that one must both believe and behave in accordance with the Scripture. He summed up the Christian life as loving God and neighbor, just as Christ commanded. He believed that loving God and neighbor would lead to a life marked by what he called Christian Perfection. The doctrine of Christian Perfection as taught by Wesley was not an attempt to say that man was without flaw but rather was by grace moving toward loving God fully and neighbor rightly. Wesley stated:

It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies. The being cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being so renewed in the image of our mind as to be perfect as our Father is perfect.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection 35)

This was the aim of Wesley for his own life and for those whom God had called him to shepherd. He wanted a lived faith that resulted in a holy life.

The process of being formed and shaped to be like Christ came through the use of the means of grace. These were the tools that God left for the Church to inwardly remake humankind into the likeness of Jesus. The means of grace are activities which form and shape the disciple both in their relationship with God and with humankind. Wesley states, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (*Works* 1:381). These practices were the context through which one encountered grace, and the resulting fruit of the means of grace is that one will love God and will love neighbor and thus fulfill the call to be holy as God is holy.

The research shows that Wesley’s methods bore fruit in the lives under his care. The question that remains is what are the attitudes, knowledge, and practice of Anglicans today regarding the command of God to love, the call toward Christian perfection, and the use of the means of grace as the tools to achieve these goals? The research will seek to answer those questions and discover best practices for spiritual formation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This Chapter provides a brief overview of the nature and purpose of the project. The focus of this Chapter centers on the research questions and how they will serve to address the purpose. The research instrument for each question will be identified as well as describing how it answers the research question.

The ministry context and the participants will be described, including demographic and descriptive information for both. The intervention, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, which is a six-week seminar, will be detailed along with the data collection and analysis. The aim is to provide a clear model for the project and its methodology.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this project was to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness. The means to evaluate knowledge, attitude, and practice is an intervention project in the form of a seminar entitled *A Heart Perfected in Love*. This seminar sought to teach the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection, which is also called holiness, as the goal of all spiritual formation. The practices which Wesley utilized to lead one toward Christian Perfection are called the means of grace. The evidence of one's formation was a life that was marked by holiness both personally and publicly.

The participants shared their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in pursuit of spiritual formation both before and after the seminar through a Likert Scale survey. This served as a quantitative measure of their knowledge, attitude, and behavior concerning spiritual formation. In addition, the participants shared their reflections and personal growth as a result of the seminar through a focus group. The aim was to increase knowledge, attitude, and behaviors that would lead the participants to grow toward personal and public holiness.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this project's research, methodology, and data analysis.

#### **Research Question #1**

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness prior to the seminar?

This information was gathered through a twenty-five question Likert Scale survey created by the researcher. The survey was tested for validity by three experts. The survey included an informed consent release as the first question and contained four demographic questions, five questions concerning knowledge, five questions concerning attitudes, and ten questions concerning behavior (Appendix A).

#### **Research Question #2**

What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the

means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness following the seminar?

The same Likert scale survey (Appendix A) was administered at the conclusion of the seminar in order to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior over the course of the six-week seminar. The post-seminar survey, while omitting the demographic information and replacing them with qualitative questions, was comprised of the same quantitative questions which allowed the researcher to quantify the impact of the seminar on knowledge, attitude, and behaviors in each participant.

### **Research Question #3**

What aspects of the seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness had the greatest impact on the observed changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice among the participants?

The researcher developed Focus Group questions; they were comprised of five guided questions and three prescribed responses (Appendix A). The conversation was audio recorded with the consent of the participants. The goal was to discover whether the seminar had resulted in new practices in the pursuit of personal holiness as well as new participation in opportunities to engage in public holiness.

### **Ministry Context**

Christ Church is an Anglican parish located in Vero Beach, Florida. Christ Church was birthed in 2010 as a group of several hundred laity, along with four clergy, walked out of Trinity Episcopal Church leaving the keys on the altar. The exodus was precipitated by the theological drift on matters of biblical, social, and moral orthodoxy. The founding group often says that they would rather have fidelity to the gospel than

facilities. Thus, they walked away from buildings, memories, and friendships to plant a parish within the newly formed Anglican Church in North America.

The mission statement that was developed to guide the newly forming parish was as follows: “Christ Church is a faith community where God’s grace and truth meet, empowering Christians to joyfully worship the living Lord, faithfully grow disciples who make new disciples, sacrificially and intentionally reach out to the local community and beyond, with mercy and compassion, to impact the lives of those Jesus died to save” (CCVB Parish Profile). The parish has summarized the mission statement into three key words: worship, grow, and reach. These three words serve as a lens in planning, budgeting, and evaluating ministry. The context in which the mission is lived out is that of a “three streams” Anglican Church. Three streams is a common phrase used in Anglican circles to refer to the priority of Scripture, Sacrament, and the ministry of the Spirit in all that is done together.

The researcher became the fourth rector of Christ Church in January of 2020. The founding rector was defrocked for a moral failure three months after the exodus from the Episcopal Church. The second rector was fired for failure to fulfill his duties after ten months. The third rector served faithfully for seven years. He was a peacemaker and healing presence in the parish. However, during his tenure, two associate priests were removed from ministry for moral failures. This history of failure on the part of clergy to live out their vows and faithful serve as spiritual leaders of this parish has had an impact on the parishioner’s ability to fully trust clerical leadership. This reality shapes how I must lead into the future.



The parish in 2021 is made up of 284 members with a pre-covid average Sunday attendance of 203 people. The median age of the parishioners is seventy years old, and this population is 112 men and 172 women (CCVB membership report August 2021). The parish has only one young family between their twenties or thirties apart from staff families. The parish does have a preschool with eighty-four children enrolled from one year olds through a kindergarten readiness class of four and five year old children. The preschool has fifty-three families that bring their children here Monday through Friday, but only one family is a member of the parish.

The parish is in Indian River County, Florida on a fifteen acre campus situated in the heart of Vero Beach. Christ Church worships in a 26,000 square foot facility that was completed in 2017 and was built debt-free. According to the Indian River County Economic Development, the total population of the county is 157,355 persons with 70,683 households. The median age for the county is 51.8 years of age (Indian River County Economic). The U.S. Census reports the racial makeup of the county is 86.7 percent white, 9.6 percent black, and 13 percent Hispanic ([Indian River County Demographic](#)).

Vero Beach is unique in that it has a large disparity in wealth distribution. The island is home to some of the wealthiest people in the state of Florida and is listed as at the fifth wealthiest zip code in Florida with an adjust gross income of \$536,700 and \$110,471 median household income (Online Median Income Report). The mainland is home to more middle-class families with a median household income of \$48,844 (Indian River County Demographic). The majority of our membership live on the island which explains why with a membership of 284 Christ Church has an annual budget of more than

1.3 million dollars. In 2020, the parish gave \$200,000 for support of local, national, and foreign missions. In addition to funding, the parish has active partnerships with an African American Sister Church, CareNet Crisis Pregnancy Center, The Source (a ministry to the homeless population), FCA, InterVarsity at Indian River College, and Women's Refuge Center (a ministry to battered and abused women).

The parish has completed a survey to discover the priorities for the future. Christ Church is positioned in a key location with abundant resources but is asking what is it that God would have us do in the next season of life at Christ Church. The first area of focus was to maintain a passionate and biblically based preaching ministry. This has been one of the hallmarks of the parish from its beginning and must continue. Second, the parish needs to refocus and grow in our discipleship efforts. Christ Church needs to strengthen their plan and process for discipleship to provide opportunities for persons at all levels of spiritual development to continue to grow. Third, the parish needs to grow in the area of innovative and collaborative leadership. An erosion of trust has occurred over the years that must be rebuilt. The clergy and laity must dream and work together to establish a vision for the future. Fourth, the parish needs to intentionally reach out and welcome young families. This focus should include a plan to develop relationships with our Christ Church Academy families as well as a plan to reach out to those in our neighborhood. Fifth, a need exists to embrace and educate the parish as to our Anglican heritage. Our Anglican heritage is one of the distinctives that sets Christ Church apart from other churches in our area. Therefore, as Christ Church grows, guarding the tradition entrusted to our care becomes even more important. The seminar, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, is a part of advancing these goals.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

The participants for the seminar *A Heart Perfected in Love* were chosen from the membership and regular attenders of Christ Church Vero Beach. A regular attender for the purpose of this seminar was one who attends two or more times per month and has been doing so for a minimum of six months. The demographics of the parish population as a whole are older, with a median age of seventy, so the researcher intentionally sought to involve those from multiple generations. In addition, the parish is overwhelmingly comprised of those with higher education and higher per household income levels which lends to a lack of diversity on those data points.

### **Description of Participants**

Fifteen participants were invited to participate based on age, gender, and length of time at Christ Church. The researcher sought to have a mix of male and female, those from differing generations, and those with differing lengths of time worshipping in the parish. This selection was in keeping with the purposive samples' methodology described by Sensing (83). The desire was to have a broad cross section of the parish. The participants represent 10 percent of an average Sunday attendance as well as a cross section of the generational mix of the parish in 2022.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants in the seminar, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, were informed of the nature of the study through an informed consent letter. The informed consent letter also included an

outline of weekly topics to be covered in the seminar. A copy of the informed consent letter is attached as Appendix C.

In order to protect confidentiality, no names or any other distinguishing characteristics of individual participants are reported in the study. If referencing a particular participant was needed, he/she has been referred to using a pseudonym known only to the researcher. Raw data, including survey and focus group results, will never be shared or disseminated.

The researcher shared significant findings from his research in a colloquium with cohort colleagues and faculty on Asbury's Wilmore campus. The researcher also shared pertinent results with Christ Church staff and discipleship leaders within the Gulf Atlantic Diocese. Only research findings were shared; no raw data, survey results, audio files, etc., were ever dispersed.

Electronic data was stored on a password protected computer. Only the researcher had the access to the computer. No audio files were recorded using any other source besides the researcher's secure computer. Any hardcopy data was kept in a locked safe in the researcher's office at Christ Church Vero Beach with the key in the sole possession of the researcher. All electronic data was deleted completely and any hardcopy data was shredded within twelve months after the conclusion of the research project.

### **Instrumentation**

The first instrument utilized in the project was the *Means of Grace Pre-Test*, a twenty-four question Likert Scale Survey. This survey was a quantitative tool seeking to measure the participants knowledge, attitude, and behavior prior to engaging in the seminar *A Heart Perfected in Love*. The survey protocol can be found in Appendix A.

The second instrument utilized was the *Means of Grace Post-Test*, a twenty-two question Likert Scale survey. This survey was seeking to measure changes to knowledge, attitude, and behavior of participants following participation in the seminar. These surveys can be found in Appendix A. The final instrument utilized was the *Means of Grace Focus Group*, comprised of six of the participants in the seminar which sought to gather qualitative data from the participants concerning matters of greatest impact on their knowledge, attitude, and behavior surrounding their spiritual formation. The focus group protocol is found in Appendix A.

The pre-test survey begins with four demographic questions, gathering information on the participants including age, educational level, and the length of time they have been an Anglican. The survey does not capture the name of the participant in order to maximize confidentiality. Each participant was given a code and only the researcher had access to the list matching participants to their codes. The demographic data points will be examined to see if they had any significant impact on one's knowledge, attitude, and behavior concerning spiritual formation.

The *Means of Grace Pre-Test* included twenty-four questions crafted to collect data on each of the following areas: knowledge, attitude, and behavior of each participant concerning their spiritual formation or growth in holiness. "The main emphasis is on fact-finding, and if a survey is well structured and piloted, it can be a relatively cheap and quick way to obtain information" (Sensing 116). The survey design was structured so that the first ten questions sought to evaluate knowledge and attitude while the final ten questions sought to discover behaviors in the areas of both personal and public holiness.

The second instrument, the *Means of Grace Post-Test*, was a twenty-two question survey that omitted the demographic questions from the pre-test but added some open-ended questions to measure the impact of the seminar. As Groves suggests, using the same questions aids the researcher in measuring changes over time (Groves 251). The researcher was able to note changes in the participants and evaluate differences in knowledge, attitude, and behavior through this instrument.

The final instrument utilized was a focus group, which sought to gather qualitative data as to which elements of the seminar had the greatest impact from a group of six participants. In addition, the research sought to understand changes in behaviors in the areas of both personal and public holiness. “The synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately” (Sensing 120). The dynamics of the group interaction helped to fill in the “why” of the impact of the seminar. The focus group protocol included six questions, with three prescribed responses. This structure was to maximize the opportunities for the participants to share the impact of the seminar as well as limit the impact of the researcher on the direction of the responses. All three instruments were developed by the researcher and submitted for expert review.

Finally, the data collected from each of these instruments was synthesized with findings from data collected in the literature review and applied to the context of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. The aim was to discover ways in which to enhance the spiritual formation process, informed by Wesley’s example, in order to increase growth in holiness resulting in greater personal and public holiness.

**Expert Review**

The researcher engaged three expert reviewers to evaluate the design in terms of clarity and necessity of the questions in the discovery of desire ends. The expert evaluators were Dr. Ellen Marmon, Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at Asbury Seminary; Dr. Brian Yeich, professor at Asbury Seminary and a Wesleyan scholar; and Father Hunter Van Wagenen, priest for discipleship at Christ Church Vero Beach. The evaluators were asked to ensure that each question was needed and clear. Father Hunter served to ensure that content was in keeping with Anglican doctrine and practice. Dr. Yeich was helpful in evaluating the content as it related specifically to Wesleyan doctrine and practice. Finally, Dr. Marmon brought her expertise in Doctoral studies to ensure that the instruments were in keeping with the best practices.

**Reliability and Validity of Project Design**

The researcher was also the rector of the Christ Church Vero Beach. This relationship required the use of a mixed method approach to ensure validity as the researcher was a part of the faith community being studied. Mowat and Swinton state, “It is our opinion that the most effective way that practical theologians can use qualitative research methods is by developing an eclectic and multi-method approach that seeks to take the best of what is available within the accepted modes of qualitative research but is not necessarily bound by any one model” (Sensing 60). The researcher utilized both qualitative and quantitative instruments in order to seek the most dynamic engagement with the participants around their knowledge, attitude, and behaviors concerning spiritual formation.

The project employed a twenty-four question Likert Scale Survey, being a quantitative instrument, both before and after the intervention to measure the knowledge, attitude, and behavior of participants before the intervention as well as changes following the intervention. The pre-test was given one week prior to the intervention which allowed the researcher time to analyze knowledge, attitude, and behavior. The post-test was given at the conclusion of the final session of the intervention. The pre-test and post-test instruments were identical with the exceptions that demographic questions were excluded from the post-test and two open ended impact questions were added. The use of the same instrument was employed to give the greatest validity to the measurement of change following the intervention.

The researcher then utilized a focus group, administered three weeks following the intervention, to afford the participants to reflect upon and express the impact of the intervention as they experienced it. “The synergy of the group will often provide richer data than if each person in the group had been interviewed separately. One person’s response may prompt or modify another person’s memory of an event and its details.” (Sensing 120). The group interaction allowed the researcher to discover greater context for the qualitative data as well as unexpected impacts experienced by the participants.

Finally, the qualitative and quantitative data was synthesized and analyzed within the context of Christ Church Vero Beach. The aim of the research was to discover themes and trends of current knowledge, attitude, and behavior concerning spiritual formation. The ultimate aim was to identify new strategies for improving spiritual formation practices to result in greater personal and public holiness within the parish.



The research methodology would allow for others to easily repeat the process and collect reliable data for their given context.

### **Data Collection**

The research method utilized in this project was a mixed-method intervention. “The practical mandate to gather the most relevant data to address the project’s purpose outweighs concerns about methodological purity based on epistemological and philosophical arguments” (Sensing 52). This design was chosen to collect quantitative data concerning knowledge, attitude, and behavior around spiritual formation at Christ Church Vero Beach before and after the intervention. The surveys were followed by the use of a focus group, a qualitative instrument, to better understand the impact of the intervention from the experience of the participants.

The classic qualitative-quantitative debate has been largely resolved with recognition that a variety of methodological approaches are needed and credible, that mixed methods can be especially valuable, and that the challenge is to appropriately match methods to questions rather than adhering to some narrow methodological orthodoxy. (Patton 79)

This use of mixed method approach allowed the researcher to gather both qualitative and quantitative data points which gave a more dynamic understanding of the changes resulting from the intervention.

The qualitative instruments, pre-test and post-test Likert Scale Surveys, allowed for the collection of “what” the participants knowledge, attitude, and behavior were concerning spiritual formation (Appendix A). The pre-test, in printed format, was given one week prior to the intervention which allowed the researcher time to analyze

knowledge, attitude, and behavior. The post-test was given at the conclusion of the final session of the intervention.

The focus group, a qualitative instrument, was comprised of eight questions with three prescribed responses to discover the impact of the intervention, and was administered three weeks following the intervention to afford the participants to reflect upon and express the impact of the intervention as they experienced it (Appendix A). This construction allowed the researcher the collection of the “how and why” the participants knowledge, attitude, and behavior were affected by the intervention. The responses from the focus group also afforded the participants to reflect on what had the most transformative impact upon them. The audio recordings of the focus group were then transcribed and evaluated for common themes, as well as differences, that gave insight into how members of Christ Church had been affected and informed through their participation in the intervention.

### **Data Analysis**

The data from the pre-test was post-test surveys were stored in a locked safe in the researcher’s office immediately after completion. The data were then evaluated both for common themes which gave insights into the spiritual formation practices of members of Christ Church. The pre-test served to give a baseline of information prior to the intervention concerning each participant’s knowledge, attitude, and practice as they seek to grow in personal and public holiness through the practice of the means of grace. The post-test served to give insights as to the impact of the intervention by noting changes to knowledge, attitude, and practice by participants as they pursue personal and public holiness through the practice of the means of grace. These changes were categorized

under the headings of knowledge, attitude, and practice. The trends as to common changes were also tracked to discover how the group as whole understood and was impacted by the intervention.

The focus group was conducted three weeks following the intervention and was recorded on a password protected computer which only the researcher could access. The recording was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist hired by the researcher. The responses were categorized under heading of knowledge, attitude, or practice. The researcher sought to discover themes as to the increase in knowledge, change in attitude, and the development of new practices post intervention. The researcher sought to note impacts of the intervention as well as unexpected impacts as described by the participants.

The data from each of these instruments will serve to evaluated current methods of spiritual formation through the use of the means of grace at Christ Church and the resulting growth in personal and public holiness. In addition, data concerning knowledge and attitudes will help to evaluate needed changes or addition to current curriculum and group offerings. Finally, the data will give insights into opportunities to foster practices of the means of grace within the parish.

## CHAPTER 4

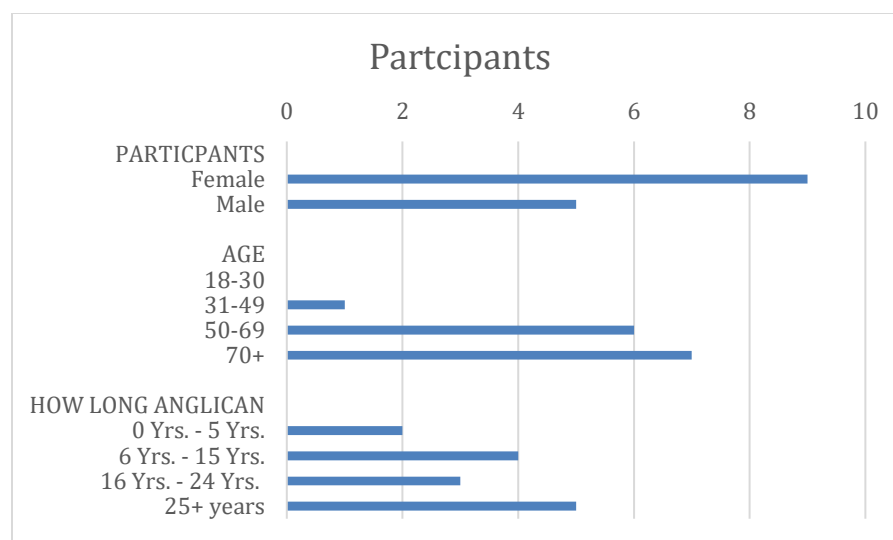
### EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This Chapter provides a summary of data collected and lessons learned during the intervention, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, which was hosted at Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. The intervention was a six-week seminar that sought to both evaluate and elevate the participants knowledge, attitude, and behaviors in spiritual formation through the practice of the means of grace. The seminar guided the participants through the great commandment to love God and neighbor as love is the motivation for both personal and public holiness. Then the participants were guided through the practical and prudential means of grace as instruments to further personal and public holiness. The participants also completed a pre-seminar and post-seminar survey to measure knowledge, attitude, and behaviors. A group of six participants then participated in a focus group one month after the final seminar session to reflect on their experience. The journey was aimed at calling the participants to higher levels of knowledge, attitude, and behavior in spiritual formation through the practice of the means of grace.

#### **Participants**

The participants in *A Heart Perfected in Love* began as fifteen members of Christ Church Vero Beach. They were selected and invited in order to provide a representation of the membership as a whole. During the course of the seminar, one male participant had a heart event and subsequently died. Therefore, the data below reflects only the fourteen participants that completed the seminar.



**FIGURE 4.1 PARTICIPANTS**

The participants were almost two to one female to male, but this is consistent with the reality of a church with more female active members than male. Second, the participants are, with the exception of one, fifty years old or older. This too represents the reality of the membership of Christ Church Vero Beach. The area of greatest variation is the length of time the participant has been an Anglican. A good spread of the participants have been Anglican for a relatively short period of time as well as having some participants who have been Anglican for most of their lives. The participants for all their similarities and diversities are representative of the active membership of Christ Church.

### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

**What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness prior to the seminar?**

The participants, through their responses to the Means of Grace Pre-Test Survey, gave insights into their knowledge, attitude, and practice concerning the use of the means

of grace in spiritual formation and growth in the areas of personal and public holiness.

Through the responses, several key trends emerged in both the areas of knowledge and attitude as well as in practices common to the group.

The first area of observation is the self-evaluation of the participant's current state of spiritual growth. Twenty-eight percent of the participants answered question 5 by stating that their spiritual growth and personal holiness was not growing or dynamic. This finding is striking as these participants were chosen from the active members of the parish. These are people who are involved in the regular activities of the parish, but who self-identify as stagnate in their spiritual growth and formation.

A second observation was the attitudes of the participants regarding the pursuit of holiness. The state of spiritual growth previously discussed is illuminated by the answers to questions 6-9 in the survey. A significant portion, 21 percent of the participants, did not see self-denial and cross bearing to be important to their daily priorities and choices (question 6). Likewise, when asked if self-denial was important in serving others (question 7), again 21 percent disagreed that self-denial was a key element of discipleship. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that the commandments serve as a standard for holy conduct (question 8) and that accountability is a key to ongoing growth. (question 9)

A third observation was a need to grow in understanding concerning the doctrine of Christian Perfection. The majority rightly understood Christian Perfection does not mean that one is totally perfect in everything they say or do (question 10). However, they did not fully apprehend that Christian Perfection, or holiness, was a surrender of body, mind, and spirit in obedience to God as 14 percent disagreed that this was necessary and

50 percent just agreed while only 36 percent strongly agreed. This was striking in that the Eucharistic liturgy begins each week with the whole congregation repeating the summary of the Law, also known as the Great Commandment, stating that all the Law and prophets is summarized in this Commandment.

<b>Pre -Seminar (Knowledge and Attitude)</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
5. My spiritual growth and personal holiness are growing and dynamic	7%	21%	64%	7%	2.71	0.73
6. The command of Jesus to, "take up your cross and follow me", shapes my choices and priorities.	0%	21%	43%	36%	3.14	0.77
7. A disciple of Jesus should practice self-denial in the service of others.	0%	7%	71%	21%	3.14	0.53
8. A disciple of Jesus does not need to keep the commandments because God's grace is greater than all our sin.	71%	21%	0%	7%	1.43	0.85
9. It is important for those seeking to be holy to confess their sins and be accountable to other believers on a regular basis.	7%	0%	57%	36%	3.21	0.80
10. The doctrine of Christian Perfection means a believer is totally perfect in everything they say or do.	50%	43%	0%	7%	1.64	0.84
11. To love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength requires that every aspect of a believer's life is surrendered to God's will.	0%	14%	50%	36%	3.21	0.70
12. Discipleship is pursued primarily through study and intellectual activities.	29%	57%	14%	0%	1.86	0.66
13. Being a disciple requires regular worship with a community of fellow believers.	0%	0%	57%	43%	3.43	0.51
14. The Book of Common Prayer is an essential tool in my growth as a follower of Jesus.	0%	21%	57%	21%	3.00	0.68

KEY: [SD-Strongly Disagree D-Disagree A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree]

**TABLE 4.1 PRE-SEMINAR KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE**

A fourth highlight was the mixed report on the participants practice of means of grace in the pursuit of personal holiness. The participation in small groups was, in spite of the stated belief in the need for confession and accountability, low. In response to question 17 on the survey, 71 percent responded that they seldom or never were involved in a small accountability group though 100 percent of participants agreed that being a

disciple requires worship within a community of believers (question 13). The contrast between the stated attitudes and practices is seen across the survey. Prayer (71 percent, question 15) and Silence (64 percent, question 23) were the personal disciplines that had the highest daily use among the participants. The practice of in-depth Bible Study (43 percent, question 24) and the Eucharist (100 percent, question 18) had the highest weekly participation rates among the participants. The discipline of fasting was not being practiced by any of the participants at the beginning of the seminar.

<b>Pre-Seminar (Behaviors)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
15. How often do you spend time in prayer? (other than meals)	0%	0%	29%	71%	3.71	0.47
16. How often do you practice fasting?	36%	64%	0%	0%	1.64	0.50
17. How often do you participate in a small accountability group?	21%	50%	29%	0%	2.07	0.73
18. How often do you receive the sacrament of the Eucharist?	0%	0%	100%	0%	3.00	0.00
19. How often do you read Scripture devotionally?	0%	21%	36%	43%	3.21	0.80
20. How often do you serve among the poor and homeless, people often forgotten by society?	29%	71%	0%	0%	1.71	0.47
21. How often do you serve among those with disease or addiction?	36%	57%	0%	7%	1.79	0.80
22. How often do you spend time socially with people of another ethnic background?	7%	64%	29%	0%	2.21	0.58
23. How often do you spend time in silence with God?	0%	29%	7%	64%	3.36	0.93



24. How often do you participate in an in depth Bible study class?	7%	50%	43%	0%	2.36	0.63
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KEY: [N-Never S-Seldom W-Weekly D-Daily]

**TABLE 4.2 PRE-SEMINAR BEHAVIORS**

A final observation was the overwhelming lack of participation by the participants in the practice of the prudential means of grace and public holiness. While the stated beliefs concerning holiness were in keeping with an historic understanding of the Church, the practices of the participants failed to match. The participants all answered never or seldom to spending time with other ethnic groups, serving the diseased or addicted, and serving among the poor and the homeless. These at-risk groups are held out by the Lord Jesus as those the Church should serve gladly. The knowledge of right doctrine did not translate into right behavior.

### **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

**What were the levels of knowledge, attitude, and practice among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in a seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness following the seminar?**

The responses by participants to the Means of Grace Post-Test Survey revealed changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice as to the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness. There are five highlights that will give a sense of the changes that took place during the seminar.

<b>Post-Seminar Knowledge and Attitude</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
1. My spiritual growth and personal holiness are growing and dynamic	0%	0%	50%	50%	3.50	0.52
2. The command of Jesus to, "take up your cross and follow me", shapes my choices and priorities.	0%	21%	43%	36%	3.14	0.77
3. A disciple of Jesus should practice self-denial in the service of others.	0%	0%	50%	50%	3.50	0.52
4. A disciple of Jesus does not need to keep the commandments because God's grace is greater than all our sin.	71%	14%	0%	14%	1.57	1.09
5. It is important for those seeking to be holy to confess their sins and be accountable to other believers on a regular basis.	0%	0%	43%	57%	3.57	0.51
6. The doctrine of Christian Perfection means a believer is totally perfect in everything they say or do.	64%	29%	7%	0%	1.43	0.65
7. To love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength requires that every aspect of a believer's life is surrendered to God's will.	0%	0%	29%	71%	3.71	0.47
8. Discipleship is pursued primarily through study and intellectual activities.	36%	43%	14%	7%	1.93	0.92
9. Being a disciple requires regular worship with a community of fellow believers.	0%	0%	21%	79%	3.79	0.43
10. The Book of Common Prayer is an essential tool in my growth as a follower of Jesus.	0%	7%	36%	57%	3.50	0.65

KEY: [SD-Strongly Disagree D-Disagree A-Agree SA-Strongly Agree]

**TABLE 4.3 POST-SEMINAR KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE**

The first observation is the change by the participants' evaluation of their spiritual growth and holiness. Prior to the seminar, 28 percent of participants felt their spiritual growth and holiness were not dynamic and growing. Following the seminar, 100 percent of the participants responded agree or strongly agree that their spiritual growth

and holiness were growing and dynamic (question 1). This change is an important change in the lives of the participants. This change indicates that through the use of the means of grace, a revitalization of their spiritual journey occurred.

The second observation is that the participants perceived need to practice of self-denial in serving others grew through the seminar. Those who strongly agreed that self-denial was a key component of serving others grew from 21 percent pre-seminar to 50 percent post-seminar (question 3). In addition, those 7 percent who disagreed that self-denial was important had moved to agreed or strongly agreed following the seminar. The participants continued to hold to the need to obey the commandments as they point one toward the practice of holiness. They also continued to view accountability to others as a core component of a growing personal holiness (questions 4-5).

Third, one can see the participants understanding of the doctrine of Christian Perfection, or the personal pursuit of holiness, grew through the seminar as well. Those who believed that being fully surrendered, heart, soul, mind, and strength, to the Lord was important grew from only 36 percent who strongly agreed before the seminar to 71 percent strongly agreeing following the seminar (question 7). The realization that holiness requires one to be active in a community of worship grew significantly through the seminar, moving from 36 percent strongly agreeing pre-seminar to 79 percent strongly agreeing post-seminar (question 9). The recognition of the need for a total giving of oneself to the Lord in order to be holy as well as the need for community to both equip and enable one to grow in holiness are encouraging developments. As Anglicans, the participants indicated a renewed understanding of the value of the Book of Common

Prayer in the pursuit of a holy life as 93 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Book of Common Prayer was a valuable tool for growth (question 10).

<b>Post-Seminar Behaviors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
11. How often do you spend time in prayer? (other than meals)	0%	0%	21%	79%	3.79	0.43
12. How often do you practice fasting?	14%	71%	14%	0%	2.00	0.55
13. How often do you participate in a small accountability group?	0%	57%	43%	0%	2.43	0.51
14. How often do you receive the sacrament of the Eucharist?	0%	0%	100%	0%	3.00	0.00
15. How often do you read Scripture devotionally?	0%	29%	29%	43%	3.14	0.86
16. How often do you serve among the poor and homeless, people often forgotten by society?	29%	71%	0%	0%	1.71	0.47
17. How often do you serve among those with disease or addiction?	36%	50%	7%	7%	1.86	0.86
18. How often do you spend time socially with people of another ethnic background?	36%	57%	0%	0%	2.57	0.51
19. How often do you spend time in silence with God?	0%	21%	29%	50%	3.29	0.83
20. How often do you participate in an in-depth Bible study class?	7%	43%	50%	0%	2.43	0.65

KEY: [N-Never S-Seldom W-Weekly D-Daily]

**TABLE 4.4 POST-SEMINAR BEHAVIORS**

The fourth observation is that in the areas of personal holiness and the practice of the practical means of grace, the participants reported a mixed response following the seminar. The practice of daily prayer increased to 79 percent among the participants, but the practice of silence diminished to 50 percent which is a 14 percent drop (questions 11 and 19). The weekly participation in the Eucharist continued to be the most practiced means of grace at 100 percent while weekly participation in Bible study went up to 50 percent following the seminar. The weekly participation in a small accountability group rose from 29 percent to 43 percent among participants. This increase is an encouraging area of growth in that small group accountability will serve to help the participants grow

across many areas of holiness. The practice of fasting also showed a marked increase in practice among participants as 14 percent reported a new weekly practice of fasting.

Finally, the practice of the prudential means of grace leading to public holiness continues to be the weakest area of spiritual growth among the participants. No participants were serving the homeless or having any social interactions with people of another ethnic background at the conclusion of the seminar. These results remain the same as the pre-seminar reporting. There were 7 percent who weekly served among the addicted population with another 7 percent who were daily serving in this context. The vast majority remained unengaged in the hands on serving of those who are in the greatest need. The results call for additional reflection on how to provide onramps for engagement that could give participants opportunities to practice the prudential means of grace among the poor and needy.

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

**What aspects of the seminar on the use of the means of grace as instruments of spiritual formation leading toward personal and public holiness had the greatest impact on the observed changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice among the participants?**

The six focus group participants (N1-N6) met together one month following the conclusion of the seminar, *A Heart Perfected in Love*. The group had been asked to complete a thirty-day challenge during the last session of the seminar as a field test of the concepts presented in the seminar. The elements of the challenge were as follows: Begin or End the day Praying *A Covenant Prayer* (Book of Common Prayer 673), pray the Daily Office (Morning and Evening Prayer) for one month, attend Eucharist weekly for

one month, fast one day a week if physically possible, and pray for the opportunity to serve someone in need. The participants were asked to come to the focus group ready to reflect on how their knowledge and attitude was impacted by these practices.

The group was asked a series of eight questions as well as two open-ended questions on the post-seminar survey which are found in Appendix A. The main themes that resulted were around the love of God, the pursuit of holiness, and new understandings concerning the means of grace. The group also shared that the area needing the most growth was the practice of the prudential means of grace in the love of neighbor.

The group began by sharing how they had come to a new appreciation and understanding of the love of God as the motivating force behind all spiritual formation. Here are two examples of the responses concerning love as the motivating force in our spiritual formation. “I think learning about Mr. Wesley...and his teachings in the past, and also having actions coming from a place of love” (N6). “...the whole concept for me of the permeability of love” (N3). The group seemed to appreciate that our practice of the means of grace was not a legalistic performance of duties but rather an overflow of our love of God and neighbor. Hearing the experiences of the participants concerning a new appreciation for how greatly they are loved by God as well as how that was motivating for them to respond to that gift with love for God and others was encouraging.

A second focus of our conversation centered around the doctrine of Christian Perfection and the pursuit of holiness. The Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection was not a widely understood concept prior to the seminar for the participants. Framing our discussion around the pursuit of holiness was helpful. One participant said, “Christian

Perfection is not about being perfect, it's about a journey of holiness toward God that is led by the Holy Spirit, and dependent on God's grace in your own life" (N4). "Christian Perfection, it's a goal that is worked toward...always striving, hopefully achieving in your own grace giftedness" (N3). The general consensus was that Christian Perfection was a journey toward Christlikeness that is enabled by grace.

Another focus in our conversation was the role of the means of grace in our spiritual formation. The participants had not had much teaching on the means of grace, what they are, and how they are used in their Christian journey. The Wesleyan construct of general means, particular means, and prudential means were helpful in identifying the means of grace and how they serve to move one toward holiness.

The means of grace that were identified as most difficult or least practiced were fasting and self-denial. Participants (N1,2,3,4) all stated that "the most difficult of the means of grace to practice was fasting." The conversation revealed that in our culture, depriving yourself is hard which is what fasting requires. Likewise, (N5) stated, "I'd say the hardest is under the general means of grace, universal obedience and denying ourselves." These responses all point to the difficulty faced by those in the American culture to say no to our desires, as well as how infrequently Christians have to deny ourselves since they are surrounded by abundance.

The means of grace that were recognized as most meaningful by participants included the Eucharist, searching the Scriptures, and prayer. The most practiced of the means of grace according to both the pre-test and post-test surveys was that of the Eucharist with 100 percent participation weekly. The testimony in the focus group mirrored those results and participants gave voice to the meaning of the sacrament in

their spiritual formation. “The first thing that came to mind for the most meaningful for me right now would be the Eucharist.” (N4) “The one I find most joyful, truly joyful, and that I look forward to the most is the Eucharist.” (N3) “I think that most meaningful to is the Eucharist as well.” (N6) Another means of grace that was held out as particularly helpful was the searching of the Scriptures. “I would say that probably the most meaningful to me would be the particular means of grace, searching the Scripture.” (N5) “I love searching the Scriptures.” The final means of grace that was identified as most useful was that of prayer. This was seen in the survey results as prayer was the most practiced weekly discipline following the taking of the Eucharist. The focus group gave voice to its importance as well. One such response was, “I like praying the daily office...I have added a bit of journaling which has been difficult, but I’ve enjoyed it.” (N3)

As an Anglican parish, the use of the Book of Common Prayer (Book of Common Prayer) as a tool for practicing the means of grace was significant in our conversation. The Book of Common Prayer helps one to rhythm life in Scripture, prayer, and worship both daily, weekly, and throughout the Church year. Some of those in the group had been Anglican most of their lives while others had been Anglican only a few years. The week spent in the seminar outlining how the Book of Common Prayer fostered the practice of general and particular means of grace in the life of the disciple was meaningful to those who were largely unfamiliar with its use. “I mentioned earlier it’s pretty much a relatively new thing for me...going forward, having a Daily Office...I am definitely going to use it [Book of Common Prayer] more. (N5) I really enjoy using the Book of Common Prayer during the service and following along...” (N2) Through the seminar, an



increased understanding of how to use the Book of Common Prayer existed as well as more frequent use outside of the Sunday liturgy among the participants.

The final area of conversation centered around the practice of the prudential means of grace. In both the pre-test and post-test surveys, this practice was the weakest area of practice among the participants. The responses from the focus group participants mirror the qualitative data collected in the surveys. The participants are not engaging intentionally with the prudential means of grace in order to live out a public holiness. The participants did note occasional acts done to serve others in the name of Christ which included taking a meal to the sick, seeking to serve members of the family, and being a witness on the golf course. When asked about a regular or consistent pattern of loving one's neighbor the answer was they were not engaged. "I can't think of anything specific that we're doing right now..." (N5) "I haven't had a real plan how I helping my neighbor, or serving my neighbor..." (N6) "Currently in the neighborhood in which we live there are fewer opportunities than I would have thought to share a Christian faith, but I'm still looking." (N1) The reality is that the participants who are active members of their local parish have no plan and regular practice of loving their neighbors in the name of Christ Jesus.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The summary of major findings from this research reveals both areas of strength and areas that need further work to bring about the desired results of a parish being transformed by love as they practice the means of grace in the pursuit of Christian Perfection.

1. The regular practice of the particular means of grace has a transforming effect.

2. The Book of Common Prayer is a meaningful aid in developing rhythms of life around the practice of the means of grace.
3. Christ Church Vero Beach needs to develop a plan to help parishioners in the practice of the prudential means of grace.

## CHAPTER 5

### LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

The project sought to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the parishioners of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida in the use of the means of grace as tools for spiritual formation which leads to personal and public holiness. The results of the information gathered from those who participated in the seminar, *A Heart Perfected in Love*, has led to the following three major findings. In addition, this Chapter gives implications and recommendations for others who would seek to build upon this research.

#### Major Findings

##### **Major Finding #1: Regular practice of the particular means of grace has a transforming effect**

The participants' understanding of and engagement with the means of grace prior to the seminar was lacking. Though the prayer of General Thanksgiving, which is prayed daily in the Morning Office, gives thanks for the means of grace, the participants were not able to give a definition of the term means of grace. In addition, a conscious pursuit of the practice of the means of grace did not exist. However, when the means of grace were defined, many of the participants were in fact practicing some of them on a regular basis. During the seminar, the participants were exposed to Wesley's teaching on the general, particular, and prudential means of grace. Many of the participants discovered new ways to pursue holiness during the seminar. At the conclusion of the six-week course, the participants shared stories of renewed practices as well as engagement with new practices that had impacted their spiritual journey. The overall impact is seen in the

fact that 100 percent of those going through the course could at the end say that they agreed or strongly agreed that their spiritual growth and personal holiness was dynamic and growing. This result is in contrast to 28 percent of these same participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the same statement prior to the course. This result suggests that the regular practice of the means of grace will have a transforming effect on the spiritual life of those who engage them.

The literature review in Chapter Two revealed that for Wesley the aim of the Christian life was to be holy, or perfect, as Christ is holy. Wesley made the pursuit of holiness the center of his life, and he spent his ministry helping others to join him in that journey. The instruments in this pursuit of holiness are call the means of grace. The means of grace are activities which form and shape the disciple both in their relationship with God and with humankind. Wesley states, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace” (*Works* 1:381). Wesley sought to both model and invite all to encounter grace and to pursue holiness through the use of the means of grace. The literature review gives support to the idea that the use of the means of grace will move and shape one toward holiness.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection, the pursuit of holiness, was the heart of ministry for Wesley. The Scriptural mandate is found in the gospel of St. Matthew, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48). The life of the disciple is to be daily rhythmed to move progressively toward Christian Perfection. “At its core, Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection is rooted in a deep optimism about the

power of the Triune God of the gospel to transform human life” (Colyer 180). The participants gave evidence that this is exactly what happened in their lives. They were changed as they engaged the means of grace and found themselves moving toward greater holiness. Just as justification is by faith, so too is perfection by faith and is fully a work of God, but grace is encountered through the use of the means of grace.

The research supports a renewed emphasis among pastors on the regular and accountable practice of the means of grace as essential to growing dynamic holiness within the lives of those entrusted to our pastoral care. The ministry modeled around self-help and felt needs over the past several decades seems not to lead the Church to greater holiness. The Church must get back to these core practices especially as the culture moves toward crisis and chaos. Only as Christians are holy as Christ is holy will the world be able to see and share in the gift of grace leading to Christian Perfection.

**Major Finding #2: Regular use of the Book of Common Prayer is a meaningful aid in developing rhythms of life around the practice of the means of grace.**

The participants in *A Heart Perfected in Love* had differing experiences around the Book of Common Prayer (Book of Common Prayer). Some had been Anglican for most of their lives while others were relatively new to Anglicanism. Christ Church, which was founded by former Episcopalians, did not have a rich use of the Book of Common Prayer in worship or formation when I arrived as Rector. After I arrived, copies of the Book of Common Prayer were purchased and placed in the Nave for use during worship.

In addition, Book of Common Prayer was not used in the formation of disciples at Christ Church. A plan did not exist to catechize new members in praying the Daily Office or the Eucharistic liturgy. Therefore, I spent a year during Sunday School teaching how

to use the Book of Common Prayer in both private and public worship. In spite of these efforts, when I began the seminar 21 percent of the group disagreed that the Book of Common Prayer was an important resource for spiritual formation (Pre-Test Survey Question 14). This result was a great concern for me as the Rector of Christ Church. However, 93 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Book of Common Prayer was an important part of their formation following the seminar (Post-Test Survey Question 10). The use of the Book of Common Prayer changed perspectives and proved valuable in the spiritual formation of the participants. These results confirm what was said by Wesley and other scholars in the literature review.

The Book of Common prayer is a tool that guides the disciple in daily morning and evening prayer, Scripture reading, and intercession for others. These practices are means of grace that, when practiced in community, are transformational in the life of the disciple. The word *common* in the Book of Common Prayer references that the prayers and practices are to be done in community. “He organized to beat the devil – not to make converts but to converts into saints. Wesley would have nothing of “solitary religion”, secret Christians, for faith without works” (Snyder *The Radical Wesley* 24). The particular means of grace are those practices common to the exercise of faith within the context of the Church. Each of these practices is rooted in Scripture and the life of Christ, has been essential to the historic practice of Wesleyan spiritual formation, and finally are practices intended to lead one on to holiness. These practices include prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord’s supper, fasting, and Christian conferencing (Knight 5). Wesley, as an Anglican, would have made use of the Book of Common Prayer in his personal

spiritual formation. Those who are pursuing the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection, a life spent loving God and neighbor, would do well to make use of it too.

The writer to the Hebrews holds out a biblical mandate that Christians would do well to remember. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting the meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10.24-25.). The admonition, not clearly seen in the English translation of the Greek, is to consider one another. The calling of the disciple is to take note of other disciples. Christians are in this pursuit together. Christians then seek to stir one another up to love and good works. Christians do this as they habitually gather together in expectation of the coming again of the Lord Jesus. The Book of Common Prayer was designed as a tool to aid those who want to stir up love and good works. The Book of Common Prayer is truly a gift that, when used together in community, nurtures a rich and growing faith.

**Major Finding #3: Christ Church Vero Beach needs to develop a plan to help parishioners in the practice of the prudential means of grace.**

The most striking discovery of this project was that the participants did not regularly practice the prudential means of grace in order to love their neighbors. The data showed that not only was this true prior to the seminar but remained unchanged following our time together. This finding provided evidence to the initial questions giving rise to this research project. As I stated in Chapter One, I have felt the weight of responsibility as a parish priest to not only have a place to worship but to help people to be fully formed as disciples growing in the Lord and sharing his grace with others. I have observed in some what seems like a passion for Anglican history, sacraments, and liturgy but an

apathy toward the personal incarnation of the love of God and others that undergirds our faith as Anglicans. The research bears out that my parishioners are eager to have Anglican worship and are willing to engage the particular means of grace for personal growth in holiness but are not engaged in being incarnational witnesses through the practice of the prudential means of grace.

Therefore, as the priest of Christ Church Vero Beach, I must endeavor to provide on-ramps and opportunities for the parishioners to grow in these practices. The next steps for me are to evaluate our current local partnerships and needs within our community and then to set up opportunities for parishioners to engage through using their spiritual gifts and God given talents to serve others. The plan will need to include opportunities of varying lengths and with differing levels of physical requirements as the demographics of Christ Church are weighted toward an older population. However, age does not exempt one from utilizing God's gifts and graces to serve others out of a heart of love.

The biblical mandate for this is found in the narrative of Luke 10.25-37 and is commonly called the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable reminds us that the key to inheriting eternal life is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The parable goes on to show how love motivates us to act sacrificially for the good of another. The Samaritan, who would be the most unlikely to come to the aid of the wounded man, gave of himself, his resources, and his time to do good for the man in need. This biblical narrative calls on us all to examine our lives and ask hard questions. Christians must see those in need around them and act to come to their aid. The parable demands that one consider what loving God and loving others means. If one comes to understand the radical love of God toward mankind, then one



cannot look at those whom God loves with hatred or indifference. God gave his Son to redeem mankind from their sin. God was motivated by love to redeem us. Therefore, as those who have been loved by God, Christians are called upon to love which means both new affections and new actions.

The findings of the research bring to question whether the parishioners of Christ Church are unaware of the needs around them or just unconcerned for others. If they are unaware, the Church can serve to connect them with those in need in order to serve them in meaningful ways. This is what Wesley encouraged of those under his care.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection is the outworking of loving God and loving neighbor. John Wesley sought to personally and pastorally lead his people to sacrificially serve others. The doctrine of Christian Perfection as taught by Wesley was not an attempt to say that man was without flaw but rather was a means of moving toward loving God fully and one's neighbor rightly through grace. Mr. Wesley stated:

It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies. The being cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being so renewed in the image of our mind as to be perfect as our Father is perfect.

(A Plain Account of Christian Perfection 35)

The heart transformed by love will lead to an outward love for others in sacrificial ways. One can see in Wesley's life his willingness to suffer personally, to sacrifice financially, and to serve tirelessly those in greatest need such as widows, orphans, and the afflicted.

This way of life is the model of ministry I hope to see replicated at Christ Church Vero Beach.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The data collected in this research will inform the practice of ministry here at Christ Church in our discipleship process, our prayer book emphasis, and the development of a plan for engaging with those in need in our community. First, the teaching about and engagement with the means of grace showed a marked change in the spiritual formation of the participants as they moved to a more dynamic and growing faith. Therefore, Christ Church will seek to teach and train their parishioners to engage with the general, particular, and prudential means of grace. Christ Church will seek to form small groups to foster growth in practice of the means and accountability in the lives of parishioners. These groups will emphasize the regular use of the Book of Common Prayer in the devotional life of each disciple. In addition, Christ Church plans to form accountability groups (bands) that are made up of three to five participants of the same gender. They will meet at a minimum of twice per month to hold one another accountable in personal holiness as well as to encourage and engage in public holiness together. Finally, Christ Church will seek to develop a plan to equip and enable our parishioners to practice the means of grace and demonstrate the love of God to those in need in our sphere of influence. Examples would include those who are able to do light construction or woodwork to come to the aid of single moms and seniors to do light maintenance and repairs. Those who are mechanically inclined could provide service to those in need. Likewise, those with skills in professional trades could offer free services to people in

need. The goal being is to incarnate God's love in our city and to share his grace with those who are currently far from God.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited by several factors including the death of one participant during the study, the lack of demographic diversity in that the overwhelming majority of participants being over fifty, and the limited number of participants. First, the seminar began with fifteen participants as outlined in Chapter Three. During the seminar, a man in the study had a heart event and subsequently died. This not only reduced the size of the study, but also impacted those that remained in the study emotionally. Second, six of the fourteen participants in the study were fifty or older and an additional seven participants were seventy or older. One participant was in her thirties and none were younger than thirty. This data is representative of the parish as a whole which demonstrates Christ Church is an aging parish. These numbers also reflect the reality of the community of Vero Beach as a retirement community which is home to older and wealthier people.

### **Unexpected Observations**

I was surprised by the participants infrequent and limited engagement with the means of grace on the whole. The participants were all part of a parish that was born out of a commitment to the Scripture and sacramental worship. They walked away from property, friends, and a lifetime of history in order to be true to the Scripture. I assumed with that history, a robust engagement with the means of grace would be present. However, what I discovered was a lack of understanding of the general means of grace, a sporadic practice of the particular means of grace, and an almost universal failure to practice the prudential means of grace.

I was most encouraged by the fact that 100 percent of the participants at the conclusion of the seminar described their spiritual life as dynamic and growing which was a 28 percent improvement from when we began. This provided proof that one need only lead the parish in the regular practice of the means of grace in order to provide the needed soil for spiritual growth. These results have led me to consider how to best structure the efforts to raise up disciples who will make disciples and live a life of holiness.

### **Recommendations**

I would recommend that the instruments be revised should one want to repeat this project in the future. Several important revisions need to be made in the areas of process, instruments, and timeline. First, as to the timeline, I would suggest that the Prayer Book Challenge which appears in session 6 be moved to the first session. I would also suggest that an element of the challenge be highlighted each week and participants should be given opportunity to reflect on their experiences and encourage one another along the journey. Second, concerning the instruments, I would revise them, both qualitative and quantitative, to include questions of the theological concept of loving God and loving neighbor. I would give participants the opportunity to articulate their understanding before the seminar and then to contrast their understanding at the end of the seminar. I would also suggest that they be given opportunity to discuss the relationship between loving God and loving neighbor. During the seminar, several discussions occurred that were insightful and encouraging that could not be included in the research as the instruments did not give voice to this data. Third, as to the process, I would include resources to engage more adult learning styles. The method I employed was largely

lecture which did not connect with visual and kinetic learners. I would suggest the use of visual aids, handouts, and small groups to allow the participants to have great opportunities to process and internalize the content.

The research has revealed that Christ Church Vero Beach needs to address several key areas. First, Christ Church needs to teach and train parishioners on the use of the Book of Common Prayer in their daily devotional lives. Second, a exists need for accountability groups (bands) that will encourage and hold accountable parishioners in the regular practice of both personal and public holiness. Finally, a change of emphasis from programs to the practice of the means of grace needs to occur.

Those who wish to build upon this research may consider exploring the impact of using the Book of Common prayer in the context of Wesleyan Bands. Learning how the practice of meeting together for prayer, accountability, and reflection shapes both the individual and the group in practicing holiness would be interesting. Learning how the dynamic of the group effects the type of grow and frequency of public holiness would be helpful. A second area of further research would be in regards to the practice of the prudential means of grace. The result of the study at Christ Church showed that very little practice of the prudential means of grace existed before the seminar as well as little change to that reality following the six-week course. It would be helpful to understand is this a common reality, what are the hinderances to the practice of the prudential means, and are there practical ways to encourage and equip the Church to reengage the prudential means of grace.

### **Postscript**

The last four years of my life have brought with them significant change. I have changed ministry context, led the parish through COVID, shepherded the parish through a clergy moral failure, and have been diagnosed with cancer and been through treatment as well as walking with brothers and sisters in my role as Provincial Canon to Myanmar who are facing danger and persecution following the junta in February 2021. These changes have touched every sphere of my life and tested all that I know about leadership.

The opportunity to study at Asbury and alongside those in my cohort has been such a gift for a such a time as this. The material we engaged together gave me the tools needed to lead in this time of change. The relationships gave me the emotional and spiritual support to endure all the realities of these days. The completion of this journey will bring with it the achievement of earning a Doctor of Ministry degree. However, the fruit of the journey will last for the rest of my life. I will be a better friend, a more faithful follower of Jesus, a more well-equipped leader, and a proud alumnus of Asbury Theological Seminary. I pray that my life will carry forward the flame of holiness that I have received at Asbury and that I will honor those who have gone before me and all who invested in my life and formation. I pray that my leadership will equip and encourage another generation of leaders to answer the call to live a holy life.

## **APPENDIXES**

A. Survey/Focus Group Schedule and questions

B. Ministry Intervention

C. Informed Consent Letters/Forms

E. Other

**APPENDIX A**  
Surveys and Focus Group Questionnaire

**Means of Grace Pre-Test Survey**

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project was to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice concerning spiritual formation among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in the seminar *A Heart Perfected in Love*. Your willingness to participate in this research is appreciated.

**Confidentiality**

The researcher will seek to keep all your responses confidential. All research instruments are coded with a unique number for each participant. Your name will not be attached to any data collected. Only the researcher will know which code belongs to a given participant.

In addition, all participants are asked to keep the responses of others within the context of the seminar. Please do not repeat outside of the seminar anything heard from another participant as a part of this research.

1. I have signed the informed consent and confidentiality agreements for the study *A Heart Perfected in Love*?
  - Yes
  - No



2. Please indicate your gender.
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Male
  
3. Please indicate which age range best describes you.
  - ☐ 18-30
  - ☐ 31-49
  - ☐ 50-69
  - ☐ 70 or older
  
4. Please indicate how long you have been worshipping in the Anglican Tradition.  
(this would include years spent in the Episcopal Church)
  - ☐ 0-5 years
  - ☐ 6-15 years
  - ☐ 16-24 years
  - ☐ 25 or more years

If you responded 0-5, in which tradition have you been formed?

---

5. My spiritual growth and personal holiness (becoming more like Jesus personally and in your public witness) is growing and dynamic
  - ☐ Strongly Disagree
  - ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Strongly Agree
  
6. The command of Jesus to, “take up your cross and follow me”, shapes my choices and priorities.
  - ☐ Strongly Disagree
  - ☐ Disagree
  - ☐ Agree
  - ☐ Strongly Agree

7. A disciple of Jesus should practice self-denial in the service of others.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
8. A disciple of Jesus does not need to keep the commandments because God's grace is greater than all our sin.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
9. It is important for those seeking to be holy to confess their sins and be accountable to other believers on a regular basis.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
10. The doctrine of Christian Perfection means a believer is totally perfect in everything they say and do.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
11. To love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength requires that every aspect of a believer's life is surrendered to God's will.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
12. Discipleship is pursued primarily through study and intellectual activities.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

13. Being a disciple requires regular worship with a community of fellow believers.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

14. The Book of Common Prayer is an essential tool in my growth as a follower of Jesus.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

15. How often do you spend time in prayer? (other than at meals)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

16. How often do you practice fasting?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

17. How often do you participate in a small accountability group?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

18. How often do you receive the sacrament of the Eucharist?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

19. How often do you read Scripture devotionally?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

20. How often do you serve among the poor and homeless, people often forgotten by society?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

21. How often do you serve among those with disease or addiction?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

22. How often do you spend time socially with people of another ethnic background?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

23. How often do you spend time in silence with God?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

24. How often do you participate in an in depth Bible study class?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

## **Means of Grace Post-Test Survey**

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project was to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, and practice concerning spiritual formation among congregants from Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida who participated in the seminar *A Heart Perfected in Love*. Your willingness to participate in this research is appreciated.

### **Confidentiality**

The researcher will seek to keep all your responses confidential. All research instruments are coded with a unique number for each participant. Your name will not be attached to any data collected. Only the researcher will know which code belongs to a given participant.

In addition, all participants are asked to keep the responses of others within the context of the seminar. Please do not repeat outside of the seminar anything heard from another participant as a part of this research.

25. My spiritual growth and personal holiness (becoming more like Jesus personally and in your public witness) is growing and dynamic

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

26. The command of Jesus to, “take up your cross and follow me”, shapes my choices and priorities.

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom

- Weekly
- Daily

27. A disciple of Jesus should practice self-denial in the service of others.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. A disciple of Jesus does not need to keep the commandments because God's grace is greater than all our sin.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

29. It is important for those seeking to be holy to confess their sins and be accountable to other believers on a regular basis.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

30. The doctrine of Christian Perfection means a believer is totally perfect in everything they say and do.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

31. To love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength requires that every aspect of a believer's life is surrendered to God's will.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

32. Discipleship is pursued primarily through study and intellectual activities.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

33. Being a disciple requires regular worship with a community of fellow believers.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

34. The Book of Common Prayer is an essential tool in my growth as a follower of Jesus.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

35. How often do you spend time in prayer? (other than at meals)

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

36. How often do you practice fasting?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

37. How often do you participate in a small accountability group?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

38. How often do you receive the sacrament of the Eucharist?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly

- Daily

39. How often do you read Scripture devotionally?

- Never
- Seldom
- Weekly
- Daily

40. How often do you serve among the poor and homeless, people often forgotten by society?

- Never
- Seldom
- Weekly
- Daily

41. How often do you serve among those with disease or addiction?

- Never
- Seldom
- Weekly
- Daily

42. How often do you spend time socially with people of another ethnic background?

- Never
- Seldom
- Weekly
- Daily

43. How often do you spend time in silence with God?

- Never
- Seldom
- Weekly
- Daily



44. How often do you participate in an in-depth Bible study class?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Daily

45. What about this experience was least meaningful to you?

46. What about this experience was most meaningful to you?

Means of Grace Focus Group

1. Why did you agree to participate in *A Heart Perfected in Love*?
2. What was most meaningful to you about this whole experience?
3. How would you explain John Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection to a friend who was curious about it?
4. What does the Great Commandment mean by loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind?
5. Which of the Means of Grace, of those taught in the seminar, are most important to you and your spiritual growth right now? Which ones are the most challenging for you right now?
6. What are you currently doing to serve others? (loving your neighbor as yourself)
7. What is your current practice in utilizing the Book of Common Prayer as an aid in your spiritual formation?
8. What question do you wish I had asked about *A Heart Perfected in Love* and how would you answer them?

Prescribed Responses:

1. What I hear you saying is \_\_\_\_\_, am I hearing you correctly?
2. Could you tell me more about that?
3. How has that impacted your personal or public holiness?

## APPENDIX B

### Ministry Intervention

A Heart Perfected in Love  
Week 1  
From Created for Holiness  
B.Keith Allen

*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:14-16, ESV)*

I have given myself to pastoring the Church for the past 32 years of my life. As I looked back over the years my besetting question was “why have I not seen more people growing in holiness?” I have led Sunday School classes, Small Groups, taught Bible Studies, and to the best of my ability faithfully preached the gospel.

One morning, while praying the morning office, I was stopped by the words of the Prayer of General Thanksgiving. We bless you for our creation, perseveration, and above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the **means of grace**, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, **not only with our lips, but in our lives**, by giving our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days... (BOOK OF COMMON

PRAYER 2019, p. 25) The aim of daily life is to be progressively transformed by grace into the likeness of Christ.

As I looked for an example of an Anglican priest who had actually led a church to grow in true holiness I was drawn to the ministry of John Wesley. Wesley has been commonly credited with leading a revival that swept two continents – Europe and North America. He was known for his method of making disciples that called people to both personal holiness and led to a change in the culture around them.

The fruit of inward transformation is a life of service to the glory of God and for the good of others. This is a wholistic process that understands we are much more than, “as Decartes described us to be: thinking things that are containers for ideas.” (Smith, 31) We are invited to fall in love with God and with one another. It is this love that reorients our habits, our hearts, and our heads. The process is rooted in the theological context, biblical command, and practical rhythms that will be described in the following sessions of our seminar.

Today we will begin with the end in mind and ask what does it mean to be holy?

- I. Created for Holiness (Genesis 1-2)
  - a. Created in the Image of God
  - b. Created for a Love Relationship with God
  - c. Created to Incarnate the Love of God toward others
- II. Conversion the Beginning Not the End. – Follow Me!
  - a. Cognitive assent to a set of facts – believe

b. Conformity of Life MUST Follow Belief

It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

—C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory”

III. Call to Holiness – the love of God and Neighbor

a. Christian Perfection – be perfect as I am perfect (Matthew 5:48)

i. What it is...

The doctrine of Christian Perfection has been the source of much confusion and debate both in Wesley’s day and in our own day. The conflict arises from the use of the word perfection. The Greek word translated perfect is *teleios*, which is best translated as complete, perfect, whole, full-grown, or mature. (Newman, p.180) The word perfection in English carries the meaning of “being entirely without fault or defect: flawless.” (Miriam Webster’s Online Dictionary) The doctrine of Christian Perfection as taught by Wesley was not an attempt to say that man was without flaw, but rather was by grace moving toward loving God fully and neighbor rightly. In his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* Mr. Wesley stated:

It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies. The being cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, being endued with those virtues which were in Christ Jesus; the being

so renewed in the image of our mind as to be perfect as our Father is perfect. (Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, p.35)

Mr. Wesley had a robust faith in the power of grace as proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was convinced by Scripture and experience that one could move toward perfection, and that this was the necessary course for all followers of Christ. One could not follow Christ in half measures, but with one's whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. This radical transformation of life was totally a work of grace but was marked by obedience springing from a love of God and neighbor. "At its core, Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is rooted in a deep optimism about the power of the Triune God of the gospel to transform human life." (Colyer, 180) It was not the result of one's works, but the result of faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as justification is by faith, so too is perfection by faith and fully a work of God.

## ii. What it is NOT – Limitations

The doctrine of Christian Perfection is not an attempt by Mr. Wesley to argue for absolute perfection. "So, that how much soever any man hath attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to grow in grace, and daily advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior." (Works, Sermon 40, pp.104-105) Mr. Wesley understands and teaches that there are real and significant ways in which humankind will fall short of absolute perfection. Four universal deficiencies faced by all who seek to follow Christ are identified by Mr. Wesley in his sermon *Christian Perfection*: He states that no one is perfect in knowledge, free from ignorance,

free from infirmities, nor free from temptation. (Works, Sermon 40, p. 102)

These are real and ongoing battles during this earthly life.

1. Human Cognition is Incomplete
2. Ignorance – things not known or understood
3. Infirmities
4. Temptations

b. Grounded in Grace

The mention of this doctrine brings the reminders that “all sin and fall short of the glory of God” or “there is none righteous, not one”. However, Wesley, in his sermon Christian Perfection, counters with the reminder that “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” (Romans 6:6, ESV) Wesley’s fundamental belief was that grace was greater than sin. That grace would in fact free us from our enslavement to sin and allow us to live a life of holiness. This is the message of all who follow in the Wesleyan tradition, and it must again become the focus of our preaching and practice.

c. Incarnation of Grace

- i. Restoration of the imago dei
- ii. Renewed ability (by grace) not to yield to sinful actions or intentions, but rather to choose love

A Heart Perfected in Love  
Session 2  
An Invitation to Love  
B. Keith Allen

I. Created to Love

Maximus the Confessor argued that Jesus Christ is the eternal logos that brings about the order and beauty of this world through the power of divine love. Sin is a disordered state that deforms and destroys life through the powers of envy, hate, greed, and so on. Jesus Christ...is the fashioner and provider of all, and through himself draws into one what is divided, and abolishes war between things, binds everything into peaceful friendship and undivided harmony.” (Louth, pp161-162 as quoted in Wirzba)

a. The Love between the Godhead is the generative force behind all creation

The Great Commandment to love God and love neighbor is rooted in nature of the Trinity itself. It is the doctrine of the Trinity that serves as the foundation for this life of love. It is love that motivates God’s love of humanity and it is only love that remakes humankind to love God and others. John Wesley often reminded his followers that “God is love” and that the end of discipleship, which is Christian perfection, could also be summed up in the word love. (On Perfection, Works, 3:74)

b. The pre-Fall relationship between God and humankind is marked by love

– self giving

i. Provision



- ii. Presence
- iii. Purpose
- c. The horror of the Fall was that of a broken relationship

## II. Command to Love [Luke 10:25-28]

- a. God
- b. Neighbor
- c. Nature of Love

The Greek word translated “to justify” is *dikaioo* and means to vindicate. (Bock, 1027) The answer Jesus gives the lawyer brings about causes the lawyer to desire to prove that he has loved his neighbor. There are real responsibilities to one’s neighbor according to the Law. “Substantival uses of *plesion* in contexts similar to Luke 10:25-37 always designate the sort of person with whom one shares a reciprocal relationship of entitlement; that is, “neighbor” is someone whose welfare one is obliged to promote and from whom one can reasonably expect similar treatment.” (Proctor, 212) The term is further defined: “Pauline texts repeatedly use the same word in this parable (*plesion*) to summarize proper human relations ordered by love, truth and humble service beyond self.” (Weeldreyer, 167) “According to Johannes Fichtner, the command of Lev. 19:18 applies unequivocally toward members of the covenant of Yahweh and not self-evidently towards all men.” (Proctor, 212)

## III. Conduct of Love – Good Samaritan [Luke 10:29-37]

According to Wesley the love of God and neighbor was not merely a feeling of warm affection, but rather an incarnational way of life enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Love motivates one to reorder all of life. “Real Christian experience is quite simply falling in love with God. And when we do that, we are never more rational, never more truly human, never more spiritually and intellectually awakened, never more at our best.” (Noble, p. 17) Wesley longed to see mankind captivated by the love of God and thereby remade to be all they were created to be for God’s glory.

This vision of a religion marked by love stood in stark contrast to the lifeless formalism that surrounded Wesley in his day. He sought to convince the men and women of his day that...

“there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of God that gave it. And this we conceived to be no other than love: the love of God and of all mankind; the loving of God with all our heart and soul and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul.” (An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Works, 1:222)

Wesley sought to hold out this religion springing forth from the love of God and then replicated in a real love of God and a robust love of neighbor. “Indeed the telos for Christians is Christ: Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of what we’re made for, of the

end to which we are called. This is why Paul's exhortation is to 'put on love' (Col. 3:14) is equivalent to the exhortation to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 13: 14)."

(Smith, 90) His aim was greater than an intellectual knowledge of history and doctrine. He desired a holiness of life, as the proper response and fulfillment of love, which he called Christian Perfection.

In order to understand and apply this passage we will consider three world, as Richard Pratt suggests, to serve as lens interpretation; that world, their world, and our world. (Pratt, He Gave Us Stories)

***That world.*** The story is told in the context of a world in which the Jews, those who had inherited the covenant promises of God, were a people without a home, power, or a king. They had received the Covenant and were looking for the promised Messiah. There were many who hoped that Jesus was in fact that fulfillment of those promises. Thus, the lawyer sought to verify Jesus' identity.

***Their World.*** The hearers of the story were Jews who believed that with the coming of Messiah there would also be a socio-political kingdom in which they would rule. There was a deep sense of Jewish pride as the people of God. Though they were currently subject to Roman rule, they saw themselves as set apart and superior to others. Therefore, Jesus tells this parable to call his Jewish hearer, and all who would follow him, to a right understanding of self, Savior, and servanthood.

It is true that the Jews were God's chosen people. However, they had been chosen to share with the nations the grace, love and hope of redemption. We see this in the Abrahamic Covenant as God tells Abraham: "...And I will make you a great nation,

and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:2-3, ESV) So, this parable calls the Jews to a selfless love of others, especially their enemies.

***Our World.*** As we read this text in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Christians we must remember we have been sent into the world not to establish a Christian culture, but a divine Kingdom. We must understand ourselves as sinners who have been redeemed at great cost. Then we must understand that the Savior who gave himself for us is calling us to give ourselves for the good of others. Finally, this will require that we sacrificially love our neighbors, especially when they look like our enemies.

A Heart Perfected in Love  
Session 3  
The General Means of Grace  
B. Keith Allen

- I. Holiness the Aim of the Disciple – to fully and faithfully follow Jesus [Mark 1:16-20]
  - a. Come Follow Me
  - b. Church Growth
  
- II. Heart the Seat of Our Desire
  - a. Out of the Heart Flow the Issues of Life
  - b. What is your Heart Set on
  
- III. Means of Grace Defined

In his sermon Means of Grace Wesley states, “By ‘means of grace’ I understand outward signs, words, or actions ordained of God, and appointed for this end – to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.” (Works, Means of Grace, p. 381)

The general means denote certain attitudes and practices which pervade the Christian life: keeping the commandments, self-denial, and taking up our cross daily. The particular means are more specific acts of worship and discipline: prayer, fasting, the Lord’s Supper, searching the scriptures. In contrast, the prudential means of grace vary from age to age, culture to culture, and person to person; they reflect God’s ability to use any means in addition to those instituted in accordance with different times and circumstances. (Knight, p. 3)

#### IV. General Means

##### a. Defined

The first of Wesley’s typologies is that of the general means of grace.

“Meeting in Conference in 1745, John Wesley introduced a concept to the people called Methodists that has been overlooked ever since: the general means of grace.” (Thompson, The General Means of Grace, Methodist

History 51:4, July 2013, p. 249) The general means of grace are not practices

in the outward since, but rather inward practices or disciplines comprised of attitudes or desires which fuel all other means of grace. “They are – in the phrase of Henry Knight – ‘graced responses to grace received’ that collectively constitute a kind of faithful disposition toward all that one does in the pursuit of sanctification.” (Thompson, General Means, p. 250)

Andrew Thompson has compiled a list of the general means from across Wesley’s writings, which includes watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, exercise the presence of God.” (Thompson, The General Means, p.251)

b. Differ from other Means

“General means...refer less to discrete practices and more to broad approaches to the practice of the faith that require intentional awareness of one’s motivations in thought, word, and action.” (Ibid) The general means of grace are attitudes and inclinations that allow one to both receive grace and respond to grace in love. They are the substance of the heart longing for grace and then living out the grace that they receive in love for God and neighbor.

c. Practicing the General Means – HEART WORK

- i. Watching – stand watch against the devil, watching for the will of God [Eph 6:12]
- ii. Denying Ourselves – Not my will; not my wants [Phil 2:7]

The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man which once ran parallel with it is now another path, not only different from it, but in our present state directly contrary to it. It leads from God; if therefore we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. (Wesley, Self-Denial, Works 2:242)

This is the systematic undoing of the Adamic nature – the reversal of the epistemological change that occurred at the Fall. [Gen. 3:6]

- iii. Taking Up Our Cross Daily (after denying self we then take up our cross)

“A cross is anything contrary to our will, anything displeasing our nature.” (Wesley, Self Denial, Works 2:243) Wesley is quick to point out he is not advocating self-discipline in the form of self-harm, but rather the willingness to walk in the will of God even when it is at great cost. Wesley perceived a direct linkage between one’s willingness to follow Christ down the hard path and the genuineness of one’s status as a true disciple.

- iv. Exercising the Presence of God

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28, ESV) Therefore, the disciple who is seeking to move on in Christian perfection will practice the presence of God knowing that it is God who is guiding, guarding and redeeming every circumstance of life.

A Heart Perfected in Love  
Session 4  
Particular Means of Grace  
B. Keith Allen

The particular means of grace are those practices common to the exercise of faith within the context of the Church. Each of these practices is rooted in Scripture and the life of Christ, has been essential to the historic practice of Wesleyan spiritual formation, and finally are practices intended to lead one to holiness. ***They include prayer, searching the Scriptures, the Lord's supper, fasting, and Christian Conferencing.*** (Knight, p.5)

There were those in the Church who mistakenly believed the practice of these disciplines to be the aim of discipleship, not the means to a holiness of life. To which Wesley declared, “Now use all outward things; but use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. (Wesley, Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount IV, Works 1:545)

This was the context through which the disciple was moved on in Christian Perfection as he received and reciprocated the love of God. “The experience is transformative because it is an experience of the identity of God. As God is remembered and as the promises of God are renewed, the Christian affections are formed and shaped.”



(Knight, p.129) The one who loves God will seek His love through the practice of the means of grace.

### I. Prayer and Fasting

“Prayer is the act of lifting up your thoughts, words, and affections to God” (Thompson, The Means of Grace, Loc. 731) Prayer is an invitation to personal relationship, as well as the power for transforming us and the world. “Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into the perpetual communion with the Father.”

(Foster, Loc. 684)

### **The Model Prayer**

Jesus instructs His disciples when you pray...pray like this:

“Our Father in heaven hallowed be thy name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 5:9-13, ESV)

This model prayer gives us insight into both the opportunities and modalities of prayer.

The Lord's prayer shows us three opportunities to grow in grace: as sons and daughters, servants of the King, and shining lights in this fallen world.

### **The Modalities of Prayer**

The modalities of prayer include prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplications. The practice of private prayer and public prayer includes these forms of communication with the Father. The Book of Common Prayer includes each of these modes in both the prayers of the daily office, as well as in the Eucharistic liturgy.

Wesley, being an Anglican clergyman, would have been rooted in these modes of prayer from childhood.

### **Fasting**

The practice of prayer is often accompanied by fasting. The Lord in His Sermon of the Mount assumed that all who follow Him would fast, pray, and give alms. “As to the nature of it, all the inspired writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word fast in one single sense, not to eat, to abstain from food.” (Works, Sermon on the Mount VII, p. 594) The practice was to abstain from food to free more time and space for prayer. To deny bodily desires in order to pursue spiritual needs in prayer.

## II. Searching the Scriptures (more than reading)

### **Man of the Book**

Wesley calls us to the means of grace called “searching the Scriptures”, not merely read them. He holds out his firm belief that the Scriptures will be the guide to life and the way to heaven through the application of the truth in daily life.

I want to know one thing; the way to heaven – how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself condescended to teach the way: for this very end came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri (Works, 1:105)

Wesley was a man of one book!

### **Read, Hear and Meditate**

One searches the Scriptures according to Wesley through the modes of reading, hearing, and meditating upon the Scripture then practicing what is contained in the text. (Works, 1:387)

As Kevin Vanhoozer states: Good theological judgement is largely, though not exclusively, a matter of being apprenticed to the canon: of having one’s capacity for judging (a capacity that involves imagination, reason, emotion, and volition alike) formed

and transformed by the ensemble of canonical practices that constitute the Scripture.  
(Vanhoozer, p. 331)

“According to a recent study by Pew Research Institute, even though American Christians voice assertion on the authority of the Bible, in recent years the use of the Bible has declined in the church and in its formative practices such as worship and discipleship. Forty-five percent of Christians seldom or have never read the Bible.”  
(Maddix, PP. 34-35) There can be no formation by the Scripture if you do not read, mark and inwardly digest the Scripture. One can hear in the words of St. Paul to Timothy that the journey begins as a child of hearing the Scriptures is the substance of life in Christ. “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)

### III. Eucharist

#### **Real Presence**

The Anglican Church holds to the doctrine of real presence, denoting that Christ is present to those who receive the meal in faith. (39 Articles of Religion) The bread and the wine being the outward signs, of the inward grace of Christ's presence, and thus the meal is called a Sacrament of the Church.

Borgen states, “Christ is present in the sacrament in His divinity, applying the merits of the great Atonement to the believer. Wesley holds a view of the Real Presence of Christ, which may properly be called dynamic or living Presence. Where God acts, there He is. (Borgen, 66)

The invitation of the Lord's Supper is more than remembering of the past, but rather a fresh encounter with the Lord and His grace and a feasting on His presence. It is the satisfaction of our deepest longing. "Man is a hungry being...behind all hunger of our life is God. All desire is finally a desire for Him." (Schmemmann, p. 14)

### **Regular Practice**

The receiving of the Lord's Supper should be the regular practice of all who place their faith in Jesus. In his sermon, *The Duty of Constant Communion*, Wesley says, "I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can." (Works, 3:428) Wesley, like most Anglicans of his day, would have seen daily communion as the preferred frequency for receiving the Sacrament. Wesley was motivated to receive the Lord's Supper by his desire to obey God's command, as well as his recognition of his desperate need.

#### IV. Christian Conferencing (Community)

### **Not Good for Man to Be Alone**

The first negative statement in the Bible is "It is not good that man should be alone." (Genesis 2:18, ESV) All that God created is good, but it was not good for the man to be alone. This runs counter to the current culture which elevates the ideas of autonomy and individualism. These priorities have affected the Church as congregants have become consumers, picking and choosing according to their felt needs. The priorities of community and fellowship have been replaced by Facebook and online encounters.

The remedy is a renewed emphasis on Christian Conferencing, or the practice of intentional community and accountability. Andrew Thompson states three key realities concerning Christian Conferencing, also called fellowship.

Real Christian fellowship is a means of grace, and the promise it holds for us can be summed up with three simple statements about discipleship. First, we can never do it on our own. Second, God doesn't intend for us to do in on our own. And third, when we experience the power of deep Christian fellowship, we find that we would never want to do it on our own." (Thompson, Loc. 1195)

The type of fellowship which Wesley calls Christian Conferencing was more than just being together. It was a mindful presence with one another, which would seek to encourage and enliven one's faith. He would describe it as "watching over one another in love." (Works 9:259) The pursuit of Christian Perfection requires that one have others watching their life in love. "The emphasis of Wesley's groups were spiritual renewal, mutual responsibility, and Christian practice in the world." (Blevins, p. 77) This type of fellowship must be the regular pattern of life, lest one fall prey to the schemes of the devil.

### **Model to Consider**

The invitation is to find two or three others of the same gender and form a group that will meet at a minimum bi-weekly. The format of the group should be to have time to talk and share life, to pray, to hold one another accountable to growth in holiness, and to serve others together. The questions below are offered as tools to help facilitate such a group.

### **Watchman Bands**

Each member will be open and accountable in the following areas:

1. Christ's Disciple How have you sought to be a disciple of Christ in this week?
  - a. Your *spiritual formation*: (Morning and Evening Prayer, Worship, Eucharist, Spiritual Retreat)
  - b. Your *study*: Scripture Reading, Devotional/Theological Reading, Bible Study
  - c. Your acts of *service*: How have you made Christ and His love known in your family, workplace, neighborhood, small group, Christian community?
2. Closest to Christ - At what moment did you feel closest to Christ this week?
3. Call to Discipleship – Was there a moment when you felt you were responding to God's call and using your spiritual gifts to serve others? Did you fail to respond to God's call to use your gifts to serve others?
4. Course Correction - What is your plan for the coming week to grow in the areas of spiritual formation, study, and service?
5. Call to Prayer: (Intercession, thanksgiving, mission (local, national, the nations))

A Heart Perfected in Love  
Session 5  
Prudential Means of Grace  
B. Keith Allen

**Do All the Good You Can**

*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.*

John Wesley

The particular means of grace, also called the instituted means, were established by Christ in the Scripture. The prudential means are encounters with grace that happen in the ordinary things of life. *“Prudence is the kind of wisdom you gain through maturity and the experience of daily life.” (Thompson, Loc. 1328)* The prudential means are encountered as one meets someone who is living a holiness of life and **incarnating** the love of God here in this fallen world. Unlike the particular means of grace there is not a finite list of prudential means as they were contextual. These were encounters with grace at the place of greatest need. They were demonstrations of the dynamic nature of grace. There are however some that are commonly experienced. “The prudential means include:

7. Particular rules or acts of holy living
8. Class and Band Meetings
9. Prayer meetings, covenant services, watch night services, love feasts.
10. Visiting the sick.
11. Doing all the good one can, doing no harm.
12. Reading devotional classics and all edifying literature.” (Knight, p. 5)

Wesley emphasized that the practice of the means of grace was to result in a life marked by holiness.

However, the end was not merely personal holiness, but rather that holiness be multiplied to others. *“Discipleship is the essential bridge between missiology and ecclesiology. Mission-shaped disciples are those who intentionally pursue this mission*

*spirituality as a way of life; by seeking growth in God's love through spiritual discipline and small group accountability and sharing that love with others in the ordinary flow of everyday life."* (Meadows, 1) This is seen in that the last of the particular means is that of Christian Conferencing and Classes and Bands mark some of the key prudential means of grace.

### **Thy Kingdom Come: Taking Grace to the World**

The shallow nature of spiritual formation today is due to a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be a disciple. The modern evangelical focus is largely on making a decision to "believe" in Christ, not daily surrendering one's life to become more like Christ.

One reason is that for many Christians the gospel is a one-time transaction where you put your faith in Jesus and he rewards you by forgiving you and giving you a ticket to heaven. This account has often resulted in a distortion of the gospel, where people are forgiven but otherwise unchanged, continuing to love and serve the ways of sin and death instead of being transformed by God's love and learning to love God. (Watson, Band Meeting, p. 21)

Personal holiness and public holiness are rooted in the communal nature of the Church. "*Wesley realized that if you wanted to bring about a fundamental change in peoples' belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as an example to others, you needed to create a community around them, where those new beliefs could be practiced and expressed and nurtured.* (Gladwell, 173) Thus, the formation of societies, classes, and bands. Those who wanted to be a part of a Society, Class or Band



had to be committed to the pursue of a holy life. “There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into societies, as desire to flee the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.” (Works, 9:70) One cannot love God rightly, nor share the love of God robustly without the context of community.

If I cannot find God in the middle of my work – where my concerns and worries, pains, and joys are – it does not make sense to try to find him in the hours set free at the periphery of my life. If spiritual life cannot grow and deepen in the midst of ministry, how will it ever grow on the edges. (Nouwen, xvii)

The power of the gospel must be an earthy and daily experience. Our lives are lived in relationship to others, so the participation in societies and bands was essential.

### **1-3-12 Model**

The Lord Jesus had twelve disciples, with three in the inner circle, and one beloved disciple. Yet there were many more who followed him everywhere he went. The smaller groups were evidence of enhanced levels of discipleship. Wesley followed this model when he established Societies, Classes, Bands, Select Bands, and the Penitent Band.

These groups were voluntary and sought to provide the soil for a growing holiness.

***The three key endeavors of the societies and bands were: 1. Do not harm by avoiding every kind of evil. 2. By doing good, by being in every kind merciful in their power...3.***

***By attending upon all the ordinances of God. (Works, 9:70-73)*** While both societies and bands shared these overarching goals, there were distinctions in their missions. John Drakeford outlines the groups, and their aims as follows:

6. The Society – Associational: primarily for fellowship and encouragement, including non-believers;
7. The Class – Behavioral: primarily for examining the behavior of Christians and providing encouragement and correction;
8. The Band – Motivational: extended examination beyond behavior to the very intent of the Christian;
9. The Select Society – Aspirational: for the most enthusiastic member, seeking as full a Christian life as possible;
10. The Penitent Band – Reclamation: for those who had failed in other groups but were willing to attempt to return. (Blevins, p. 78)

One can see that Wesley believed in grace and shared journey of faith. Societies welcomed non-believers, so that they could regularly put themselves in the way of grace and examine their lives with others and be saved. Societies gave context for Christian fellowship as an alternative to the worldly pursuits of the culture. Classes were groups of twelve members, who professed faith in Christ, that sought to form and shape members to live out their identity in Christ. They were saved and the class sought to form them so that they lived like it. Bands were designed to give deep examination and reflection upon the one's lived holiness. The band would speak truth to one another and spur one another on to faith and holiness. The four alls of salvation in the Wesleyan tradition are seen in this way of discipleship. "All need to be saved, all can be saved, all can know they are saved, and all can be saved to the uttermost." (Watson & Kisker, p. 67) Participation in these groups gave a context for ongoing growth in holiness.

Here at Christ Church we have Eucharist Services, Bible Studies, Community Groups, as well as various recovery type groups. Each of these is a modern adaptation of the methods of Jesus and Wesley to seek to make disciples in the context of community. These groups serve as doorways into differing opportunities to grow as a disciple. They seek to stir us up to love and good works (Heberws 10:24-25)

Our goal in discipleship should be to grow and be equipped to go and serve others, to do them good, to share the gospel, and to help others grow in grace. The prudential means of grace find their context in the shared life of disciples. “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” (Acts 2:42) The intentional life of doing good, doing no harm, and attending to the ordinances. In this soil grows the seeds of Christian perfection. The outworking of this way of living is the daily expectation and encounter with grace. Through the practice of the means of grace, individuals are continuously being transformed and reminded of the purpose of Christian discipleship: participation in the kingdom of God through local communities of faith as the church in the world. Christian discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition consists of both personal and social holiness.” (Warner, 171) *Grace that redeems the lost, heals the sick, comforts the suffering, and consoles the dying. This is a life worth living.*

Heart Perfected in Love  
Session 6  
Book of Common Prayer: A Tool for Practicing the Means of Grace  
Fr. B. Keith Allen

1. Means of Grace<sup>1</sup>

a. General Means of Grace

- i. Universal obedience
- ii. Keeping all the commandments
- iii. Watching

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<sup>1</sup> Henry H. Knight III *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 1992, p.5

- iv. Denying ourselves
- v. Taking up our cross daily
- vi. Exercise of the Presence of God

b. Particular Means of Grace

- i. Prayer
- ii. Searching the Scripture
- iii. The Lord's Supper (Eucharist)
- iv. Fasting
- v. Christian Conferencing (Community)

c. Prudential Means of Grace

- i. Particular rules or acts of holy living
- ii. Class and Band meetings
- iii. Prayer meetings, covenant services
- iv. Visiting the Sick
- v. Doing all the good one can, doing no harm
- vi. Reading devotional classics and all edifying literature

2. BCP 2019

- a. What is a Prayer Book?
- b. Why do we have a Prayer Book?
- c. How does the Prayer Book foster a practice of the Means of Grace?

### 3. Prayer Book Challenge

- a. Begin or End the day Praying the A Covenant Prayer (p. 673)
- b. Pray the Daily Office (Morning and Evening Prayer) for one month
- c. Attend Eucharist weekly for one month
- d. Fast one day a week if physically possible.
- e. Pray for the opportunity to serve someone in need.

**APPENDIX C**  
Informed Consent/ Forms

Informed Consent Letter

*A Heart Perfected in Love*

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Fr. Keith Allen a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a member of Christ Church Vero Beach, Florida. If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to attend a six-week course on spiritual formation hosted at Christ Church. The study will be held Sunday evenings from October 2-November 6, 2022 from 4:30-5:30 pm in the Community Center.

There are minimal risks to you in participating in this seminar. There is the likelihood that others in the parish will know of your participation, and this may pose a social risk to you. There will be no extraordinary physical or psychological risks from participating in the research. The benefit of your participation will be to increase understanding of current knowledge, attitude, and practice at Christ Church in the area of spiritual formation. The information gained from the research will serve to improve future spiritual formation opportunities.

You may share with others that you are participating in the study. However, your personal information will not be shared with others as a part of the study. All responses will be kept confidential, with only the researcher knowing your information.

The following steps will be taken to guard your confidentiality. You will be participating in a pre-seminar survey and a post-seminar survey. Each survey will be coded with a unique participant code. The researcher will be the only person with a list matching the participant codes to each participant. Once the surveys are completed, they will be stored in a locked safe in the Christ Church office. The paper surveys will be shredded one month after the researcher completes the D. Min. colloquium at Asbury Theological Seminary. Those who participate in the post seminar focus group will be recorded on a locked device. The recording will be transcribed by a professional transcriber hired by the researcher. She has signed a confidentiality agreement and will not disclose any information contained on the recordings. The recording and transcripts will be destroyed one month after the researcher completes the D. Min. colloquium at Asbury Theological Seminary. Finally, each participant will be asked to keep the contents of other participants responses confidential, but this cannot be guaranteed.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please let Fr. Keith Allen know. My email address is [kallen@christchurchvero.org](mailto:kallen@christchurchvero.org). You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions and will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please email Fr. Keith Allen at [kallen@christchurchvero.org](mailto:kallen@christchurchvero.org).

Signing this letter means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be a participant in the study. If you do not want to participate, do not sign the letter. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this letter or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been informed about the study and want to participate in it.

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Signature of Participant

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Date Signed



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