

**Colorado Family Church New Member Education and Internal Guidance
Teacher Training
Alice Fleisher - May 11, 2019 – Denver, Colorado**

Through my spring semester's class (MIN 8502) at Unification theological Seminary, which was on religious education, my attention was drawn to the importance of teacher training and providing resources to respond to that need. One conclusion that Tauber drew as a result of her research was that congregational educators would benefit greatly through a greater awareness of religious education theories and best practices:

My research suggests that rabbinical students, as well as those studying for the clergy in seminaries beyond the Jewish world, would benefit by opportunities for more comprehensive exploration of their own identities as teachers, and of the practice of educating adults, while attending seminary. A firmer understanding of adult development is vital to this trajectory. (Tauber, p 152)

Adult development theory has been and remains a focus of scholarly research in adult education, even as how it is understood has taken on new dimensions. Narrative identity, spiritual formation, and gender studies, for example, reflect the ongoing evolution of adult developmental theories . . . In this regard, spiritual formation and faith development are primary areas for further inquiry into the role of clergy as teachers of adults. These are domains that transcend particular traditions and religion in general as a subject. (Tauber, Pp 154-155)

So, while most of the staffing for CFC's new member education ministry have not had the benefit of a seminary education, I have (limited though it was), and I will be using this paper to summarize key understandings and points as a means of passing on this wisdom to the educators participating in that providence.

The text that I found the most helpful in summarizing the wisdoms and knowledge pertinent to the CFC new member internal guidance ministry that I will be using to help kick-start spiritual growth and maturation was Seymour's (2014) book *Teaching the Way of Jesus: Educating Christians for Faithful Living*. Other texts and PowerPoints that I will be referencing

in this paper were able to add depth and greater insights to the material found within that text however that book seemed to provide the most comprehensive overview of pertinent and relevant features and elements for religious education teacher training. I will recommend that the educators for this ministry read Seymour's book in conjunction with the information I will be providing in this paper. I believe that the overall tone and purpose of adult internal guidance education can be encapsulated in the stricture to teach students the Way of Jesus (or for UC members, the Way of Christ who are the True Parents):

The Father calls us to listen to the vision that guided Jesus work and his call for abundant life. Teachers and leaders who followed Jesus knew that something was new in the world (Seymour, p. xvii)

Diana Butler Bass, . . . has discovered that vital congregations are connected to the Christian spiritual practices and concerned to live "God's dream" for individuals and the wider world. (Seymour, p. 28)

It has called us to seek an identity faithful to the way of Jesus and a vocation that follows Jesus into seeking the realm of God. Renewal and empowerment result from taking the path that Jesus offered and his disciples taught; the path of loving God and neighbor, of living in the presence of God, of looking for the realm of God, of calling people to the banquet table, of resisting the time of trial, and of proclaiming the resurrected one. (Seymour, p. 182)

To summarize, Seymour came to the conclusion that the way of Jesus that must be taught consisted of the following: 1) Loving God and neighbor, the Shema Israel; 2) Living in God's grace; 3) Looking for the realm of God; 4) Calling people to the banquet table; 5) Resisting the time of trial; and 6) Proclaiming the Resurrected One. Grasping these points and the implications they carry for a genuine faith-growing spiritual walk was for me a sobering reminder that those of us who have been blessed through knowing and are tasked with representing and conveying the essence and core of the providence of the True Parents surly must impart a providentially expanded awareness combining Jesus Way and now the Way of the

Second Advent of Christ, to new members of this movement. It is not enough to just teach spiritual practices and an awareness of sin and restoration. Far more important than that information is the need to impart the purpose and vision brought by the True Parents and help the new members be connected to this providence of God which embodies the unfolding destiny for our age. I believe that all mentors and educators who are faithful to the Unification Church/FFWPU need to keep and convey such a vision and purpose in any religious education they provide to old and new members alike.

Along these lines, I spent time reflecting on some points related to the Way of Christ that are unique to the Unification Church (UC)/Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) , and I welcome additional insights related to this theme. One key insight found in the UC tradition is related to the implications stemming from Jesus and True Parent's understanding of God in the parental role to his creation and most importantly, the insight into the depth of God's heart, that They (based on the belief that God is both Father and Mother) are sorrowful due to the introduction of sin into the world and the suffering of Their children. Actually, the emphasis on Heart or the internal dimension of life is a key characteristic of the UC culture and tradition. Also, based on Jesus and True Parent's lives, the expectation that anyone called to a vocation or mission needs to be prepared to go a course fraught with difficulty, resistance (both internal and external), obstacles, and danger – no cross, no crown is modeled. We can be hopeful, however, because the course of the True Parents also embodies the tradition of success and victory, with each progressive stage and step being painfully won and that current disciples are standing on an amazing foundation of spiritual power, benefit, and purpose. Also, the True Parents' have given more depth to Jesus call to establish the Kingdom through the concept of the Three Blessings, especially related to social reformation/transformation connected to the 2nd

Blessing. In addition, the process of salvation is now understood to require both man's portion of responsibility and God's portion of responsibility, with the sacrament of the Blessing representing a crucial transition and inaugurating point of that salvation.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of a vision and purpose to educators, I believe that students undertaking their spiritual growth course supported by the study providence that CFC is inaugurating needs to verbalize and include their owned sense of purpose and study goals. To address this, I looked to the writings of Fowler (1981) on the meaning of faith which led me to the conviction that it is crucial for students to contemplate and determine the outcomes they hope to achieve through their study experience. As Fowler indicates in the following quote, the matter of faith ultimately has to do with the commitment of a person's core being and heart. I would wish that each student be able to to conceptualize their faith urgings and needs at the outset of their investment, and also periodically along the way as their awareness and perceptions mature:

Smith's careful work, with a cumulative impact I can scarcely hope to communicate here, helps us see that curiosity about what "they believe," to reach any significant level of depth, has to become the question of faith. "On what or whom do you set your heart? To what vision of right-relatedness between humans, nature and the transcendent are you loyal? What hope and what ground of hope animate you and give shape to the force field of your life and how you move into it? (Fowler, p. 14)

Moreover, we look for something to love that loves us, something to value that gives us value, something to honor and respect that has the power to sustain our being. (Fowler, p.5)

I think it is important, therefore, for all participants in CFC's new membership education providence to reflect on what they wish to obtain from the meetings, especially related to their spiritual growth.

I would recommend, therefore, that each newly formed group begin with one or two sessions on the meaning of faith and that questions be poised at the outset to let the students contemplate on the goals and purpose that should fuel their study. Some question that could be used that were formulated by Fowler are as follow:

- What are you spending and being spent for? What commands and receives your best time, your best energy?
- What causes, dreams, goals or institutions are you pouring out your life for?
- As you live your life, what power or powers do you fear or dread? What power or powers do you rely on and trust?
- To what or whom are you committed in life? In death?
- With whom or what group do you share your most sacred and private hopes for your life and for the lives of those you love?
- What are those most sacred hopes, those most compelling goals and purposes in your life? (Fowler, p. 3)

I would further suggest that at about the third session, students formulate a pledge that expresses their sincere desire to invest in and commit to their spiritual lives. Rick

Warren's insights into the importance of this are telling:

The truth is this: Spiritual growth is intentional. It requires commitment and effort to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow. Discipleship begins with a decision—it doesn't have to be a complex decision, but it does have to be sincere. The disciples certainly didn't understand all of the implications of their decision when they decided to follow Christ; they simply expressed a desire to follow him. Jesus took that simple but sincere decision and built on it. . . The important thing is that God has a part in our growth, but so do we. Becoming like Christ is the result of the commitments we make. We become whatever we are committed to! Just as a commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church, it is also the way to grow a great Christian. Without a commitment to grow, any growth that occurs will be circumstantial, rather than intentional. Spiritual growth is too important to be left to circumstances. (Warren, Pp. 332-333)

With any maturing member, however, I believe that being able to conceptualize and verbalize a deep understanding of spiritual life's depth and complexity will not be possible at the outset of a person's spiritual walk. Therefore, I would suggest that the pledge and goal initially set out by

the new members be periodically reviewed and revised to keep them relevant, in order for those pledges to keep pace with the member's maturity and spiritual growth.

Another relevant point and element found in many of the course textbooks, and PowerPoints that I wish to incorporate in the program's preparation also can be found in Seymour book: Teachers need to systematically and proactively create lesson plans for each study session. As always, things may not go as intended in the lesson plan, but any teacher worth their weight would never attempt to teach without one. Things Seymour suggests be included area;

1. Context – describing the context and the learners (whether classroom, mission, trip, retreat, youth gathering, and so).
2. Content-exploring and describing the content to be taught.
3. Learning goals-focusing on learning, being clear and limited, deciding what we hope will be learned.
4. Environment-attending to room arrangement and enrichments of setting for teaching/learning.
5. Flow of the teaching-deciding on timing, strategies, and aesthetic shape.
 - a. Beginning-focusing the learning community
 - b. Flow or process-using the “considering, exploring, discerning approach”
 - c. Ending-Sending out the learners
6. Evaluation-Noting signs of Student learning; considering what one learned about learners, oneself, the teaching and learning plan, and theological education and theological wisdom; and defining options or steps for the future.(Seymour, p. 105)

Other wisdoms from Seymour:

Without a culture of theological reflection, without a call for responsible belief, without a regular effort to listen and gage the issues people bring to faith, and without membership vows that mean something, education is limited and its power muted. (P. 44)

Educating churches guide people on the journey of life, unapologetically witnessing that being disciples makes a profound difference. Like early Christian, we need communities of support in which we learn to grow in the faith and test our lives. Openness, freedom to share and a safe and challenging environment are essential to the educational support needed to assist people in engaging the risky behaviors of challenging lifestyles, questioning the tradition, and deciding to be

faithful. Following Jesus means offering people the chance to restore the image of God within their lives and within their communities. (P. 61)

In contrast to the “schooling/instructional paradigm, “he proposed a socialization/enculturation paradigm” that recovered a catechetical approach to education. Christian education focuses on the total life of the persons in the faith community and it is the deliberate, systematic and sustained efforts of that faith community which enables persons and groups to evolve Christian life styles. (P. 69)

Worship, telling Christian stories, interpreting the scriptures and tradition, praying, reconciliation, encouraging one another, service and witness, generosity, suffering with others, providing hospitality and care, listening and talking to one another about experiences in life, struggling together, criticizing and resisting powers of evil, and working to create and sustain faithful social structures. (P. 76)

Living near Him (Jesus/Christ) must have meant a community of joy, celebration, and grace. Yet it also meant living faithfully. (P. 80)

Simply, church business is not enough. Unless a congregation is embodying the missional commitments of the gospel for the humanization of people and the renewal of the social order, it is shirking its responsibility. Unless it focuses on teaching the way of Jesus, its agenda can be captured by politeness rather than mission. (P. 82)

Sara Little defines Christian religious instruction as “the process of exploring the church’s tradition and self-understanding, in such a way that persons can understand, assess, and therefore respond to the truth of the gospel for themselves. Instruction is a complicated process of learning the content of the tradition, making judgments about that content, claiming it as one’s own, and living its meaning in the world. (P. 93)

We cannot adequately live a faith or engage in theological wisdom unless we are growing in understanding and knowledge of the faith and its practices. Understanding creed, code, and cult [worship] is essential. Rigorous, ongoing, systematic, and structured education is necessary. To be faithful requires a critical and nuanced practice of reflection (of considering, exploring, and discerning) in the midst of seeking to live and practice that very tradition. (P. 109)

The quality of theological reflection coupled with humble prayer have resulted for some in genuine transforming God moments. (P. 127)

Directly addressing emancipatory hope and its vision is crucial. To follow Parker, one of the first things we must do is teach that God is making a difference in the world. Many forget without a reminder. (P. 135)

Practices of faith are taught through the interrelationships of worship, study, mission, prayer, learning, and living. (P. 163)

Mission is both the goal of ministry and an essential process of Christian education or faith formation. (P. 166)

From Yust and Anderson on the process towards spiritual maturity:

While the so-called banking model of education, in which teachers deposit bits of truth into attentive students, is falling out of favor in many quarters, the legitimate desire to encourage transformation through an encounter with information about the histories, traditions, and psychosocial aspects of human and religious experiences raises questions about the place of information in the cultivation of spiritual knowledge. (Pp. 126-127)

From Diadocho on spiritual knowledge: Spiritual knowledge is also connected to wisdom, both in their shared origin in God and in the latter's role as an outward expression and augmentation of the former. Diadochos believed some received spiritual knowledge, which illuminates the inner life, and a few receive spiritual knowledge and wisdom, which gives on the ability to interpret to others the "energy of love" experienced in one's life. (P. 132) and That such knowledge is necessary for human salvation and sanctification and that mystical experience (through prayer and contemplation) is essential to faithful perception of religious truth. (P. 131)

The divine gift of spiritual knowledge comes to those who sit with God in prayer. [However, one must also develop the ability to discern between thoughts sent by God and those sent by satan or low spirit world – from Alice Fleisher] (P. 131)

Nonetheless, the conundrum continues to exist: religious imagination is essential to the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and is itself insufficient to guarantee an encounter with God and the development of spiritual wisdom. (P. 135)

While we do not control God's actions in this relationship, we create a contemplative space in our lives (through various spiritual practices of prayer, worship, solitude, and study) where God may choose to enter and draw us into communion. (P. 136)

Second, our role as the teacher of an unteachable yet learnable form of knowledge is to guide others into spiritual exercises (disciplines, practices) that render their lives hospitable to God's self-revelation as well. (P. 136)

. . . provide students with the skills to become constructive knowers without obscuring their need to become mystical knowers who simply gaze on God and wait for God to illuminate their understanding. (P. 136)

In every case, we need to challenge our students to experience theological (Christian) education as a spiritual practice that points beyond itself to our need for divine illumination if we are to know God and not simply know about God. (P. 136)

What we need from students instead is their willingness to explore with us what is and is not happening in their own quest to encounter and serve the living God and how their experiences are shaped by and out to shape our teaching. We also need to guide students in reflection on their own engagements with and resistance to learning. (P. 155)

These explorations then lead the teacher and students to a place of confession to one another and God for ways in which both [student and teacher] our faults interfere with this quest, followed by mutual forgiveness and recommitment to faithfulness in our shared journey of teaching and learning. (P. 155-156)

Our daily challenge is to resist the culturally condoned temptations of relevance, popularity, and powerfulness through the disciplines of contemplation, confession and forgiveness and theological reflection. Regular personal and communal evaluation of our teaching practices assists us in our resistance and invites our students to help us overcome the various barriers humanity unintentionally erects to obstruct and undermine the work of God in the world. This evaluation belongs in a context of mutual commitment to Christian discipleship by all participants, as well as mutual acknowledgement that the only worthy judge of our teaching or learning is God. (P. 162)

From class PowerPoints and Discussions on learning and neurobiology:

Key Lesson learned by Dr. Winings – We are not teaching information, ideas or practices to people; we are teaching **people** information, ideas, or practices;.

We are all called to ministry and so education should equip all students to respond to this call.

We learn through rehearsal and practice. If a pattern is repeated, neurons fire together and create a memory trace. The more understanding and meaning we attach to new learning, the more likely it will be stored in different networks. Memory is state dependent: this means mental, physical and emotional states; how and where we learn may be as important as what we learn. The use of methods and strategies (intentional) is import for learning.

Important guidelines for learning: preparation, acquisition, elaboration, and making deep associations and extended usage. Short and intense presentations during the prime learning times (first and last – ie – in a 20 minute lesson, prime time is about 18 minutes; in a 80 minute lesson, prime time is about 50 minutes). This is called the primacy-recency effect.

Emotions are important to leaning. We can only think deeply about the things we care about. Educators need to leverage the student’s emotional dimension. Our brains grow best in the context of interactive discovery and through the co-creation of narratives.

Learning involves retrieval, recognition, recall, reprocessing and constant relearning. The goal is retention so that the student is able to locate prior learning, fit them into a conceptual framework, rehearse and reprocess the information and elaborate on past learning.

We educate biologically, psychologically, culturally, and theologically.

Process and methods should be consistent with purpose.

A sense of well-being, experiencing joy, and enduring happiness are associated with eating a more healthful diet, regular exercise and better slip.

Mirror neurons allow us to connect to what we see in the other person; their emotions, movements, and even their intentions. This is crucial in the process of education. The social brain includes a multitude of circuitry, all designed to attune to and interact with another person’s brain. The core skill in this ability is empathy – sensing what others are thinking and feeling.

From Immordino-Yang on the importance and place of emotions for learning:

Learning is dynamic, social, and context dependent because emotions are, and emotions form a critical piece of how, what, when, and why people think, remember, and learn. (P. 17)

It is neurobiologically impossible to build memories, engage complex thoughts, or make meaningful decisions without emotions. . . We only think about things we care about. . . It suggests that, for school-based learning to have a hope of motivating students, of producing deep understanding, or of transferring into real-world skills-all hallmarks of meaningful learning and all essential to producing informed, skilled, ethical, and reflective adults-we need to find ways to leverage the emotional aspects of learning in education. (P. 18)

Emotions . . .rely on subjective, cognitive interpretation of situations and their accompanying embodied reactions . . .Even in academic subjects . . . deep

understanding depends on making emotional connections between concepts. (P. 19)

Though supporting students in building these connections is a very hard job, it appears to be essential for the development of truly useful, transferable, intrinsically motivated learning. (P. 20)

In addition, emotions, like cognition, develop with maturity and experience. In this sense, emotions are skills-organized patterns of thoughts and behaviors that we actively construct in the moment and across our life spans to adaptively accommodate various kinds of circumstances, including academic demands . . .(P. 20)

Instead, understand emotions is also (and perhaps even more critically) about the meaning that students are making-that is, the ways in which students and teachers are experiencing or feeling their emotional reactions and how their feelings steer their thoughts and behavior, consciously or not. Emotions are not add-ons that are distinct from cognitive skills. . . Educators have long known that personal relevance is important for learning and that the ability to hold goals and dreams is critical to motivation and persistence. (P. 21)

Ethical decision making weaves together motion, high reasoning, creativity, social functioning in a cultural context. (P. 36)

Furthermore, the aspects of cognition that are recruited most heavily in education, including learning, attention, memory, decision making, motivation, and social functioning, are both profoundly affected by emotion and in fact subsumed within the processes of emotion. Emotions entail the perception of an emotionally competent trigger, a situation either real or imagined that has the power to induce emotion, as well as a chain of physiological events that will enable changes in both the body and mind (Damasio, 1994). . . Emotions help direct our reasoning into the sector of knowledge that is relevant to the current situation or problem. (P. 37)

The brain is a dynamic, plastic, experience-dependent, social, and affective organ. Because of this, the centuries-long debate over nature versus nurture is an unproductive and overly dichotomous approach to understanding the complexities of the dynamic interdependencies between biology and culture in development. (P. 85)

. . . the learners' emotional reaction to the outcomes of their behavioral choices become implicitly attached to the cognitive knowledge about the domain . . . (P. 98)

Strategies to bring emotions back into classroom learning (Pp. 101-104):

- Foster emotional connection to the material. . . In addition, teachers can make room to relate the material to the life of the students and to students' interests . . . encourage connections to interests and passions . . . create space for emotional reactions to appear and lessons gleaned from mistakes.
- Encourage students to develop smart academic intuitions. . . Without the development of sound intuitions undergirding their representations, it is likely that the students will not remember the material in the long term, and that even if they remember it in an abstract sense, they will have difficulty applying it to novel situations.
- Actively manage the social and emotional climate of the classroom. While allowing for the development of skilled intuition is important, simply having the space to make mistakes will not be enough, since students will allow themselves to experience these failures only if they can do so in an atmosphere of trust and respect. It is here that the classroom climate and the social relationships between the teacher and students have crucial contributions to make . . . in building cohesion among the students and between students and the teacher-necessary ingredients of engaged learning.

From Johnson and Taylor (editors) on the insights to adult learning gained from neuroscience:

(Gleaned and summarized from Pp. 5-17)

- The four fundamental pillars of adult learning are gathering, reflecting, creating, and testing.
- Learning is a process of continuously modification of what we already know.
- Wisdom – see the basic truths in their most general and least complex form.
- Teachers giving new experiences +students processing those experiences = learning.

Recognizing and acknowledging the competence, status, and accomplishments of the adult learner activates the scaffolding for new learning. (P. 17)

Attention is the first step in this learning process. If the brain ignores the data, they are not encoded and obviously not retained. (P. 36)

There are two factors – both of which the educator controls – that have been shown to greatly influence the kind of connection made in the brain that can lead to future recall and greater understanding. They are whether or not the information has meaning and whether or not it has an emotional hook. . . (P. 37)

Creating meaning through metaphor, analogy, and simile; creating meaning through concrete experience; creating meaning through projects and problem solving. (P. 38)

Summarization of Pp. 46-49 on Instruction:

- Begins with the baseline of prior experience.
- Extend learner's consciousness from precepts to concepts.
- Ask – how does this knowledge fit with your personal consciousness? Match your prior experiences? Conflict with? How would you integrate your experience with this knowledge? How does it supplement, extend your consciousness, improve effectiveness?
- Experiences are the building blocks of consciousness and guide cognitive processes.

Far more effective are instructional strategies that build on prior experiences, engage learner in activities that enable them to extend their consciousness to novel situations beyond the realm of their prior experience, add layers of tacit knowledge, and enrich their consciousness with a range of experiences. (P. 50)

Discover and nourish purpose and passion. It is much easier for students to deal with difficult situations and persist with complex problems when the solution or question really matters to them. Within limits (because people who care too much can become dysfunctional), the more they care, the more mental and physical reserves are available to apply to the learning. (P. 59)

Practice the art of scaffolding . . . This requires a teacher to help recruit the interest of the learner, develop experiences at an appropriate degree of complexity and difficulty, model and demonstrate and question and process as needed, and allow the scaffolding to fade as a learner becomes competent. (P. 60)

On Mentoring:

- Compared with those adult educators who see their work primarily as helping students' master course content, mentors believe that learning promotes development and that "development means successively asking broader and deeper questions of the relationship between oneself and the world" . . . According to Brookfield (1987), this happens through "discerning, exploring, and challenging one's own underlying assumptions about the self, society, and reality" . . . A mentor facilitates this journey by inviting learners to question and challenge their assumptions, and by providing emotional support as they do so. (P. 63)
- When a mentor is supportive, caring, and encouraging, and offers enthusiasm balanced with an optimal learning environment, learners are assisted in moving their thinking activity into the higher brain regions (the frontal cortex), where reflective activity and abstract thinking take place. (P.64)

- The discovery that a trusting relationship with a mentor is connected to brain reorganization, growth, and learning underscores what adult educators have long held true: if the mentor creates a safe, trusting relationship and holding environment, learners are much more able to reorganize their thinking and move through the progressive stages of the developmental journey . . .social interaction and affective attunement. These two processes “stimulate the brain to grow, organize and integrate (Cozolino, 2002, p. 213).(P. 65)
- Mentors contribute to the growth and development of learners’ brains through social interaction, one form of which is dialogue. Through dialogue, the mentor not only attempts to understand the learner’s thoughts, but also raises questions that can stimulate the neuronal process of reflection. While experience is necessary for learning, reflection is required because “reflection is searching for connections-literally. . . (P. 65)
- Social cognitive neuroscience affirms that over eons our brains have developed physical mechanisms that enable us to learn by social interaction. These mechanisms have evolved in order for us to be able to acquire the knowledge we need to keep us emotionally and physically safe . . . They enable us to (1) engage in affective attunement or empathic interaction and language, (2) consider the intentions of the other, (3) try to understand what another mind is thinking, and (4) think about how we want to learn (Stern, 2004). These four developmental abilities are the evolutionary underpinnings for reflective social interaction between mentor and learner. (P 65)
- . . . Literally looking into the eyes of the affectively attuned other is another significant form of social interaction that can assist in promoting development. (P. 67)
- . . . The brain actually needs to seek out an affectively attuned other if it is to learn . . . In other words, dialogue between a trust, affectively attuned mentor and a learner creates the holding environment that assists the learner in moving his or her emotions from the limbic area to the higher regions of the brain (orbitofrontal cortex), where the “voice of reason” is found and the learner can self-modulate those fears. . . The key is in the spaces created by the mentor-learner relationship, spaces where the learner feels uniquely seen by the mentor, valued and safe. (P. 66)
- . . . scaffolding can be interpreted in new ways: it can be seen as a process in which the new information is taken in, the learner searches for neuronal connections, and the learner then integrates the old and new knowledge into a reconstructed mental representation. (P. 68)
- How does a mentor lead a learner into the exhilarating power of her own creative process? Metaphorically speaking, the mentor has special “radar” or listening device that seeks out the voice of the learner’s self. Daloz (1986) believes that “calling the student’s voice to emerge is of central

importance, for clearly we do not learn to speak unless encouraged to do so, or think without practice” . . . (P. 68)

- If mentors are to assist learner on the journey from dualistic to multiplistic to contextual thinking, it means choosing to be the guide who “points the way through the fire) . . . (Pp. 68-69)

Educator Training Model & Strategy New Member Internal Guidance Education

Following is a proposal for a model/strategy for the new member education providence emphasizing the format/methodology and content for that educational program. Those components include the following:

Format and Methodology:

The format for this education should consist of a small group of a designated moderator/teacher; the new members (ideal size would be no more than 8-10 people), and the new member’s spiritual parents. A study group should not grow in size so that members of the group can build up trust and experience sustainable growth. New groups should be formed rather than have new members join existing groups.

These groups should initially meet twice a month for approximately 2 hours in a **warm and trusting environment**. This could either be in the church facility or in one of the members’ homes. There should be snacks and beverages provided. This speaks to the following quote from Covey: “ Only when you live the primary laws of love [accept not reject; understand not judge; participate not manipulate; unconditional loving; invest in emotional bank account, loyal to those not present; make and keep promises, value intrinsic worth] do you encourage obedience to the primary laws of life [honesty, integrity, respect, responsibility, trust]. (Covey Pp. 329-330)

The theme of each lessons/topic taught should span two sessions. The first session would consist of presentation of material on the chosen topic, followed by discussion, and then recommendations for practice and application of that material in the subsequent weeks. The following session would begin by review of the last meeting’s material followed by reports/testimonies on the impact of the efforts by the students, including emotions and feelings that emerged in the prior weeks. This component should be followed recommendations for future practice and usage within their real life situations. This pattern takes into account the findings relating neurobiology and learning such as: the primacy-recency effect; the importance of emotions to learning; the role of rehearsal, practice, narratives, retrieval, recognition, recall, and reprocessing to learning. I believe that teachers also need to build in time for reflection and contemplation, both during the class

and afterwards during the “gap” period. As well, past topics studied should periodically be re-addressed and progress reports requested to assess how a student is progressing in relationship to their efforts and spiritual development and how the teachers can best support them in those efforts.

At the outset of the program there should be two sessions where the meaning of faith, goals, and purpose are presented (Fowler is one resource to utilize). In the third and fourth sessions, students should determine their goals, interests, passions, and what they most want to learn through the meetings and then write this up. Periodically these goals should be reviewed and edited in conjunction with the growing spiritual maturity of the students. The key word that should guide the building of these goals is intentionality and sincerity. The quote from Warren (1995) should be reviewed. This approach takes advantage insights inspired by Neuroscience that “we only think about things we care about” (Immordino-Yang, p. 18)

- The truth is this: spiritual growth is intentional. It requires commitment and effort to grow. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow. Discipleship begins with a decision—it doesn’t have to be a complex decision, but it does have to be sincere. The disciples certainly didn’t understand all of the implications of their decision when they decided to follow Christ; they simply expressed a desire to follow him. Jesus took that simple but sincere decision and built on it. . . The important thing is that God has a part in our growth, but do we. Becoming like Christ is a result of the commitments we make. We become whatever we are committed to! Just as a commitment to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission will grow a great church, it is also the way to grow a great Christian. Without a commitment to grow, any growth that occurs will be circumstantial, rather than intentional. Spiritual growth is too important to be left to circumstances. (Warren, Pp. 332-333)

I believe that it is important that a new member educational program include material and a plan for teacher training and education. Educators should be exposed to current religious education theories and insights. In addition I believe that teachers need learn and use the skill of drafting lesson plans for each session to include the following: environment/context; content; learning goals for the session; flow of the teaching including timing, strategies, beginning, ending.

In addition to requiring students to systematically develop and verbalize their expectations and goals for their studies, the educators and spiritual parents need to systematically figure out goals and expectations for their student’s learning. The lessons and skills that they want the students to acquire need to be spelled out, for the short and long terms (for the sessions and for the new member education providence).

Refer to the 4 leadership roles from Covey: modeling, mentoring, organizing, and teaching. Also the 7 Habits: 1) Be proactive, 2) Begin with the end in mind, 3) First things first, 4) Think win-win, 5) Seek first to understand . . . then be understood, 6) Synergize, and 7) Sharpen the saw. [For the details within these 7 habits, please refer to Covey's Text. The 4 Gifts are: Conscience, Self-awareness, Independent will, and Imagination. Role mistakes: 1) Thinking presenting once is enough, 2) Ignoring Sequence, 3) Thinking that any one of the 4 leadership roles is enough. They need to be done in sequence and all need to be included.

Periodically teachers should build in time for evaluation; individually, with peers, and in honest and open discussions with students. Also, student feedback and suggestions should be requested and responded to.

Content:

I believe that a comprehensive goal for the new member educational classes should borrow strongly from Seymour's book – *Teaching the Way of Jesus: Educating Christians for Faithful Living*. For Unificationists, the implications derived from the life and theological vision of Rev. and Mrs. Moon should be included.

As this providence is one to build spiritual growth skills, I would argue that training of skills such as prayer, reflection, and study of holy words/scriptures should be included, understood, and practiced to help students build a contemplative space in their lives in the spirit of the following quotes:

- The divine gift of spiritual knowledge comes to those who sit with God in prayer. [However, one must also develop the ability to discern between thoughts sent by God and those sent by Satan or low spirit world – from Alice Fleisher] (Yust and Anderson, p. 131)
- Nonetheless, the conundrum continues to exist: religious imagination is essential to the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and is itself insufficient to guarantee an encounter with God and the development of spiritual wisdom (Yust and Anderson, p. 135)
- While we do not control God's actions in this relationship, we create a contemplative space in our lives (through various spiritual practices of prayer, worship, solitude, and study) where God may choose to enter and draw us into communion (Yust and Anderson, p. 136)
- Second, our role as the teacher of an unteachable yet learnable form of knowledge is to guide others into spiritual exercises (disciplines, practices) that render their lives hospitable to God's self-revelation as well. (Yust and Anderson, p. 136)

- This work, assisted by the Spirit, creates space for a “faith energized by love” and opens up the possibility that God might also give on the gift of wisdom if the soil is right. Hence, the lifelong work of Christians is to prepare the fields of their lives through prayer and study, for “spiritual knowledge comes through prayer, deep stillness and complete detachment, while wisdom comes through humble meditation on Holy Scripture and, above all, through grace given by God.” (Yust and Anderson, p. 133)

Convey the disciplines, insights and spiritual practices of Brown-Taylor (2010) and Nouwen (2010) at this point in the curriculum, such as the following:

- We all need help to stay focused. We cannot just sit there in silence and do nothing—at least not at first. We need a focus, a point of concentration . . . We do not fight distractions by pushing things away; rather, we fight them by focusing on one thing . . . To help you focus, pick a sacred text . . . Gently focus your thoughts on these sacred words you have chosen. When the distractions come, smile at them, let them pass, and return to your chosen text. The words spoken with your lips or silently in your heart will become increasingly attractive to you and soon you will find them much more important than the many “oughts,” “musts,” and “have to’s” that try to slip into your consciousness and create havoc. Words that come from God have the power to transform your inner life and create there a home where god gladly dwells.(Nouwen, p. 27—28)
- But it is possible to discover, underneath this great variety, a few practices that can be isolated as guides for all those who are concerned with their own and other people’s spiritual growth. I will focus here on five practices that seem of special importance: *reflection* on the living documents of their own hearts and times, *lectio divina* (*scripture, word*), *silence, community, and service. Practiced together, especially with a spiritual director and community of faith, these areas of discipline help fashion our hearts for God.* (Nouwen, P. XXI-XXII)

In addition to the above I would like to highlight aspects of the material I encountered during this semester at UTS (spring 2019) that I believe will be useful in serving the individuals who will participate in the CFC new member education providence. I would argue that the material I gleaned from the following authors [Seymour, Fowler, Yust and Anderson, Winings, Immordino-Yang, Johnson and Taylor, and Tauber] could indirectly help those individuals as the writings of these scholars were more focused on educating the educator rather than the learners.

It would follow, however, that inspired and informed teachers are likely to inspire and inform their students. The substance of much of the material has already been summarized in the preceding model.

In addition, I found the words and works of Taylor (2010), Nouwen (2010) and Covey to contain material that I would most likely be pushed to utilize and share with students to aid their understanding and practice of their faith walk and spirituality. The insights from Covey, especially related to acquiring new habits and life/faith change, were particularly helpful. Essentially, he shared that attempting to adopt new habits or practices is not easy and needs to be accompanied with strong resolve and new structures/behaviors:

The lunar voyage provides a powerful metaphor for describing what it takes to break out of old habits and create new ones, such as having weekly family times. The gravity force of the Earth could be compared to deeply embedded habits, tendencies programmed by genetics, environment, parents, and other significant figures. The weight of the Earth's atmosphere could be compared to the turbulent family unfriendly environment of the wider culture, the wider society. These are two powerful forces, and you must have a collectivized social will that is stronger than both of these forces in order to make liftoff happen. . . As the great American philosopher and psychologist Willian James suggested, when you are attempting to make a change, you need to make the resolve deep, seize the first moment of initiative to act on that resolve, and allow no exceptions. The most important thing is to make the commitment to do it . . . The point I'm trying to make is this: It's not always easy. And it's usually not convenient . . . Any change—even a tiny one—in your direction today will make a significant difference hundreds of miles down the road. (Covey, Pp. 150—151)

Since the students participating in the new member education providence will be relative novices in the realm of faith practices and spirituality, being aware that they will need to be vigilant, make continual effort/ practice, and diligent is good counsel.

Taylor has developed an approach to faith formation practices that seeks to support efforts of the student live in the world while noticing the sacredness that is present but often hidden. “Anything can become a spiritual practice one you are willing to approach it that way –

once you let it bring you to your knees and show you what is real, including who you really are, who other people are, and how near God can be when you have lost your way. (Pp. 82-83). The practices that she includes in her book are as follows:

- 1) Waking up to God (Vision) – Taylor suggests that the student sits quietly and look for that which is holy, inspiring, Godly, sacred.
- 2) Paying attention (Reverence) – Practice totally investing in what is right in front of you (P. 29) and that anything can become a sacrament (P31)
- 3) Wearing skin (Incarnation) – Students should be confident that things of the body can be holy and they need to treat their bodies with respect and perceive the presence of God utilizing their bodies, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from god? (I Corinthians 6:19)
- 4) Walking on the earth (Groundedness) – Go take a walk but be fully immersed in that walking.
- 5) Getting lost (Wilderness) – “. . . I have decided to stop fighting the prospect of getting lost and engage it as a spiritual practice instead. (P. 73)
- 6) Encountering others – Taylor points out that the practice of being self-absorbed is a real impediment to a meaningful spirituality. “The wisdom of the desert fathers includes the wisdom that the hardest spiritual work in the world is to love the neighbor as the self-to encounter another human being not as someone you can use, change, fix, help, save, enroll, convince or control, but simply as someone who can spring you from the prison of yourself, if you will allow it. (P. 93)
- 7) Living with purpose (Vocation) – Testimony: My own way is to think of all tasks/efforts as ministry but not with the same weight.
- 8) Saying no (Sabbath) – Taylor recommends that each person needs time to reflect and contemplate, if they are constantly busy, this becomes more difficult.
- 9) Carry Water (Physical Labor) – “. . . Choose the work, and it becomes your spiritual practice . . .” (P. 152)
- 10) Feeling pain (Breakthrough) – “Pain is the fastest routes to a no-frills encounter with the Holy, and yet the majority of us do everything in our power to avoid it. (P. 158).
- 11) Being present to God (Prayer)
- 12) Pronouncing Blessings (Benediction)

Taylor pushes learners to see their everyday life and activities through new lenses, strip away the surface perceptions, and see everything they do (and then some) as opportunities and paths to holiness and spirituality. I am sure that the above is not an exhaustive list (though it is all that Taylor shares in the textbook) but it is nonetheless a fairly good one in my estimation. I believe that in sharing it with new students (and older pilgrims) pursuing a spiritual life can help them

develop new mindsets and vantage points. I would suggest that by following the suggestions found in Taylor's book, students can well hasten their transition into a God perceiving and holiness evoking beings.

For me the key words that sum up Nouwen's message are inner contemplation coupled with service within the community and to the world. In his book he focuses on these two areas for spiritual formation:

Spiritual formation, to use the words of Elizabeth O'Connor, requires both a *journey inward* and a *journey outward*. The journey inward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling within us. The journey outward is the journey to find the Christ dwelling among us and in the world. The journey inward calls for the disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, meditation, contemplation, and attentiveness to the movements of our heart. The journey outward, in community and mission, calls for the disciplines of care, compassion, witness, outreach, healing accountability, and attentiveness to the movement of other people's hearts. These two journeys belong together to strengthen each other and should never be separated. (P. 123)

Living a spiritual life calls for spiritual formation, spiritual direction, and spiritual discernment. Though they are concurrent realities in the spiritual life, it may be helpful to consider them individually. Having read this book on spiritual formation, you have taken the first step in the long journey of faith. You now may need a spiritual director, because the journey of the spiritual life calls not only for determination, but also for a special knowledge of the terrain to be crossed. Under the guidance of a spiritual director, and with the accountability of a community of faith, you may want to learn the ways of spiritual discernment. Together, spiritual formation, spiritual direction, and spiritual discernment constitute a trilogy of sorts of the spiritual life (Pp. 124-125)

Nouwen's book is one I would strongly recommend to the students participating in CFC's new member spiritual life education providence who are novices in the area of prayer and contemplation. It takes the practice of prayer out of the realm of the head, where a person might be caught up at the level of considering a litany of people and things they wish for God to take care of and handle/care for. I believe that there is a place and value to those types of prayers but appreciate the work of Nouwen who I believe is adding a valuable dimension and understanding

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to the spiritual practice of pray by bringing it into the realm of an emotionally communication with, communion, and resonance with (being with) God at a core level of heart. Nouwen doesn't send students of his methodology/approach on their walk unprotected, however, but wisely guides them to connect their spirituality to a spiritual guide or director, and also in the midst of a community. Just a note, a spiritual director “. . . is not a guru whose authority depends on personal enlightenment, but a person of faith and a discerning companion who listens well and prays with you. (P. xxvii). For Nouwen, this approach to spirituality should bear fruit in vocation (calling), ministry, and the loving service of the other. Wise words and counsel indeed.

Dear educator: I hope the content of this paper proves to be useful in planning for and carrying out the programs you are endeavoring to carry out. I would counsel that referring to the material utilized in this paper represents a good start in your efforts to invest in your understanding of best educational theory and practices. Please continue your study efforts as new understanding are continually being uncovered and discovered. Your goal should be to help your students really learn the material you are sharing and, more importantly, become men and women of great character and heart who have grown into rich and fulfilling relationships with God and are contributing to the betterment of their fellow human beings and the social experience. God Bless your efforts!

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